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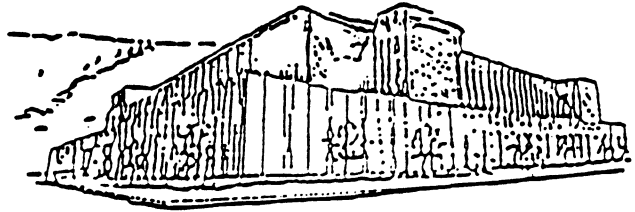
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ELITE COMPETITION AND NATIONALISM: EXPLAINING THE RISE  
OF NATIONALISM IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA.

by

Gregory Richard Koers

B.S. Central Michigan University, 1998

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

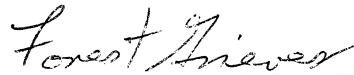
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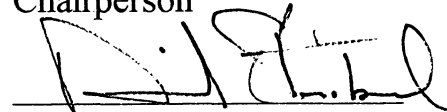
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Elite Competition and Nationalism: Explaining the Rise of Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia

Director: Forest Grievés



Preceding 1992, Yugoslavia was comprised of six republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia) and two semi-autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). Established following World War II, Yugoslavia witnessed a period of authoritarian rule controlled by the Communist party and headed by Josif Broz (Tito). While maintaining a relatively independent socialist system embodying greater freedoms than their Eastern bloc cousins, Yugoslavia pursued pan-Slavic policies in order to transcend the rise of potential nationalism and ethnic mobilization between the republics and provinces. By the 1980's, however, the idea of pan-Slavism weakened in the face of deteriorating economic and political conditions. Soon afterward, Slovenia and Croatia broke away from the federation and paved the way for a civil war.

This thesis argues that the rise of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia was precipitated through elite competition. In addition, two other important factors facilitated this process. First, declining economic conditions and deteriorating communist party legitimacy provided an atmosphere conducive for the rise of nationalism. Second, the policies implemented by the federal government facilitated competing interests between the republics and provinces of Yugoslavia, particularly Slovenia and Serbia.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vi
Chapter	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Relevance for Employing Yugoslavia as Case Study..	3
Definition of Terms.....	5
Organizational Plan of the Study.....	6
SECTION I. THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	
1. THEORIES OF NATIONALISM: AN OVERVIEW OF PREDOMINATING THEORIES.....	10
The Marxist Approach: From Classical Marxism to Neo-Marxism.....	12
Modernization Theory: Open and Closed Opportunities.....	16
Cultural Pluralism: The State as Neutral Actor.....	18
Relative Group Worth Theory: Psychological Fulfillment Through Collectivism.....	19
Rational Choice Theory: Economizing the Rise of Nationalism.....	20
Brass' Hybrid Theory of Nationalism: A Balance Between Primordialism and Instrumentalism?.....	22
Concluding Remarks on Nationalist Theory and Brass.....	29
2. HISTORICAL BACKDROP: FROM OTTOMAN AND AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN OCCUPATION TO THE ECONOMIC DECLINE OF THE 1970'S.....	32
Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Rule: Convergence of Empires and Cultures....	33

WWI and WWII: The First and Second Creation of Yugoslavia.....	36
1945 through 1973: The Reign of Tito and the Communist Party.....	38
The Fourth Constitution of Yugoslavia.....	43

SECTION II. APPLICATION OF BRASS' THEORY

3. FROM 1980 TO 1985: A DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.....	48
State Policies and a Deteriorating Economy: Providing a Conducive Context.....	50
Federal Economic Reform and a Political Stalemate.....	58
4. FROM 1985 TO THE COLLAPSE OF YUGOSLAVIA: THE RISE OF POLITICAL COMPETITION AND NATIONALISM.....	61
An Examination of the Serbian Strategy: The Meteoric Rise of Milosovic and Nationalism.....	63
Slovenia's Asymmetric Aspirations and the Slovene Spring.....	69
Divisive Nationalisms and the Eventual Collapse of Yugoslavia.....	74

SECTION III. CONCLUSION

5. SUMMARY AND SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.....	79
WORKS CITED.....	85



## TABLES

TABLE	Page
1. U.S. AID TO YUGOSLAVIA, 1949-1967.. . . . .	42
2. SURVEYED YOUNG PEOPLE NOT WISHING TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS.. . . . .	56
3. PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN MEMBERSHIP OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS. . . . .	56
4. THE PERSONAL ATTACHMENT OF CITIZENS IN YUGOSLAVIA TO DIFFERENT LEVELS OF TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION, MAY-JUNE 1990. . . . .	76

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Map of Former Yugoslavia.....	vii

# Former Yugoslavia



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Fig. 1. Yugoslavia before its dissolution. Taken from Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book

## INTRODUCTION

Under the leadership of Josip Broz (Tito) the Communist Party of Yugoslavia emerged as the hegemonic party following World War II. Through a one party system the Communist party ushered in a period of authoritarian rule. Acutely aware of the underlying tensions among the ethnically diverse inhabitants consisting predominantly of Muslims, Catholic Slovenians and Croatians as well as Christian Orthodox Serbians, Tito provided a limited degree of autonomy to each group that would be ultimately controlled under a federal umbrella.

This federal umbrella encompassed eight ethnically diverse republics and provinces in Yugoslavia prior to its dissolution in 1991. Thus, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia became republics under the new federal system while Vojvodina and Kosovo became semi-autonomous provinces. Furthermore, Tito actively pursued state policies such as the proportionate distribution of government jobs, resources, and perhaps most importantly, developed a new constitution in 1974, which increased the sovereignty of the republics while, simultaneously, decentralizing the power of the federal government. Nonetheless, despite Tito's conscious engagement of Yugoslavia's divisive provincialism, nationalist uprisings periodically erupted. Such pervasive tensions revealed the precarious balance of power system Tito was juggling between the federal government and the ethnically diverse republics and provinces as well

as posing a perennial threat to the legitimacy of one-party rule and the nation-state.

With the death of Tito in 1980, a crumbling economic system and a federal government plagued by political paralysis, the tenuous bonds holding Yugoslavia together quickly disintegrated during the 1980's. Simultaneously, the power vacuum left behind by Tito provided an avenue for the rise of new political contestants who fiercely competed among themselves in order to gain control of the state and the rewards it offered such as the disbursement of resources and government job opportunities.

As previously suggested, Yugoslavia's central government was plagued by political conflict among the various republics and provinces. Such tensions provided a formidable arsenal for those political elites willing to achieve power by any means necessary. Invoking ethnic and nationalist fervor among their respective peoples, political elites perverted historical facts in order to ignite feelings of injustice. One example illustrating nationalist rhetoric during the tumultuous late 1980's includes the many rhetorical speeches delivered by Slobodan Milosovic highlighting the so-called superiority of the Serbian people over ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo.

In 1991, Slovenia eventually broke away from the federation, with Croatia quickly following suit. Like a domino effect, republican secession prompted the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation established after World War II as well as paved the way for a vicious war that would take thousands of innocent lives.

The preceding analysis generally identified Yugoslavia's path toward its ultimate dissolution. However, the question remains of whether or not the collapse and ensuing conflict in Yugoslavia was inevitable? If so, was it because of the presence of a multi-

ethnic nation-state? Similarly, if a multi-ethnic nation-state is inevitably plagued by conflict, why is it that some multi-ethnic nation-states avoid war while others erupt into widespread conflict? Conversely, if these events were not inevitable, what precipitated their rise in the first place? Was nationalism, for example, precipitated by elites as previously suggested? As a means of answering these questions this thesis explains the rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia as a phenomenon precipitated through elite competition.

### *The Relevance for Employing Yugoslavia as Case Study*

There are two important reasons why Yugoslavia was employed as the case study. First, Yugoslavia is a contemporary example illustrating the rise of nationalism. In fact, nationalism is still a clear and present danger in what remains of Yugoslavia today. Currently, the southern province of Kosovo is embroiled in conflict as the Kosovar Albanians seek independence from Serbia. On the other hand, the semi-autonomous republic of Montenegro, whose autonomy has been eclipsed by Serbia's pursuit of strong centralized policies, is beginning to tremor with its own appeals of nationalism, which may eventually, if unchecked, erupt into violence. The implications of this very real possibility could destabilize current international peacekeeping efforts underway in Kosovo.

Second, not only is Yugoslavia an important contemporary example meriting close scrutiny because of its potential ramifications, but also because it provides fertile ground for testing various theories attempting to identify the causal factors initiating the rise of nationalist movements.

The existing body of literature concerning nationalism can be generally split into two overall categories: instrumentalism and primordialism. The instrumentalist approach encompasses such theories as Marxism and rational choice theory. As the name suggests, instrumentalism implies that nationalism is employed as a means to an end. One example illustrating this includes the rise of nationalist movements in Latin America that developed nationalist movements as a means to conquer external domination by Europeans.

Conversely, the primordial approach emphasizes cultural differences between various groups as the most important factor sparking the rise of nationalism. Thus, according to the primordial approach, existing confrontations between the Muslim Palestinians and Jewish Israelis over Jerusalem could be attributed to their unique but mutually incompatible cultural differences. Unfortunately, much of the literature concerning nationalism, however, has predominately focused on proving the validity of one approach over the other rather than recognizing the potential merits of both.

In an attempt to reconcile these tensions between the primordial and instrumentalist approaches political scientist, Paul Brass, adopts instrumentalism while including the primordialist's emphasis on culture as an important factor used by elites when mobilizing masses. More specifically, according to Brass, the rise of nationalism is attributed to elite competition over the distribution of resources. Within this context, elites find it politically profitable to employ ethnic and/or nationalist symbols as a means to co-opt and mobilize groups for a particular cause(s).

However, elite competition does not develop in a vacuum. Instead, as Brass states, elite competition and the rise of nationalism accompany a deteriorating economy and

political environment. In Yugoslavia, for example, the 1980's witnessed a rapid increase of debt, inflation and unemployment. Politically, the legitimacy of the one party system maintained by the Communist party dramatically deteriorated. Also, Brass maintains that the rise of elite competition and concomitant effect of nationalism emerges from the policies implemented by the state. In Yugoslavia, the federal government pursued policies perceived to be contrary to the republics and provinces of Yugoslavia, particularly Slovenia and Serbia, which shaped tensions and separatist politics.

In order to demonstrate the accuracy of his theory Brass studied the two most ethnically diverse countries in the world: India and the Soviet Union. In the same fashion, this thesis attempts to emphasize the importance of the instrumentalist approach while simultaneously recognizing primordial factors by focusing on the development of nationalism in Yugoslavia prior to its disintegration.

Clearly, the presence of nationalism does not automatically dictate an inevitable mass conflict as witnessed in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, many nationalist movements have sought to liberate oppressed peoples from external constraints and domination. One example is many nationalist movements characterized in third world countries of Latin America. It is important for the scope of this thesis to understand how and why nationalism even came about in the first place.

### *Definition of Terms*

As expected, the wealth of literature concerning nationalism has similarly produced a considerable amount of definitions. However, they all emphasize the same theme, namely,



the expression of an autonomous nation-state. For the scope of this thesis, John Breuilly's definition will be employed because of its straightforward approach. According to Breuilly, nationalism refers to "political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments." Furthermore, "a nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions:

- a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
- b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
- c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment political sovereignty."<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the term "elite" employed in this thesis refers to "influential subgroups within ethnic groups and classes".<sup>2</sup>

### *Organizational Plan of the Study*

This thesis is divided into three main sections. The first section is concerned with the predominant theories of nationalism. The second section initially touches upon the basic history of the peoples inhabiting Yugoslavia in order to provide the reader with a general overview of the historical context. More important, the second section provides an analysis of Yugoslavia's contemporary history and attempts to identify key developments shaping the rise of nationalism. The third section sums up the preceding analysis as well

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1 John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* ( Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1985), 3.

2 Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury, California: Sage Publications, 1991),

as investigates the validity and usefulness of Brass' theory.

### *Section I*

Chapter One provides an introductory survey of the predominating theories of nationalism. The first theory explored concerns Marxism and the varying approaches splintering from the classical Marxist approach. These approaches include Lenin's conception of the nationalist question as well as core-peripheral dynamics as a critical component shaping nationalist movements. Furthermore, analysis examines some of the downfalls associated with the Marxist approach such as an over dependence on class antagonisms and its use of subjective and objective classifications.

The second theory examines modernization theory. In short, modernization theory states that countries modernizing develop new educational opportunities for citizens previously excluded. As new populations become increasingly educated, contestation over government job opportunities and resources simultaneously increases. However, those at the top of the social ladder tend to preserve their privileged positions and thus attempt to prevent others from taking over key positions. As a result, such actions act as a mobilizing force for those on the periphery.

Next, cultural pluralist theory is examined. The cultural pluralist theory states that in a heterogeneous society conflict is inevitable because of conflicting cultural values. The result of this conflict reinforces cultural distinctions and acts as a catalyst igniting nationalist aspirations. From here the analysis focuses on relative group worth theory. According to relative group worth theory, a person participates or identifies with a

particular group or movement as if it were an extended kinship. Also, the likelihood this will develop into a nationalist movement depends on their relative status to other groups. If, for example, one group perceives themselves in a subordinate status to another group, they will likely initiate a movement in order to address grievances.

Following an examination of relative group worth theory is an analysis of rational choice theory. Here, people are likely to join a nationalist movement if the benefits outweigh the costs. Finally, analysis concentrates on Brass' theory of elite competition. Employing an instrumentalist approach, Brass contends that the rise of nationalism is precipitated by elite competition. Also, the rise of nationalism is simultaneously energized by the policies implemented by the state and the presence of deteriorating economic and political conditions.

## *Section II*

Chapter Two provides an historical overview of the Yugoslav peoples beginning with the convergence of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Next, more in-depth analysis concentrates on the first and second creation of Yugoslavia following WWI and WWII respectively. Particularly important is analysis of the second creation of Yugoslavia characterizing Communist rule and the emergence of the charismatic leadership of Josip Broz (Tito). While implementing one party rule, Tito pursued a direction unique among authoritarian socialist societies.

Chapter Three applies Brass' theoretical orientation to the socio-economic and political developments in Yugoslavia from 1980 through 1985. This chapter illustrates the

rapid socioeconomic decline and the impact such developments had on Yugoslavia. Another important theme emerging out of this analysis is the growing republican and provincial discontent with the federal government's efforts at reforming the economy and their push to centralize.

Chapter Four provides analysis of the critical events transpiring from 1985 to the collapse of Yugoslavia. The growing discontent witnessed in the early 1980's grew increasingly intense and continued until the eventual dissolution of Yugoslavia. Most important, Chapter Four illustrates the increasing conflict between Slovenia and Serbia and their significant impact on the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Also, Chapter Four demonstrates the role that elite competition played in igniting nationalism. More specifically, analysis centers on the rise of Slobodan Milosovic and his transformation from an obedient Communist party apparatchik to a fervent Serbian nationalist politician. Similarly, analysis also concentrates on internal Slovenian developments and the role Slovenian elites played in sparking nationalism. Thus, in order to demonstrate the role that elite competition plays in precipitating the rise of nationalism and conflict, this chapter has specifically focused on the developments affiliated with Slovenia and Serbia.

### *Section III*

Chapter Five summarizes the preceding chapters and offers some conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Brass' theory in explaining the rise of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORIES OF NATIONALISM. AN OVERVIEW OF PREDOMINATING THEORIES

In Robert Grey's book, *Democratic Governance and Post-Communist Change*, contributing academic, Vicki Hesli, surveys five predominating theories employed to account for the rise of nationalism. These theories vary in their assumptions as well as their goals. According to Hesli, "some approaches attempt merely to explain identity, while others seek to go beyond identity to describe the origins of ethnic mobilization and nationalism."<sup>1</sup> The five theories Hesli surveys include the following: Marxism, Modernization, Cultural Pluralism, Relative Group Worth and Rational Choice theory.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter seeks several objectives. First, analysis focuses on the prevailing theories identified by Vicki Hesli. Second, specific analysis looks at the major presumptions of the Marxist and cultural pluralist theories regarding the role of the state in precipitating the rise of nationalism. Generally speaking, cultural pluralists maintain that the state is a neutral instrument or arena in which varying ethnic groups compete for resources on a level playing field. Marxists, particularly neo-Marxists and Core-Peripheral theorists, have asserted that the role of the state is not a neutral, passive actor, brokering and responding to varying interests. Rather, neo-Marxists argue that the state

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<sup>1</sup>Vicki Hesli, "Political Institutions and Democratic Governance In Divided Society," in *Democratic Theory and Post-Communist Change*, ed. Robert D. Grey (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 192.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

plays an actively biased role in the distribution of resources and policy. Thus, within the context of rising nationalism the unequal distribution of resources and policies between different ethnic groups ignites conflict and the rise of nationalism.

Third, all of these theories previously identified regarding the rise of nationalism, particularly the Marxist and pluralist schools of thought, are inadequate tools identifying the main precipitators of conflict. According to political scientist Paul Brass, a significant problem with these theories is a limited and inaccurate identification of the units of analysis. Marxists, in general, rely too heavily upon such objective classifications as class as well as such normative classifications as class-consciousness. Conversely, the cultural pluralists overemphasize the permanence of groups and treat them as givens rather than recognizing that groups are, in fact, in a continual state of flux.

The fourth and final objective of this chapter is to provide a general analysis of Brass' arguments outlined in his book Ethnicity and Nationalism.<sup>3</sup> According to Brass, primary emphasis should be placed upon the actions employed by competing political elites because those actions undertaken are the main precipitators to conflict. Such actions employed by political elites could include, particularly in nation-states characterized as multi-ethnic, appealing to a respective ethnic group's low socioeconomic status, invoking xenophobia and chauvinism and scapegoating other groups in order to advance political interests.

On the other hand, for those political elites already established within the state such as a president, prime minister or another high official, further options for maintaining their legitimacy are at their disposal. These could include, for example, the

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<sup>3</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury, California: Sage Publications, 1991), 14.

implementation of affirmative action programs or the recruitment of those elites on the periphery who are creating conflict. In the case of the latter, the recruitment of peripheral elites, such as those discussed in the hypothetical situation illustrated above, would help diffuse tensions and facilitate the legitimacy of the ruling political elites by including them in the decision-making processes or, at least, providing an effective façade that they are being included in the decision-making process.

Of course, the inclusion of peripheral political elites based on a façade probably wouldn't last too long. However, it would buy the established political elites some time to implement alternative, longer lasting remedies to a potential threatening situation. Conversely, political elites can ignite divisive politics by limiting the decision-making process to one group at the exclusion of another. Consequently, certain actions made by elites within this competitive framework can potentially spark conflict or preserve stability. In Yugoslavia, for example, competition among political elites such as Serbian president Slobodan Milosovic and Croatian president Franjo Tudjman ultimately precipitated the rise of ethnic and nationalist conflict.

#### *The Marxist Approach: From Classical Marxism to Neo-Marxism*

The Marxist approach encompasses several variations. First, the classical Marxist approach asserts that the creation of an ethnic identity or nationalism is merely a veil imposed upon the proletariat by the owners of the means of production. This veil, classical Marxists argue, facilitates a splintering effect among the proletariat by diffusing potential solidarity movements, which could threaten the bourgeois capitalist order.

Leninism provides a second variation to the classical Marxist approach by employing the concept of imperialism as the main impetus facilitating ethnic conflict. However, Marxism/Leninism suggests that the presence of ethnic tensions actually reflect class antagonisms. The central component shaping the Leninist argument concerns the disproportionate distribution of jobs among various ethnic groups. More specifically, as imperialist countries required new areas for resource exploitation, whether in the form of cheap labor and/or natural resources, the predominant tendency disproportionately recruits members of some ethnic groups over others. Such mal-distribution resulted in the selective disbursement of managerial jobs to some, while relegating those jobs characterized as low wage and labor intensive to other ethnic groups. Consequently, such favoritism along ethnic lines spawned conflict by creating animosity between the haves and the have-nots.

A third variation of the Marxist approach extends the scope of Lenin's analysis by asserting that the rise of nationalism can be attributed to the competitive nature capitalism breeds between nations rather than how capitalism affects the internal dynamics of nations. Often characterizing such tensions is the implementation of protectionist measures to offset trade imbalances. Japan, for example, has made nationalist appeals in order to offset the imbalance of trade with other countries by making nationalist appeals while simultaneously boycotting or taxing products from those countries perceived as engaging in unfair trading practices. Similarly, the United States has made nationalist appeals by implementing "Buy American" slogans in order to offset trade imbalances. Consequently, the rise of nationalist appeals sets the potential stage for rising nationalism.



A fourth theoretical variation of the Marxist approach is what has been labeled as core-peripheral theory. The implication of core-peripheral dynamics upon ethnic politicization and nationalism finds its genesis springing from the “core” or state. Here, the state acts as the dominant actor or capitalist instrument by which material resources are extracted from the peripheral areas. It is presumed the state is composed primarily of one or more dominant ethnic groups exploiting the periphery or “satellite” communities as a means of resource exploitation. As a result, the core derives all the material benefits while the periphery is relegated to the task of supplying cheap labor. Consequently, inequality is inevitable between those groups on the periphery and the state, which is predominantly composed of a dominant ethnic group(s). Such inequalities breed unification among the peripheral group(s) and act as a driving force for ethnic politicization and nationalism.

Within the context of ethnic conflict, neo-Marxists have adjusted the classical Marxist emphasis on the state as an active instrument dominated by the bourgeoisie. Instead, neo-Marxists have highlighted the importance of ethnic groups within the policy-making institutions of the state and those ethnic groups eclipsed from the decision-making process. For those associated with the core-peripheral school, primary analysis focuses on the role of ethnic groups rather than class exclusively.

The state, according to core-peripheral theorists, is a semi-autonomous entity dominated by a few ethnic groups who are usually the numerical minority. Accordingly, the dominance of the state by a few ethnic groups inevitably translates into the disproportionate distribution of jobs, policies and resources among the population. Consequently, such mal-distribution is the catalyst igniting conflict because groups on the

exterior of the decision- making process essentially have two options: either accept their subordinate position or challenge it. Prior to the construction of Yugoslavia's new constitution in 1974, for example, Muslims from the province of Kosovo were essentially left out of the decision-making process because of inadequate representation at the federal level. To the Muslims, the federal government was perceived as a tool facilitating the interests of the dominant republics of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia at the expense of Muslim interests. Consequently, periodic disputes erupted between the Muslims and other groups because there were no formal avenues for interest articulation at the federal level. The new constitution of 1974 would temporarily ameliorate these tensions by giving Kosovo, a predominantly Muslim-occupied province, a role in the decision-making processes at the federal level.

Criticisms of the Marxist approach have predominantly focused upon its economically deterministic arguments as the driving catalyst for ethnic conflict. Clearly, not all ethnic conflicts are driven by economic factors and may, instead, be driven by appeals for linguistic continuity and other factors. Furthermore, many ethnic conflicts have not correlated with clear-cut class divisions. More often than not, ethnic conflict and nationalist movements are a combination of the bourgeois and proletariat and characterized as a collective movement transcending class distinctions.

Another criticism has been directed at Marxism's objective and subjective criteria in establishing their units for analysis. To Marxists, primary emphasis has been placed upon class as an accurate objective measurement identifying groups relative to the ownership of the means of production. Similarly, Marxists have also emphasized subjective criteria such as class-consciousness. However, the dependence upon class as the unit for analysis

oversimplifies the complexity of social movements in general. The core-peripheral theorists have tried to reconcile these oversimplifications by focusing upon ethnic groups as their main unit of analysis. However, they seem to have fallen into the same trap posed to Marxists. Rather than establishing criteria accurately reflecting the complexity of social interactions, core-peripheral theorists have attributed conflict simply as a reaction to the mal-distribution of resources among clear-cut ethnic group divisions. Particularly troublesome with both approaches is the reification of ethnic groups as fixed entities that are unchanging, rather than accepting a more accurate picture depicting ethnic mobilization and politicization as a changing process that is in a continual state of flux.

#### *Modernization Theory: Open and Closed Opportunities*

Modernization theory provides an alternative approach to Marxist theory in general, although there are a number of similarities with the core-peripheral theorists. Avoiding class conflict as the main precipitator to ethnic conflict, modernization theory stresses that societies are undergoing a process of modernization (e.g., involving such features as the rise of industrialization, increased service sectors, expanding economies, urbanization) and, as a result, facilitate the rise of nationalist movements and ethnic conflict.<sup>4</sup>

There are several factors spawning these conflicts. First, as countries modernize educational institutions become increasingly important in order to provide a working force capable of operating and managing the increasingly complex technology

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<sup>4</sup>Hesli, 194.

modernization requires. The rise of educational institutions, however, simultaneously provides new avenues for upward mobility and increased opportunities for articulating grievances. Similarly, the growth of industrialization creates jobs, which, in turn, translate into a rising migration of people from rural areas into the growing urbanized centers. This rise in urbanization facilitates diverse discourse and spawns intellectual growth and cosmopolitanism. Consequently, the increased growth of the intelligentsia or intellectual elite provides an increasing likelihood that the state will have a greater amount of people contending for power. As Hesli states, “the dual processes of urbanization and education simultaneously serve to equip national elites and ordinary people with the resources that they need to challenge a central state”.<sup>5</sup>

Second, as citizens increasingly migrate into the urban centers, people of mixed cultural origins will find themselves interacting at an equally increased level. Such interactions reinforce differences among each other. This reification of cultural distinctiveness contrasting one culture with another is also facilitated by the likelihood that some groups will acquire increased wealth, power and/or prestige that further reinforce ethnic identities in the face of inequalities. Such inequalities may also facilitate conflict among varying ethnic groups.

Perhaps the biggest criticism attacking the modernization approach is its dependence upon this process as the main precipitator of ethnic conflict and nationalism. Modernization theory, however, fails to take into consideration that many ethnic and nationalist conflicts have taken place in regions not undergoing the processes of modernization or, at least, are in the beginning stages of modernization. Another

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

problem with the logic of modernization theory is the assumption that increased social interactions among varying ethnic groups in urban sectors strengthens identity and ignites conflict.

An interesting case contradicting this reasoning concerns the urban sectors within Yugoslavia such as Sarajevo. As Sarajevo industrialized, large numbers of people living in the countryside migrated into the cities in order to take advantage of the growing opportunities. This migration brought a large influx of diverse peoples including Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Slovenes, and Gypsies. According to modernization theory, these events should have spawned conflict. However, rather than sparking conflict and reinforcing ethnic distinctiveness among the varying groups, these processes actually facilitated openness and toleration. Interestingly, the most fervently nationalist people were those groups living in the countryside.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Cultural Pluralism: The State As Neutral Actor*

A third theoretical perspective predominantly shaping the analysis of ethnic conflict and nationalism is cultural pluralism. Receiving its genesis from the classical-pluralist approach, the cultural pluralist perspective states that conflict inevitably arises in a multi-cultural society. Cultural dissimilarities are incompatible with stability and naturally ignite conflict among varying cultural groups. The ethnic conflict shaping the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, for example, was inevitable because of the presence of culturally distinct groups.

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<sup>6</sup>For an interesting look at the philosophical differences between those living in the countryside and those living in urbanized sectors see Sabrina Ramet's article, "Nationalism and the 'idiocy' of the countryside: the case of Serbia." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 1996) : 70-88.

Clearly, the cultural pluralist theory is not new. Aristotle, for example, warned of the problems of a heterogeneous society, suggesting that the polis, or city-state, could only maintain stability if it was homogeneous. Particular problems associated with a culturally heterogeneous society may arise when one group assumes the dominant role within the political and economic sectors while other groups become subordinate. One possible result is the forced assimilation of the subordinate group by the dominant group. Such an effect fosters animosity, and conflict may ensue. Clearly, there are two salient, underlying presumptions guiding this theory. First, the cultural pluralist perspective, like Marxism, presumes that ethnic groups are static entities or givens. A second presumption suggests that the presence of varying ethnic groups is inherently plagued with tensions and inevitably translates into conflict.

*Relative Group Worth Theory: Psychological Fulfillment Through Collectivism*

Another mechanism employed in the analysis of ethnic conflict and nationalism is Relative Group Worth theory. Relative Group Worth theory maintains the idea that “ethnic groups are to be understood as extended kinship clusters, and thus, the ethnic group fulfills functions similar to those filled by family ties and obligations”<sup>7</sup>. The central component shaping relative group worth theory lies within this psychological necessity for self-fulfillment. Thus, those who have identified themselves as Serbs or Croats have done so in order to feel a part of an overall community, which gives direction and a sense of place among those who, otherwise, feel plagued by a sense of anomie. If, in respect to ethnic and/or nationalist conflict, this attachment or sense of communal

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<sup>7</sup>Hesli, 196.

identity is low in relation to another group, the likelihood of animosity simultaneously increases. Consequently, the potential for conflict rises relative to the degree in which a group perceives, whether real or imagined, their inferior status. The rise of Muslim activism in Kosovo, for instance, could be attributed to their relatively subordinate status compared to that of the minority Serb population.<sup>8</sup>

One problem affiliated with relative group worth theory is the fact that it cannot account for those movements finding their catalyst, not in a group's relative deprivation to another, but rather as a means in preserving a privileged position. Furthermore, similar to those difficulties associated with Marxism and cultural pluralism, relative group worth theory implies that a group's identity is fixed and unchanging.

#### *Rational Choice Theory: Economizing the Rise of Nationalism*

A fifth theory Hesli explores is rational choice theory. This approach asserts that individuals will weigh their options and chose the best one in order to receive the maximum benefit. The underlying assumption is that people are, of course, self-interested. Consequently, the rise of nationalism is the result of individuals who have recognized that by joining a nationalist movement they will be entitled to certain benefits. Slovenia, for example, maintained one of the strongest economies in the Yugoslav federation and, therefore, was compromising too many of their interests for the benefits of other republics and provinces such as poorly dependent Kosovo. Consequently, Slovenians chose to participate in a separatist movement because they would no longer be obligated to support poorer republics and provinces.

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

One potential problem with rational choice theory is “that the mainstream model makes highly implausible assumptions about the rational capacity of individuals.”<sup>9</sup> Is it the case that all humans actively engage in “rational” decision making all the time? Assuming that humans did rationally weigh their decisions, would they actually choose the best one? It seems likely that, more often than not, humans intuitively act sometimes while rationally acting other times. When they do make their decisions rationally, it is probably safe to say that their conclusions did not always maximize the greatest benefit.

On a similar note, not everyone participating in an ethnic or nationalist movement is entirely motivated on rational grounds. Rather, many who participate are more or less swept up in the momentum of a highly emotive force and tend to rationalize reasons justifying their participation, including the justification for random acts of violence. These criticisms reflect the concerns of many psychologists regarding the plausibility of rational choice theory. Central to their position is that rational choice theorists oversimplify the complexity of an individual’s decision-making process. As already stated, rational choice theorists presume that individuals are self-interested actors rationally weighing their options according to the best, perceived outcome. However, this presumption leaves out such motivations as jealousy, rage and other highly emotive influences, which transcend the potential for rational decision-making.

A second area of critique comes from the sociological perspective.<sup>10</sup> Here, the social structure supersedes and shapes the framework from which individual choices are

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<sup>9</sup>David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, *Theory and Methods In Political Science* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 81.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.



based.<sup>11</sup> Individuals are instead constrained or assisted by the environment in which they reside. Thus, such variables as the economy, political structure, and culture all shape the individual rather than the individual shaping the environment. With regard to voting, “critics of rational choice might concede that some voting takes place on the basis of self-interest, but argue that it is an individual’s structural location that generates their interests...”<sup>12</sup>

*Brass’ Hybrid Theory of Nationalism: A Balance Between Primordialism and Instrumentalism?*

So far, analysis focused upon five predominating theories: Marxism, modernization theory, cultural pluralism, relative group worth theory and rational choice theory. Overall, the cultural pluralist and relative group worth theories fall under a school of thought considered primordialism. As Brass states “the primordialist argues that every person carries with him through life ‘attachments’ derived from place of birth, kinship relationships, religion, language, and social practices that are ‘natural’ for him, ‘spiritual’ in character, and that provide a basis for an easy ‘affinity’ with other peoples from the same background. These ‘attachments’ constitute the ‘givens’ of the human condition and are ‘rooted in the non-rational foundations of the personality.’”<sup>13</sup> Conversely, the school of thought classified as instrumentalism emphasizes that nationalism is provoked or “fanned” by elites who manipulate symbols of a particular group in order to

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Brass, 69.

consolidate their power and achieve political and economic interests.<sup>14</sup> The instrumentalist school falls under the theoretical underpinnings of a rational choice theory with its emphasis placed upon the calculated interests of the elite.

Clearly, both schools represent sharply contrasting assumptions. On the one hand, the primordialists' main emphasis centers on a group's distinctive characteristics, which naturally acts as a consolidating source for identity and conflict. The instrumentalists, however, emphasize that symbols of a group's distinctive characteristics are manipulated by elites. Consequently, ethnic and nationalist identities are flexible and exist in a continual state of flux where sentiment is waning from one context to the next.

Although instrumentalists concentrate upon a similar theme shaping the rise of nationalism, they tend to emphasize varying degrees in which nationalism is provoked by elites. For example, Brass acknowledges in his theoretical framework that elite competition precipitates the rise of nationalism. However, he does not completely abdicate the idea that one's cultural background has some significance in constraining the extent to which elites can manipulate symbols for personal profit. Instead, Brass suggests that particular symbols of a group are utilized by elites in order to buttress their positions.

In his book Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison, Brass broadly suggests three interconnected theoretical positions accounting for the rise of nationalism and ethnic conflict. The first theoretical theme shaping Brass' arguments illuminates the instrumentalist school of thought by employing "the theory of elite competition as the basic dynamic which precipitates ethnic conflict under specific conditions, which arise from the broader political and economic environments rather than from the cultural

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<sup>14</sup>Hesli, 197.

values of the ethnic groups in question.”<sup>15</sup> Implicit within this argument is that the presence of different ethnic groups does not necessarily translate into the rise of ethnic conflict and nationalism. The implications of this argument attack the widely accepted claim that the breakup of Yugoslavia was inevitable.

The second theory Brass employs “emphasizes the critical role of the relationships established between elites and the state, particularly the roles of collaborators with and opponents of state authority and state intrusion into regions inhabited by distinctive ethnic groups.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, the policies the state employs can have a significant influence on whether or not the rise of nationalism occurs. The third theoretical argument put forward by Brass states that “the cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, elites will select pertinent cultural symbols in order to consolidate their agenda and power through the co-optation of the relevant ethnic group or nationality.

Clearly, there are several critical, interplaying dynamics facilitating the likelihood of conflict and the rise of nationalism. The first theory that Brass proposed which emphasizes elite competition accurately reflects the position articulated by the instrumentalists: that the rise of ethnicity and nationalism is precipitated by elites in order to fulfill calculated interests achieving political and economic objectives rather than attributing conflict to cultural values. However, as stated earlier, Brass does not

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<sup>15</sup>Brass., 13.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

completely abdicate the presence of primordial identities. Instead, he recognizes that they are present and do shape the extent to which elites can manipulate cultural symbols and traditions for personal profit. As Brass states:

My arguments, however, fall short of the most extreme instrumentalist views associated with some proponents of rational choice theory, who transform all choices, including cultural ones, into economic choices. My aim is in no way to disregard or discard the cultural forms, values and practices of distinctive ethnic groups as unimportant. On the contrary, my purpose is to show that political and economic elites who make use of ethnic group attributes are constrained by the beliefs and values which exist within the group and which limit the kinds of appeals, which can be made. At the same time, the process by which elites mobilize ethnic identities simplifies those beliefs and values, distorts them, and selects those which are politically useful rather than central to the belief systems of the people in question.<sup>18</sup>

There are three major offshoots to Brass' first theory. The first and most obvious are the dynamics of elite competition as the defining catalyst initiating conflict. The second offshoot acknowledges the necessity for a conducive political and economic background in providing the necessary conditions increasing the probability of conflict and the third considers policies employed by the state. Presuming these conditions are ripe, the potential for conflict simultaneously increases.

In light of this argument, Brass suggests three types of economic conditions shaping the likelihood for the rise of ethnic conflict and nationalism. The first type, Brass suggests, emphasizes the dominance of one ethnic group over another. As he states,

The potential for ethnic nationalism exists when there is a system of ethnic stratification in which one ethnic group is dominant over another, but it is not usually realized until some members from one ethnic group attempt to move into the economic niches occupied by the rival ethnic groups. To the extent they fail to do so or have bitter experiences in doing so, they will protest against the system of ethnic

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<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

stratification as a whole and attempt to mobilize the ethnic group. Such mobilization may either lead to communalism involving no more than the mobilization of one's community for more effective competition, or to nationalism and a more fundamental challenge to the whole division of labor, resources, and power in the society.<sup>19</sup>

This trend may also ignite the dominant group to maintain their position in the face of growing contention.<sup>20</sup>

A second type put forward by Brass "is one in which one ethnic group dominates rural society and another the urban economy."<sup>21</sup> A third area Brass emphasizes concerns the multinational state. Here, primary emphasis concerns the relative distribution of resources among various geographical sectors such as provinces and republics. Maldistribution of resources, particularly those distributed by the state, facilitates potential conflict. Such conflict can develop between the geographical sector and the state, or it can develop between the various regions.<sup>22</sup>

There are also several political factors facilitating ethnic and nationalist mobilization. The first is the degree to which political groups effectively mobilize. Clearly, if a group cannot effectively mobilize or co-opt people into a movement, it will be practically impossible to make any changes. A second factor considers the role of government policies towards various ethnic groups. If the government institutes policies contradicting the interests of an ethnic group conflict will probably ensue. The case of Slovenia provides a useful example. Slovenians enjoyed the benefits associated with

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

being the most economically advanced republic of Yugoslavia. However, as a means to offset the imbalance this affluence created between the other republics and provinces, the federal government heavily taxed the Slovenians and created a backlash of criticism. Consequently, the policies implemented by the government sparked conflict. A third factor considers the general political context.<sup>23</sup> When Tito died in 1980 there was a scramble among the communist leadership to find someone capable of reforming a crumbling command economy while simultaneously maintaining stability among the republics and provinces of Yugoslavia. This vacuum left behind by Tito's death provided a ripe political context for others to assert their political aspirations.

The third offshoot of Brass' first theory highlights the extent to which opportunistic elites can utilize the symbols and beliefs of a particular ethnic group's culture in order to fulfill political objectives. While on one hand ethnic groups provide elites with the means to make personal connections, they are, at the same time, constrained by them as well. It would be political suicide, for example, if a political elite made an appeal to Bosnian Muslims that contradicts the values of their religion. Conversely, it would be politically advantageous for an aspiring political leader to advocate the preservation of Muslim schools in the face of growing secularization by the federal government of Yugoslavia. To a large extent, Brass seems to have reached a compromise between the primordialist and instrumentalist proponents by including both arguments as significant factors contributing to ethnic and nationalist conflict.

The second theory articulated by Brass emphasizes the significant role the state plays in either diffusing or igniting conflict. Here, Brass presents an alternative

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<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

perspective of the state avoiding the previously discussed pitfalls of Marxism, neo-Marxism and Pluralism. To reiterate, they suffer from the “reification of either classes or ethnic groups or both; attempts to assert the primacy of one or another line of division, ethnicity or class, and to treat one as a mere representation of the other; inadequate treatment of internal divisions within classes and ethnic groups; an excessive concern with the issue of whether or not the state is an instrument of class or ethnic group domination and too little concern with specific state strategies and policies toward ethnic groups.”<sup>24</sup>

In response to these criticisms, Brass proposes an alternative approach for analyzing the formation of ethnic identity and potential conflict. He begins his re-conceptualization by focusing on two interconnected issues. As he states:

the two intertwined issues then become: first, explaining how and why some ethnic categories and not others, in particular times and places, form themselves into self-conscious communities and take sometimes the further step of making demands for a greater share of state resources, for civil equality, for political recognition, or for sovereignty. On the other side, the issue is not, or at least not only, which groups dominate the state structure, but what specific alliance strategies and policies they follow in relation to ethnic and cultural groups.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, for Brass, this analysis takes into consideration the role the state plays in dealing with other groups. Thus,

the state then becomes, especially in societies undergoing secularization, modernization, and industrialization both a resource and a distributor of resources, on the one hand, and a promoter of new values, on the other hand. Consequently, the state is also not simply an agency pursuing equality or distributive justice. The state and its policies are a potential benefit to some groups and communities, but groups

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 271.

whose values differ from those of the secular, modernizing, industrializing they are also a threat to others, particularly to local elites and communities and to state.<sup>26</sup>

### *Concluding Remarks on Nationalist Theory and Brass*

Perhaps the biggest analytical problem attributed to Brass' arguments is his emphasis upon elites as actors simply trying to gain power for personal profit. Is it possible that leaders are, in fact, engaged in an altruistic concern for the equality of their people? Is it always the case that they are merely exploiting ethnic groups for personal gain? Furthermore, the implication of his arguments regarding the people who become part of a social movement or identify themselves with a particular ethnic group suggests they are irrational victims of a leader's personal aspiration. Perhaps Brass has the causal relationship backwards. Instead, the power attributed to elites may be overemphasized and, in fact, reflect the initial concerns of the group.

Furthermore, the distinction Brass makes between the other theories, particularly between Marxism, seems to be largely overemphasized. In fact, it seems as though there are more similarities between the Marxist approach and Brass' emphasis on elite competition, economic factors and the role of the state in facilitating conditions ripe for the rise of nationalism than there are differences. If anything, the approach employed by Brass seems to have included all the merits associated with the Marxist approach. In other words, Brass' theory is very elastic, allowing enough room for a considerable amount of variables affecting the potential rise of nationalism.

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<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 273.



Another tension with Brass' theory regards its ambiguous nature concerning the hierarchy of factors precipitating the rise of nationalism. While he points out that elite competition is the most important factor he also argues the importance of state policies and economic and political factors. The problem is that it's difficult to know when exactly one condition or factor is more or less salient than the other. Similarly, there tends to be a denial of historical factors shaping the rise of nationalism. In other words, Brass' theory tends to deny historical developments as significant factors shaping the rise of nationalist movements.

The approach undertaken by Brass does have its merits however. For one, it reflects the complexity involved when considering the causal factors associated with the rise of nationalism. Clearly, one theory can exactly claim an exclusive right to understanding the complex dynamics associated with nationalism and all too often accuracy is sacrificed for the sake of simplification.

In conclusion, Chapter One accomplished two primary objectives. First, analysis illustrated the pitfalls associated with the pluralist and Marxist schools of thought. Particularly important is the refutation of ethnic identity as a static, fixed identity and that conflict is inevitable in a multi-ethnic nation state. Instead, conflict finds a significant part of its genesis in the competition between elites, locally and at the state level, for the resources and opportunities established in the secularized, post-industrialized nation-state. Similarly, it is this competition among elites that precipitated the rise of ethnic identity. The creation of ethnic identity by elites is facilitated by the particular cultural symbols available for manipulation. Thus, Brass does not completely abdicate the presence of a culture's values and traditions but, rather, acknowledges that they constrain

the extent to which elites can manipulate such symbols of identification in order to accomplish the desired ends.

A second objective and, perhaps the most important one, is the development of a more accurate means in identifying the key precipitants to ethnic and nationalist conflict. By identifying the role elite competition plays in precipitating conflict, as well as, focusing attention upon the role the state plays in dealing with various ethnic groups, a more accurate and simplified picture of an otherwise complex situation is developed. Moving beyond the descriptive potential Brass' thesis provides, it can also assist international organizations in employing preventive mechanisms that could diffuse conflicts potentially threatening stability in countries around the world. Of course, the major dilemma remains of whether or not the groups in conflict are willing to abide by the decisions developed by international organizations such as the United Nations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL BACKDROP: FROM OTTOMAN AND AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN OCCUPATION TO THE ECONOMIC DECLINE OF THE 1970'S

Understanding the rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia first requires a brief historical analysis identifying the main historical themes. To examine these themes, the four sections of this chapter focus on important formative periods shaping the path and growth of Yugoslavia. Section one provides a general overview of the beginning stages of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian occupations. Emerging out of this analysis is the effect these two distinct empires had in shaping the cultural development of the Yugoslav peoples.

Section two investigates the decline and eventual disintegration of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. From here analysis concerns the first creation of Yugoslavia following WWI as well as developments preceding and following WWII and the second creation of Yugoslavia. The second creation of Yugoslavia is clearly the most important period in Yugoslavia's history because of the impact the Communist party had on the relationships established between the republics and provinces. Consequently, the remaining two sections provide a more in-depth analysis of this period emphasizing the role of the federal government.

Section three concerns the creation of the fourth constitution of Yugoslavia. A central theme emerging from this analysis is the impact the new constitution had on the relationships established between the federal government, republics and provinces.

Broadly speaking, the new constitution facilitated decentralization policies providing increased autonomy to the republics and provinces. As succeeding chapters demonstrate, this devolution was an instrumental component initiating a context ripe for the rise of nationalism.

Finally, section four provides a look into the economic and political developments during the 1970's until the death of Yugoslavia's charismatic leader, Tito. Despite prior economic success in which Yugoslavia exhibited one of the most robust economies in the West, the financial fortitude of the Yugoslavian economy during the 1970's indicated a clear decline that continued until its collapse. Furthermore, such developments illustrate Brass' contention that the rise of nationalism was precipitated by elite competition.

#### *Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Rule: Convergence of Empires and Cultures*

Located in southern Europe, Yugoslavia (literally translated as South Slavs) is separated from Italy to the west by the Adriatic Sea, bordered to the north by Austria and Hungary, to the east by Romania and Bulgaria and to the south by Greece. Yugoslavia is a geologically diverse country comprising a mountainous region encompassing approximately 45 percent of the region's terrain, while 29 percent of the land is considered lowland<sup>1</sup>. The Danube is the only navigable, major river artery in Yugoslavia. Entering the former Yugoslavia through the northeast, the Danube provides a natural boundary between Slovenia and Vojvodina.

Prior to the occupation of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires, there were three loosely knit populations comprising distinct cultures. The Croats, who slowly migrated

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<sup>1</sup> John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History: Twice There Was A Country* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

southwest towards the Adriatic Sea along the Dalmation coast around 600 A.D., grew as a distinct group that, over a period of a few hundred years, slowly integrated the beliefs of Roman Catholicism.<sup>2</sup>

As the Hungarian Empire grew into a significant European force, Croatian kings were compelled to accept the Hapsburg's increasingly dominant role as merchants along the Adriatic coast. Eventually, in 1102, a Hungarian king would assume co-leadership of Croatia and symbolically usher in the beginning of Hapsburg domination.<sup>3</sup>

Croatia's neighbor to the southeast, Serbia, initially avoided occupation by an expansionist empire and enjoyed several hundred years of cultural development. In 1331, the symbolically most important ruler in Serbia's history, Tsar Dusan, represented the apex of Serbia's medieval heritage. Tsar Dusan, motivated by imperialist intentions, doubled the size of Serbia, extending its grip deep into the southern reaches of Greece.<sup>4</sup> Following Dusan's death, a combination of successive weak rulers, and persistent advances of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia's autonomy eventually crumbled. At the Battle of Kosovo of 1389, Serbian domination in the region eventually dissolved when they lost to an advancing Ottoman army pushing towards the north. Ironically, the Battle of Kosovo would serve as a symbolically important weapon in the rhetorical arsenal of future Serbian President, Slobodan Milosovic.

The third distinct culture emerging out of this era was Bosnia. Interestingly, eclipsed by contemporary Croatian and Serbian rhetoric claiming that Bosnia is historically Serb or Croat, Bosnia was comprised, from the beginning, as a heterogeneous society

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

reflecting a diverse composition of Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Bosnia, despite numerous successful attempts halting an invading Ottoman Empire, eventually found themselves succumbing to the same fate as their neighbors and were officially occupied by the Ottomans in 1463.

As the Ottomans settled into their new role as rulers of the Balkan region, they developed a highly centralized bureaucracy extending from their capital in Constantinople. Ottoman occupation tended to be relaxed, allowing its inhabitants room to operate day-to-day activities independently. As long as the people of the region provided their necessary dues through Ottoman taxation, tensions were generally avoided. Much of the stability of the region can be attributed to this relaxed system. Religious diversity was tolerated, and business was conducted similar to pre-occupation practices. The Ottomans also imposed the *devsirme* system, which forced young boys to join the army and convert to Islam.<sup>5</sup> After 1566 Ottoman authority declined gradually, and in 1683, the Hapsburgs established a military buffer zone separating them from the threatening Ottoman Empire to the south. This buffer zone encompassed much of Croatia, stretching eastward through Slovenia and northern Serbia.

It would not be until the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that significant nationalist rumblings could be heard echoing throughout Serbia. Parallel developments occurred in Croatia as well. By the 1870's independent political parties began to emerge signifying a changing political climate contesting Hapsburg and Ottoman occupation and applauding efforts seeking the establishment of a unified Yugoslavia.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

The Ottoman Empire's presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina eventually became seriously questioned. One of the biggest points of contention concerned the overall Bosnian Muslim elite who heavily taxed Serb peasants. After an 1875 uprising by the peasants, the Ottomans and the majority of Bosnian Muslims fled while the Austrian-Hungarian Empire filled the vacuum legitimized by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

### *WWI and WWII: The First and Second Creation of Yugoslavia*

The 20<sup>th</sup> century would mark a new beginning in south Slav political developments. Modernization provided new avenues for upward mobility and increased intellectual independence separate from that provided by the Habsburg Empire. This trend, in turn, increased the level of political autonomy for Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, rising political autonomy would be eclipsed by the Habsburg's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, making the possibility of war eminent. At the same time, the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina acted as a bridge fusing the concept of an independent Yugoslavia.

On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a student revolutionary and member of the Serbo-Croat Progressive Organization, which supported the idea of a unified, independent Yugoslavia, assassinated the Habsburg heir to Franz Joseph, Franz Ferdinand. This act has been widely recognized as the main ingredient igniting WWI.

Following WWI and final dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the concept of a unified Yugoslavia was finally realized. Originally labeled the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the creation of a unified Yugoslavia was not without its complications. After several years of political contestation the Yugoslav border was

finally drawn in 1921. Eventually, the Serbs assumed the majority of responsibility because of their efforts in fighting the Austrian-Hungarian Empire during WWI. By 1929 King Aleksandar renamed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

WWII ushered in a living nightmare for Yugoslavia. The following statistics illustrate the extent of atrocities Yugoslavia experienced. Gross demographic losses, including partial births, reached 2,022,000. Real demographic losses totaled approximately 1,696,000 people. The extent of emigration as a result of the war would total approximately 670,000 people. As a total, wartime casualties would reach approximately 1,027,000 people. Losses of people who died in concentration camps would approach 80,000 people, and the number of casualties in Yugoslavia would total approximately 947,000 people<sup>6</sup>. Clearly, WWII had a significant impact on Yugoslavia.

There were several factions all fighting each other in Yugoslavia. On one side were the Communist Partisans led by Marshal Josip Broz (Tito). The main intentions of the Partisans were to repel any advancement made by either the Nazis or their fascist collaborators, the Croatian Ustase. The Partisans also found themselves simultaneously fighting a civil war against the nationalist Serbian Chetnik forces led by Draza Mihailovic. Thus there were essentially two battles being waged on Yugoslavia's landscape, one between the Croatian Ustase, the Partisans and Serb Chetniks, while another being fought between the Partisans and Chetniks.

Propelled by ideology, the Partisans exacted heavy casualties, particularly on those who were or, thought to be, part of the Serbian Chetnik nationalist movement and the

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<sup>6</sup> Bogdan D. Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 32.



Ustase. The Serbian Chetniks slaughtered primarily those of Muslim origin. Particular areas Chetniks focused on were in Bosnia, the Sajak area of Serbia, Montenegro and Croat villagers.<sup>7</sup>

The Croatian Ustase were the most vicious force operating within Yugoslavia. Targeting the same groups as the Nazis, the Ustase took the lives of most Jews living in Yugoslavia as well as Muslims, Gypsies and other groups. As will be later illustrated, these events impacted significantly the rising rhetoric associated with the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991. As Bogdan Denitch states:

The massacres committed during the Second World War have not become merely historical facts. They are part of the present day political scene. They are political almost as powerful as the history of the Holocaust is in Israeli politics today. They are also just as often misused for narrow political and partisan ends. They represent the basis for what appear to be wild charges and countercharges of past attempts at genocide, charges that can then be used in the present or future to justify new rounds of killing.<sup>8</sup>

#### *1945 through 1973: The Reign of Tito and the Communist Party*

Once the dust settled after WWII, the Communists emerged as the hegemonic party largely as a result of their anti-nazi, anti-fascist resistance during WWII. On November 29, the Serbian monarchy previously dominating Yugoslavia's government following WWI was disbanded in favor of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Acutely aware of the nationalist question, the Communists implemented a federal government reflecting the desire to have a strong central government while, at the same time, offering a limited degree of autonomy to its constituent republics. Reflecting Marxist/Stalinist ideology the communists assumed that ethnic diversity and nationalism

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

would “wither away” as the country’s communist dream became realized.<sup>9</sup> The implementation of a strong, centralized federal government, however, marked the first of several evolving stages.

As Lenard Cohen pointed out, three major themes characterized Yugoslavia’s transformation under Communist rule preceding the implementation of the 1974 constitution. The first theme (1945-1952), as previously suggested, established one party rule and a highly centralized government. Their ethnic strategy transcended latent ethnicity and nationalism by emphasizing a single, unified Yugoslav consciousness. The federal government structured itself hierarchically reflecting the model implemented by Joseph Stalin.<sup>10</sup>

This period observed the forced collectivization of peasant holdings in the countryside’s agricultural sectors as well as a dramatic increase in the number of soldiers recruited into the army that indicated their desire for a strong centralized government. Yugoslavia’s National Army (JNA), for example, increased by almost 50%, bringing the total number to 600, 000 soldiers.<sup>11</sup> Much of this increase was in response to the schism developing between Stalin’s Soviet Union and Yugoslavia’s Communist Party. These tensions culminated in Yugoslavia being expelled from the Cominform, an organization created by Stalin seeking to unify Soviet Communist countries. One other trend characterizing this period was a massive purge of Soviet sympathizers from Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia’s Disintegration and Balkan Politics In Transition* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 26.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Lampe, 250.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-249.

The year 1950 marked a symbolically significant departure from the Stalinist model employed by Yugoslavia prior to its excommunication from the Cominform. In May of 1949, regionalized “people’s” councils were instituted allowing the councils to maintain their own budgets and hold their own public meetings. The federal government also began to change their original policies of forced collectivization. In the defense-related industries, 215 factories were allowed to experiment in the creation of worker councils, allowing greater accountability as well as an increased worker participation in the decision making process.<sup>13</sup> By June 27, 1950, the federal government formally authorized worker’s councils.<sup>14</sup>

This increasing trend of decentralization marked the beginning of Yugoslavia’s second theme (1953-62) and reflected the collapse of Yugoslavia’s initial attempt to implement the Stalinist model. The government moderately decentralized, opening avenues for greater ethnic participation through policies created by the federal government that made it more of a quasi-federal organization stressing increased local participation. In 1953, a new constitution was drafted and ratified and formally acknowledged the federal government’s sincerity to continue its process of decentralization. However, as John Lampe recognized, there were still three major provisions in the constitution illustrating the will to preserve a strong, centralized government.<sup>15</sup> The first was the provision relinquishing the right of the republics to secede. The second provision illustrating the federal government’s centralized character was the implementation of the Federal Chamber that took the place of the Chamber of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

Nationalities. The third was to name Tito president of Yugoslavia for life and to create a Federal Executive Council.<sup>16</sup>

The 1950's and 1960's truly represented Yugoslavia's individualized character and reflected significant differences from its Communist counterparts in Eastern Europe. One of the most important differences symbolizing a different path was Yugoslavia's ability at maintaining a neutral relationship with both the West and the Soviet Empire through Tito's so-called Non-Aligned Movement policy.

Possessing charisma and an effective ability in conducting diplomatic relations with the East and West, Tito single-handedly crafted an important niche for Yugoslavia on the world stage. Unlike Yugoslavia's Eastern European counterparts, Tito maintained a political, social and economic balance between both ideologically different regions, directly facilitating Yugoslavia's socioeconomic honeymoon of the middle 1950's through the early 1960's. In fact, between 1953 and 1961, Yugoslavia's economy grew faster than those of most other countries in the world.<sup>17</sup>

A second aspect separating Yugoslavia from its Communist Eastern European counterparts was its ability to attract investment from abroad, particularly from the United States (see Table 1), as well as its ability to open up to Western European markets. This process facilitated several economically positive effects. Chief among them was the ability to refine production so that it was efficient. Previously, efficient production was a severely lacking component of Eastern bloc countries. Yugoslavia also maintained an open door policy with its workers allowing them to work abroad in the market-oriented factories of Western Europe. As a result, workers were allowed to see

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

TABLE 1

## U.S. Aid To Yugoslavia, 1949-1967 (US \$ MIL.)

	Marshall Plan 1949-52	Mutual Security Act 1953-61	Foreign Assistance Act 1962-67
I. Economic assistance: total	186.8	1,038	536.4
Grants	186.8	617	91.9
Loans		422	445.5
A. Aid and predecessor	124.4	454	12.5
GRANTS	24.4	265	12.1
Loans		189	0.4
Security supplemental assistance	(109.2)	(321.2)	(10.7)
B. Food for peace (PL 480)	24.8	585	523.9
GRANTS	24.8	352	79.8
Loans		233	444.1
C. Other economic assistance	310.0		
II. Military assistance: total	310.0	412	1.8
III. Total economic and military assistance	496.8	1,450	538.2
Loans		1,422	445.9
GRANTS	496.8	1,028	92.3

Source: John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 271.

the efficient productivity of the West and, in turn, transform Yugoslavia's industries when they returned. Socially, this period also witnessed a Yugoslav equivalent of the Soviet Union's Glasnost. Intellectual freedom was clearly allowed, and the cities of Yugoslavia grew increasingly cosmopolitan.

The third theme (1963-1971) of Yugoslavia's evolution experienced a new constitution encouraging continued decentralized policies emphasizing regionalization and continued one party rule. The regime's ethnic strategy was, as Cohen accurately defines it, a "pluralist socialism" that recognized the permanence of group identity and cooperative federalism<sup>18</sup>.

#### *The Fourth Constitution of Yugoslavia*

By 1974 Yugoslavia engineered its fourth constitution. On the surface, the constitution seemed to have captured the spirit of Yugoslavia's distinct socialist path. It formally articulated decentralization of federal power by granting increased autonomy to the republics and provinces of Yugoslavia. The republics were now allowed to secede, and the constitution symbolically acknowledged federal authority as a right simply allocated by the tacit approval of a consensus among the republics and provinces.

Despite the rhetoric the constitution had in delegating increased autonomy to its republics and provinces, it actually facilitated increased centralization. Vojin Dimitrijevic, for example, pointed out several assessments revealing the true intentions and implications associated with the 1974 Constitution. Rather than allocating greater decision-making power to its citizens, the constitution had actually usurped their power by creating "a parallel social system of autonomous self-management, atomized and

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<sup>18</sup> Cohen, 27.

incomprehensible, and, as such, unable to influence political decision-making”.<sup>19</sup> The constitution also deprived the citizens of the right to vote except at the very lowest levels of elections. It only allowed the League of Communists to nominate all candidates for office and was the only group allowed to appoint representatives to the Federal Assembly. Furthermore, the constitution formally established Tito as the President for life.<sup>20</sup> Overall, and most importantly, Vojin Dimitrijevic concludes that:

To leave matters at these observations would be highly unrealistic and naïve and would fail to make the most important point, namely that the 1974 Constitution was an ornamental piece of rhetoric, a justification for dictatorial (even totalitarian) rule, and that its main deficiency, quite apparent in the late 1980’s, was that it was not meant as a supreme legal and political text, was not intended to be seriously implemented in the political sphere, and was impossible to implement in other fields.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, while Yugoslavia on the surface engaged in a process of decentralization, delegating increased responsibility to its citizens, in actuality, the federal government became more entrenched. Interestingly, the formal granting of increased autonomy to the republics and provinces had simultaneously strengthened nationalist aspirations. Thus, in many respects, the Communist party was paving the way for its own demise by giving at least a rhetorical recognition of republican and provincial sovereignty while at the same time denying them any significant participation in the decision-making processes.

The policies outlined by the state of Yugoslavia also illustrate how the state can ignite ethno-nationalist aspirations. Clearly for Paul Brass one of the most significant factors precipitating the rise of nationalism is the type of policies the state, in this case

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<sup>19</sup> Akhavan, Payam, general ed., Robert Howse, contributing ed., *Yugoslavia: The Former and Future* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNRISD, 1995), 71.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

Yugoslavia, enacted in regards to different ethnic and/or nationalist groups. On the surface increased decentralization seems like a positive effect augmenting provincial and republican control of their own policies, whether economic, political or social. Instead, however, as Vojin Dimitrijevic previously noted, ensuing was increased authoritarianism and a façade of democratic participation. Such policies may have in fact highlighted republican and provincial distinction by first, offering a degree of autonomy and, second, actually limiting it. In other words, the federal government raised expectations without actually delivering on their promises and as a result strengthened republican and provincial identities.

Another interesting dynamic emerging out of this context was the fact that the Communist party continued to choose party cadres either unqualified and/or unmotivated, which inhibited any potential reform of the increasingly outmoded authoritarian system. Furthermore, from the early to mid 1970's the societal atmosphere reflected a growing degree of disillusionment because of the lack of adequate avenues for participation. As Vojin Dimitrijevic pointed out,

the 1974 Constitution came at a moment when the party structures, cadres, and morale started to decay as a result of the prolonged possession of absolute power. The majority of members and functionaries were opportunist careerists who gradually forgot the Marxist origin of their philosophy and, faced with the lack of enthusiasm in the population, started to seek other sources of support and legitimacy that for them were more comprehensible and natural. By necessity, these sources were parochial and provincial, with a natural tendency to become nationalist. This was to be countered by the largely artificial constructions of self-management, but they were not supportive of any broader unity, relying as they did on minuscule 'basic associations of associated labor,' which could not resist the meddling of party committees and secretaries from the municipal to the highest levels.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.



Such a gradual trend depicting a disenfranchised population and an authoritarian system isolated from the people's concerns continued until the eventual collapse of the one-party system in 1991. While Yugoslavia initially reflected a country economically robust and socially relaxed, it eventually developed into an increasingly authoritarian system, which atomized its provinces and republics from the federal decision-making processes. The result provided a context conducive for highlighting individualized republican and provincial concerns at the expense of pursuing policies transcending regionalized politics.

This chapter has attempted to illustrate the historical patterns depicting Yugoslavia's evolution from a loosely knit region comprising three distinct cultures to its eventual culmination into a communist-controlled society engineering a pan-Slavic identity. Particularly important in this analysis were the developments following the imposition of Communist rule and the effect this organization had on establishing conflicting relationships among and between the republics and provinces. The creation of the Fourth Constitution of Yugoslavia shaped several important effects. First, the constitution symbolically provided increased autonomy to its republics and provinces. The result initially pacified growing tensions between the federal government and its member republics and provinces. However, it was soon realized that the Fourth Constitution's intentions were to augment federal power, which actually eclipsed provincial and republican autonomy.

Second, actual top-down decision-making facilitated increased tensions between the federal government and the republics and provinces as well as strengthening individualized identities transcending pan-Slavism. In accordance with Brass' theory,

such developments illustrate the role the state plays in either facilitating or inhibiting the rise of conflict. In this case, the federal government's increased centralization contradicted decentralized efforts outlined in the Fourth Constitution, thus sparking dissent among the republics and provinces. The conflicting relationships established in the late 1960's and early 1970's would carry into the next decade with increasing momentum. As will be demonstrated in succeeding chapters, this increased momentum characterizing increasingly conflicting relationships will gain momentum as the socio-economic and political climates continue to deteriorate at an almost unrecoverable rate. Furthermore, on May 4, 1980, the president for life of the Republic and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia died at the age of 87, symbolically illuminating the decline of Yugoslavia.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FROM 1980 TO 1985: A DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Yugoslavia's slipping economy and deteriorating party legitimacy during the 1970's continued accelerating into the 1980's. Absent Tito's strong arm tactics, charismatic leadership and curious ability in deflecting external threats to communist party control, Yugoslavia was now exposed for what it really was: a country on the verge of collapse. Finally pushing the country over the precipice into a disastrous nationalism was a combination of the ingredients Brass outlined. Among them were elite competition over the distribution of resources, a ripe political and socioeconomic context, and state policies facilitating conflict.

In light of these developments, this chapter seeks several objectives. First, and perhaps most importantly, this chapter employs Paul Brass' argument "of elite competition as the basic dynamic which precipitates ethnic conflict..."<sup>1</sup> Thus, this chapter attempts to illustrate how developing patterns of elite competition during the 1980's initiated the rise of nationalist conflict rather than the widely proclaimed argument that nationalist conflict resulted exclusively from cultural differences or class antagonisms among the varying ethnic and nationalist groups. Some of the themes illuminated in this chapter supporting this argument identify the meteoric rise of

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<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury, California: Sage Publications, 1991), 13.

Slobodan Milosovic, the Slovene Spring and accompanying political developments within Slovenia.

A second objective identifies significant political and socioeconomic developments providing the necessary context for emerging elite competition. Particularly important will be an analysis of the crumbling national economy and increasing economic disparity growing between the republics and provinces of Yugoslavia.

In addition to the aforementioned objectives this chapter also highlights the role of the state, particularly the federal government, in initiating elite competition during the 1980's. Identifying policies implemented by the federal government aligns with Brass' arguments that the state plays a significant role in either initiating conflict or preventing it, depending upon the policies implemented regarding ethnic and/or nationalist groups. In this case, analysis concerns the evolving philosophy of the federal government and its impact on republican and provincial interests. Emphasizing a strong centralized government stood in stark contrast to many of the interests of its member states. Consequently, Yugoslavia's federal government was a defining catalyst facilitating conflict with the republics and provinces because of the policies and actions it implemented.

Also, this chapter exemplifies the Communist party's elites growing inability in maintaining one-party legitimacy. These forces, coupled with an increasing intensity of tensions among nationalist and ethnic groups, rapidly dissolve any preservation of a pan-Slavic identity.

A fourth objective is to illustrate examples in which rising nationalist elites employ cultural symbols as a springboard for consolidating political power. Clearly,

these examples reiterate the point that elites are the salient catalyst to conflict rather than any incompatible cultural distinctions themselves. Slobodan Milosovic, for example, will invoke nationalist passions by carefully implementing symbols of past and present injustices of the Serbian peoples.

*State Policies and a Deteriorating Economy: Providing a Conducive Context*

As illustrated in chapter one, Paul Brass first argues for the importance of an economic and political context in providing an atmosphere conducive for the emergence of nationalism. More important, it is “the relative distribution of ethnic groups in the competition for valued resources and opportunities and in the division of labor in societies undergoing social mobilization, industrialization, and bureaucratization” which provides the stimulus for nationalist impulses.<sup>2</sup>

This section attempts to illustrate the deteriorating economic atmosphere beginning in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. The destabilizing forces associated with this economic deterioration would have a profound effect on the allocation and distribution of resources among the various republics and provinces. As a consequence, these developments significantly stimulated both objective and subjective distinctions among each group which, incidentally, provided part of the arsenal for rising political elites as well as strengthening competing interests between the republics and provinces and the federal government.

With the death of Tito on May 4, 1980, Yugoslavia lost the seemingly immortal leadership Tito provided. As chapter two illustrated, Yugoslavia was now undergoing dramatic transformations, both politically and socio-economically. Despite liberalization

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

on the surface, the 1970's initiated increasingly authoritarian policies. In its wake, the Communist party recruited obedient technocrats willing to succumb to their directives despite the need for reform minded experts. Consequently, the Communist government operated under little direct scrutiny over its economic policies.

The recruitment of submissive policy makers concomitantly affected Yugoslavia's future economy. Paralyzed by a command economy powerless to adapt to an increasingly globalized economy, Yugoslavia fell behind its Western European counterparts. Exasperating problems, Yugoslavia continued heavy borrowing from the West. Now, not only was Yugoslavia's economy beginning to fall behind, but they were also beginning to accrue massive debt to foreign banks.

Another significant development was the vast financial disparity growing between the North and South of Yugoslavia. Slovenia maintained the highest wealth while Kosovo had the least. As a result, the federal government implemented a redistribution program transferring funds from the North to the less developed South.<sup>3</sup> Through the Federal Fund for the Development of Less Developed Republics and Regions, all republics and provinces had to contribute 2% of their total social product.<sup>4</sup> The Fund would then distribute the money to the less developed republics and provinces. This redistribution provoked the more well off countries to the North to have animosity towards those to the South. Clearly, this example reflects Brass' contention that the state, in this case the centralized federal government, provoked dissent among the provinces and republics through its policies.

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<sup>3</sup> Bruno Dallago and Milica Uvalic, "The Distributive Consequences of Nationalism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50 (January 1998) : 71, 70-89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Like the Constitution of 1974, Yugoslavia's maintenance of positive economic development during the 1970's was merely a façade. Underneath the surface was a completely different story. In fact, Yugoslavia's positive economic performance was the direct result of its heavy foreign borrowing, which, according to Susan Woodward had two purposes. First, Western loans provided Yugoslavia with the means to import technologically advanced machinery in order for it to remain competitive with other market oriented countries.<sup>5</sup> Second, the loans also provided more time for domestic industries to acclimate to higher oil prices "and other primary commodities and a variety of erratic, nontariff barriers against Yugoslav exports of steel, textiles, tobacco, and beef to European (hard currency) markets".<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, Western markets' demand for Yugoslavia's products shifted from manufactured products to primary commodities. This shift dramatically decreased the need for manufactured products.<sup>7</sup> As a result, manufacturers were unable to continue the purchase of new technologies, which would have facilitated their ability to compete with other manufacturers in the West.<sup>8</sup> This developing trend decreased Yugoslavia's revenue as well as shifted dependence from the more industrialized sectors of Slovenia to the primary commodity sources of Serbia, parts of Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.<sup>9</sup>

More significantly impacting Yugoslavia's economy were other external events beyond the control of Yugoslavia. As Susan Woodward states:

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<sup>5</sup> Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. 1995), 47.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

The 1970's ended with even more extreme external shocks, however A second oil price rise occurred in 1978-79. Interest rates for U.S. dollars, in which Yugoslav debt was denominated, jumped into double digits. At the same time the country's borrowing from commercial banks at free-market rates had reached 58 percent of total debt. Commercial bank lending to Eastern Europe nearly stopped altogether after 1978, and that trend was given political impetus in 1979-80 by the Polish crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. For Yugoslavia, an economic crisis originating in the foreign sector could no longer be averted by minor adjustments. With seriously depleted foreign reserves, failing exports, and an increasingly intractable foreign debt of about \$20 billion, the government had no choice but to focus all of its attention on foreign liquidity.<sup>10</sup>

The crumbling financial stability of Yugoslavia extending from an almost out-of-control debt to foreign banks naturally acted as an impetus compelling drastic domestic structural economic adjustments requiring further external involvement--this time by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF called for a massive macro and microeconomic overhaul of Yugoslavia's economy. This technique, later to be dubbed "shock therapy," generally called for austerity measures intending to stabilize inflation by liberalizing trade and prices accurately reflecting the market.

Furthermore, the government "sought every possible way to cut domestic consumption and squeeze foreign currency and exports out of the economy."<sup>11</sup> In light of these efforts the government discontinued food subsidies, raised gasoline prices and heating fuel as well as transportation costs. Simultaneously, the private sector was forced to streamline its operations resulting in the slashing of jobs deemed too costly for efficient production.

Unemployment skyrocketed as a result. As Susan Woodward stated, "an underclass developed of unemployed, unskilled workers emerged, concentrated in the urban areas. Wage and income restrictions, price increases, and unemployment among young people

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.



and women sent average household incomes plummeting to levels of twenty years before. Savings were rapidly depleted for 80 percent of all households, who found it increasingly difficult to live on their incomes. Official unemployment was at 14 percent by 1984, varying from full employment in Slovenia to 50 percent in Kosovo, 27 percent in Macedonia, and 23 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in large parts of Serbia, including the capital, Belgrade.”<sup>12</sup> By 1984 inflation would rise to 50 percent.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps most importantly was the development of a shrinking middle class. As Woodward states;

The consequence of greatest long-term political significance was the erosion of the substantial middle class, which had been growing since the late 1950's. This solid social middle consisted of the public sector managers, urban professionals, skilled industrial workers, and a portion of private sector shop owners, artisans, and farmers. They were the most likely to benefit from successful reforms, and they could also provide the basis of a moderate political center by cutting across the urban-rural and public-private sector divisions of the economic and political system. Instead, they were being polarized economically and socially by the austere conditions. Sixteen percent were able to sustain or improve their standards; the remaining 84 percent felt their economic fortunes and sense of personal security begin to decline. Even those who could maintain their standard of living feared the future and the prospect of isolation from the global economy.<sup>14</sup>

Reflecting these negative developments mass strikes became a normal occurrence on the landscape. Between 1982 and 1983 strikes had increased by 80 percent.<sup>15</sup> The striking would increase throughout the 1980's and by 1987 there were 1,570 strikes<sup>16</sup>. Clearly, these numbers illustrate the growing discontent with Yugoslavia's poor economic performance and the government's means in curing them through “shock therapy”. Compelled to find other means for income many resorted to the black market.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Interestingly, deteriorating conditions did not ignite any noticeable political dissent among the public, not yet, at least. Instead, people sought to fill their increasing sense of helplessness by more vigorously participating in their respective religions. In the summer of 1981 approximately six to ten thousand people made pilgrimages to Medjugorje in western Herzegovina where it was reported that the Virgin Mary visited some children.<sup>17</sup> Grandiose Mosques also began to spring up across cities in northern Yugoslavia.<sup>18</sup> Parallel developments also indicated an increasing sense of anomie by the Yugoslav peoples.

Communist legitimacy was rapidly decreasing for a number of reasons previously indicated. First, the positioning of Communist elites in key positions within the federal, republican and provincial governments offered little in critical discourse. Second, those in power had little knowledge and/or the initiative bringing about reform. With the deteriorating economy constantly threatening any semblance of stability and disrupting the social fabric, party influence and legitimacy rapidly deteriorated. Tables 2 and 3 reflect this growing ineptitude for the League of Communists. Both tables indicate that the rate of young people not wanting to join the League of Communists increased and the rate of those actually participating in the League dramatically declined from 1974 through 1989, suggesting that the Communist party is no longer attracting the interests of its youth.

The collapsing economy also provided ripe conditions initiating xenophobic attitudes. People frequently blamed their declining financial position on party apparatchiks who were privileged because of their unique access. Similarly, these

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Table 2

Surveyed Young People Not Wishing To Join The League Of Communists  
(In Percent)

Region	1974	1986	1989
Slovenia	32	88	92
Croatia	13	70	75
Vojvodina	4	54	50
Serbia	6	40	42
Macedonia	7	40	42
Bosnia-Hercegovina	5	36	40
Kosovo	4	35	33
Montenegro	8	18	34
Total Yugoslavia	9	50	51

Source: Lenard Cohen. Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics In Transition, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 48.

Table 3

Participation Of Young People In Membership Of The League Of Communists  
(In Percent)

Region	1976	1980	1984	1988	January- June 1989
Slovenia	27.7	26.0	16.6	8.3	7.3
Croatia	24.7	26.2	18.7	7.1	---
Vojvodina	31.2	28.9	20.7	14.0	13.2
Serbia	32.5	33.3	24.8	16.3	15.8
Macedonia	20.9	25.3	20.2	12.1	10.3
Bosnia-Hercegovina	36.0	41.2	33.6	20.2	17.8
Kosovo	35.3	40.7	37.8	35.7	34.0
Montenegro	30.2	25.0	28.6	22.5	22.8
Total League of Communists	30.8	33.1	25.3	16.1	15.8

Source: Lenard Cohen. Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics In Transition, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 48.

perceived privileged positions accorded with a person's particular nationality, which stimulated complaints of favoritism. The result of these complaints was the strengthening of identity.

The growing realization that the economy was in serious need of restructuring was becoming increasingly apparent in the face of a world economy growing more global in nature. The federal government acknowledged the necessity for economic reform and decided that they must have complete control over economic policies if any recovery was going to germinate.

The strategy employed by the federal government was to take control of the financial systems of the republics and provinces. Of course, this control meant that the federal government was proposing policies that would eclipse some degree of republican and provincial autonomy. Previously, the republics and provinces were allowed a considerable degree of freedom in developing their own economies in tune with their unique individual needs. Now, the government wanted to take away the autonomy of the republics and provinces by opening the borders in order to promote the free flow of goods, capital and labor.<sup>19</sup> Also, the federal government sought efforts to consolidate the monetary system.

Clearly, these events transpiring indicate Brass' contention that policies pursued by the federal government can have a significant impact on the relationship between the federal government and its republics and the rise of the nationalism.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

### *Federal Economic Reform and a Political Stalemate*

Whether or not these efforts were the right policies to pursue remains to be debated. Most importantly, however, is that the federal government's aggressive pursuit of macroeconomic policy and desire to flex its muscle over that of the republics naturally initiated a backlash in the mid 1980's. In the minds of the republics and provinces, all past efforts during the 1960's and early seventies to gain control of their own economic destiny were now seriously threatened.

The competing interests of the varying provinces and republics with the federal government naturally spawned a virtual political paralysis. The federal government's desperate attempt and need to alter dramatically the existing economy and take control of its monetary system lay in serious jeopardy as a result. Nothing could be accomplished. The stalemate proved a substantial barrier to reform. Furthermore, the avenue in which legislation occurred depended upon virtual unanimity in order to get anything accomplished. As Susan Woodward stated, "criticism of the government focused on the virtual stalemate in federal decision making due to republican and provincial authority, and the procedure for making federal decisions. Federal policy took a long time to negotiate. All interested parties had to be consulted, and consensus had to be reached."<sup>20</sup>

The loudest opponents to federal reform were primarily those republics standing to lose the most. In other words, it would be the richest of the republics staunchly opposing any structural reform eclipsing their economic autonomy. Thus, Slovenia, who continued to maintain a relatively strong economy, would now have to let the federal government determine their economic destiny. In addition, the poorer republics and

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

provinces felt that they would lose some of their political power if they gave into federalist demands.<sup>21</sup>

Much of the reasoning behind republican and provincial animosity surrounding the federal government's proposals attacked the federal government's own fiscal failures. After all, the anti-federalists argued, current economic woes could be attributed to the federal government's own financial ineptitude that got the country in its financial disarray to begin with. The more wealthy republics such as Slovenia, for example, felt that one of the main problems contributing to Yugoslavia's financial depression was the result of the federal government's policies compelling the redistribution of wealth towards the poorer republics and provinces as well as spending too much money on military expenditures.<sup>22</sup> Instead, anti-federalists argued, the government should pursue policies emphasizing decentralization rather than centralization. Such efforts would allow Slovenia and other more wealthy industrialized republics and provinces the potential to develop independently without the red tape commonly associated with a dominant federal government. Thus, the remedy was not to entrench further federal power but, instead, further decentralize, leaving each republic and province to deal with their own economic policies according to their individual needs.

Efforts by the federal government to consolidate its power and the tensions they sparked were the defining theme characterizing Yugoslavia's decline towards the rise of separate nationalisms and ultimate disintegration. These developments also reflect Brass' contention that the role of the state, the economy and political context play a significant role in providing a ripe context initiating nationalism.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

As we have seen, Yugoslavia's evolution suggests developments in line with Brass' contention that the rise of nationalism is facilitated by several factors. Chief among them was the presence of a rapidly declining economy witnessing vast disparities between the better off republics and those less fortunate. Such disparities helped fuel underlying jealousies and animosities while simultaneously strengthening differences between the provinces and the republics.

The collapsing economy also paved the way for the development of significant social problems. With unemployment climbing and inflation growing out of control, more and more citizens were becoming disenfranchised from the ideals that the Communist party originally espoused. Social anomie gripped the nation, and Communist legitimacy was rapidly deteriorating.

Another component correlating with Brass' thesis is the role that the state played in either facilitating or relieving tensions among the various republics and provinces. Clearly the federal government's objectives for economic reform were seen as contrary to the interests of the republics and provinces. These contrary interests strengthened republican and provincial identity. However, there would need to be one final component pushing Yugoslavia into competing nationalisms --political competition and the rise of political elites.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FROM 1985 TO THE COLLAPSE OF YUGOSLAVIA. THE RISE OF POLITICAL COMPETITION AND NATIONALISM

With the dissolving legitimacy of the federal government and Communist party, new political actors emerged who were willing to fill the vacuum with nationalist aspirations. As Lenard Cohen stated, “as prospects for the continued legitimacy and survival of the League of Communists rapidly diminished, members of each regional communist elite became increasingly focused upon their own survival and only secondarily concerned with cross-regional party unity...”<sup>1</sup> Originally participating within the Communist party, the new, up-and-coming elites were concerned primarily with derailing plans outlined by the federal government. Thus, the new challenges the federal government faced were from those aspiring elites now emerging as fighters for their respective republican and provincial concerns rather than seeking remedies for Yugoslavia’s problems as a whole.

As expected, social conditions simultaneously deteriorated. As Susan Woodward stated,

by 1985-86 the preconditions of a revolutionary situation were apparent. One million people were officially registered as unemployed. The increasing rate of unemployment was above 20m percent in all republics except Slovenia and Croatia. Inflation was at 50 percent a year and climbing. The household savings of approximately 80 percent of the population were depleted. Western currencies such as the deutschmark and the U.S. dollar were given preference in domestic exchange. Allocation decisions increasingly became stark questions of survival. Attempts to alleviate the pressures made inflation worse and undermined economic management. This economic polarization led to social polarization. While most people were

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<sup>1</sup> Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics In Transition* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 50.



preoccupied with making ends meet under the austerity program and the dominant mood was that of localism, personalism, scapegoating against minorities (ethnic and women), and antipolitics, independent political activity and new civic groups were also bubbling up.<sup>2</sup>

The combination of economic disparity and social anomie, coupled with the rise of xenophobic attitudes and the localization of politics, hinted at coming events. The federal government rapidly became a venue for extreme political competition and was no longer in complete control of its destiny. Increasingly, the federal government grew into a competing forum for the allocation of resources, with each group claiming an exclusive right to the direction the state should travel.

This chapter seeks several objectives. First, this chapter demonstrates the conflicting positions each province and republic, particularly Slovenia and Serbia, pursued in response to the federal government's reform efforts at consolidation. Such dynamics illustrate Paul Brass' contention that the state can have a significant influence on whether or not the rise of nationalism is less or more likely to appear in the political landscape. It will also be argued that the result of these competing interests and the position the federal government pursued facilitated a climate conducive for Yugoslavia's eventual collapse. Second, this chapter illustrates the salient role of elite competition as a defining catalyst initiating the rise of nationalist movements and Yugoslavia's final disintegration.

In order to illustrate these dynamics, this chapter identifies several prominent events shaping Yugoslavia's collapse into divisive nationalism and eventual disintegration. For the sake of chronological consistency and desire to point out the most significant events illustrating the role of elite competition as a precipitator to conflict, this chapter consists

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<sup>2</sup> Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 63.

of several sections. The first section considers Slobodan Milosovic's rapid ascent to the presidency of Serbia. Although some analysis considers the biographical background of Milosovic, it is by no means an attempt to suggest psychological factors motivated his behavior. More important, this analysis attempts to exemplify how a competitive elite implements symbols of national identity as a means to consolidate power and achieve specified objectives. Thus, this descriptive account illuminates the salient role elites play in precipitating the rise of nationalism, which is the most critical component of this thesis. Also important in the first section is the identification of Serbia's pursuit of a strong, centralized federal government contrasting Slovenia's decentralizing efforts.

The second section of this chapter analyzes the important developments unfolding in Slovenia. As an economically and politically influential republic, Slovenia's desire to limit the power of the federal government was an explicit antithesis to the position pursued by Serbia. As a result, the conflict emerging between these two influential republics acted as a significant factor contributing to the rise of nationalist politics and eventual disintegration of Yugoslavia.

The third and final section of this chapter examines the eventual rise of nationalism and Yugoslavia's disintegration.

#### *An Examination of the Serbian Strategy: The Meteoric Rise of Milosovic and Nationalism*

As previously indicated, the Serbian movement for constitutional reform sought to consolidate the powers of the federal government rather than seek policies of decentralization. Much of this push for centralization reflected Serbia's distaste for the 1974 constitution, which, in their eyes, eclipsed their political influence over the federal

government's implementation of policies. Fueling Serbian grievances were the tensions developing in the southern province of Kosovo.

Once under the jurisdiction of the Serbs, the 1974 constitution granted Kosovo semi-autonomy. However, minority Serbs living in Kosovo viewed this legislation with condemnation. Comprising approximately 90 percent of the population, the Muslim Albanians clearly had a significant advantage over the Serbs who comprised approximately 10 percent of the population. With the deteriorating socioeconomic and political atmosphere of the 1980's, the region was rapidly turning into a powder keg, which would eventually lead to the first serious pronouncements of Serb nationalism.

A formally articulated vision of Serbian nationalism first appeared in the halls of academia as a number of disenfranchised academics and intellectuals collaborated on a paper known as the Memorandum. It didn't make its first appearance until it was published on September 24, 1986, in the widely popular daily, the *Vecernje Novosti*.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the Memorandum struck a chord with the Serbian people. As Laura Silber and Allan Little stated, "...it was a political bombshell. The country was convulsed."<sup>4</sup>

The Memorandum essentially argued that despite Serbia's efforts fighting off the fascists of WWII and the disproportionate casualties it endured, the Croats and Slovenes have continually repressed the Serb population. Furthermore, all the socio-economic troubles Serbia was experiencing could be attributed to Croatia's and Slovenia's almost conspiratorial behavior against Serbia. The Memorandum also argued that the

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<sup>3</sup> Allan Little and Laura Silber, *Yugoslavia: Death of A Nation* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

predominantly Muslim population of Kosovo threatened Serbian citizens living there and that efforts should be immediately pursued remedying the problem.

Along the same tone, the Memorandum also sounded the alarm regarding the believed imminent danger posed by the Croats in threatening Serbs living in the eastern section of Croatia. As the following excerpt from the Memorandum illustrates, the issue was an intense topic among the Memorandum's chief architects, and reflected growing Serb animosity towards the Croats:

Except during the period of the NDH (the Independent State of Croatia, proclaimed in 1941 by the pro-Nazi Ustase), Serbs in Croatia have never been as endangered as they are today. The resolution of their national status must be a top priority political question. If a solution is not found, the consequences will be damaging on many levels, not only for relations within Croatia but also for all Yugoslavia?<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, a relatively young politician was advancing up the party ranks of Serbia's Communist party. Later branded by many in the West as the "Butcher of the Balkans," Slobodan Milosovic embodied the personification of a politician willing to provoke nationalist emotions in order to consolidate and advance his power.

Son of a Serbian Orthodox clergyman, Milosovic was born in August of 1941 and joined the League of Communists in 1959. In 1962, while he was attending the university, his father committed suicide. Eleven years later his mother would also take her life by her own hand.<sup>6</sup>

Milosovic had always participated in the Communist party's activities throughout his life and assumed a number of important economic and political positions along the way. Between 1966 and 1968, Milosovic was an economic assistant to the mayor of Belgrade.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

<sup>6</sup> Aleska Djilas, "A Profile of Slobodan Milosovic," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer, 1993), 81.

From 1970 to 1978, he was deputy director of Technogas and then became president of the Belgrade bank from 1978 to 1982.<sup>7</sup> In 1984 Milosovic became head of the Communist party in Belgrade through the appointment of his old friend and then current President of the League of Communists of Serbia, Ivan Stambolic.

Milosovic became widely recognized for his resolute appeals highlighting Serbia's economic problems and his strict adherence to the Orthodox Marxist doctrine. He also had a keen sense in deflecting liberal reformist movements and, initially, nationalist movements as well. In January 1986, Milosovic became President of the League of Communists of Serbia after Stambolic became President of Serbia. The Serbian people's perception of Milosovic was that of an energized figure focused on preserving the strong central government embodied by Tito. As Aleska Djilas stated, "he seemed to everyone a staunch party conservative, a kind of younger and more energetic version of Russia's Yegor Ligachev, ready to fight those communists in Yugoslavia who aspired to be Gorbachevs".<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, while the Memorandum that was now circulating among the Serb population found many opponents, if not for its grossly inaccurate accusations but for its potential to ignite nationalist sentiment and exacerbate tensions, Slobodan Milosovic chose to keep quiet and in the background while debate proceeded.<sup>9</sup> The approach was textbook Milosovic who never got involved until the perfect moment presented itself.

However, on April 24, 1987, the prime opportunity opened up for Milosovic to emerge from his cautiously calculated slumber. As minority Serbs living in Kosovo

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<sup>7</sup> Cohen, 51.

<sup>8</sup> Djilas, 83.

<sup>9</sup> Little and Silber, 33.

became increasingly restless and tensions grew in Kosovo, Stambolic sent Milosovic to calm the passions of the Serbs. However, the move by Stambolic proved disastrous. As Allan Little and Laura Silber stated, “it was a careless move which sent in motion a train of events that would cost him his career.”<sup>10</sup>

Word of the Serbian Party Chief’s approaching visit motivated the minority Serbs’ spirits in Kosovo. By the time Milosovic made his visit, the Serbs were in an ecstatic state and confident that Belgrade was going to make changes. The following account by Little and Silber seems to capture the essence of the moment:

... galvanized by the fact that Belgrade was finally paying attention to their plight, thousands of local Serbs pressed forward, trying to shake the Party leader’s hand as he entered the drab House of Culture in Kosovo Polje. Frantic to gain his attention, demonstrators screamed of Albanian oppression. While Milosovic met local Serb representatives, police, fearing violence, used batons to drive the crowd away. The protesters chanted: ‘Murderers’ and ‘We are Tito’s, Tito is ours’.<sup>11</sup>

As a means to quell the passions of the discontented Serb protesters, which numbered in the thousands and were beginning to grow increasingly violent, the local party leadership requested that Milosovic speak to the crowd. Unfortunately, rather than achieving the intended desire of calming the protestors, Milosovic, for the first time, articulated appeals legitimizing their concerns and stressing the necessity for change. The following excerpt from Milosovic’s speech on that day clearly illustrates his departure from an anti-nationalist perspective to a nationalist one:

You should stay here. This is your land. These are your houses. Your meadows and gardens. Your memories. You shouldn’t abandon your land just because it’s difficult to live, because you are pressured by injustice and degradation. It was never part of the Serbian and Montenegrin character to give up in the face of obstacles, to demobilize when it’s time to fight... You should stay here for the sake of your ancestors and descendants. Otherwise your ancestors would be defiled and

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

descendants disappointed. But I don't suggest that you stay, endure, and tolerate a situation you're not satisfied with. On the contrary, you should change it with the rest of the progressive people here, in Serbia and in Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup>

With this speech Milosovic was catapulted to the forefront of Serbian nationalist politics, marking a departure from party etiquette towards nationalist politics. It would only be a matter of time and several opportunistic political maneuverings before Milosovic emerged as the clear representative of the Serbian nationalist movement.

As Milosovic eventually assumed the role of Serbia's presidency he began to shake his orthodox communist convictions in favor of socialism in tune with the world market economy. Clearly, Milosovic realized the current system was highly bureaucratized, inefficient and in need of dramatic reform. Responding to these growing realizations, Milosovic established a commission comprised of a group of experts who would engineer reform proposals.

Popularly known as the "Milosovic Commission," the group of experts led by Milosovic broadly concluded that the direction of the new Serbian economy should focus upon investment in production and the development of innovative enterprises emphasizing new technologies. Also, the commission explored potential policies facilitating the growth of smaller scale enterprises as well as seeking means of increasing foreign investment.<sup>13</sup> However, the process of reform was to be coupled along socialist lines, emphasizing reform of public enterprises rather than initiating and invigorating private enterprise. In this regard Milosovic sought to streamline the public sector, making it more efficient and less bureaucratized.

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen. 56.

At the center of the Commission's concerns lay a federal government apathetic to the requirements of Yugoslavia as a whole. Rather than consolidating a unified economy, the Commission argued, the federal government embodied eight different economies with each pursuing their own policies. Thus, the state should integrate the Yugoslav market in order to transcend the individualized concerns of the eight regions.<sup>14</sup>

Accompanying the Commission's emphasis on economic reform was a reexamination of the political structure as well. On the surface the commission encouraged the formation of a politically pluralist system respecting the right to free speech and freedom of association. The Commission also proposed the reform of the Communist party monopoly on selecting and approving personnel recruitment as well as their monopoly over state institutions.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Slovenia's Asymmetric Aspirations and the Slovene Spring*

Meanwhile, Slovenia was undergoing its own reexamination. Originally, Slovenia's Communist party remained content with preserving the federal government and state of Yugoslavia. However, rather than taking the route proposed by Serbia, Slovenia wanted to maintain a decentralized state. As illustrated in chapter three, Slovenia's emphasis on decentralization does not come as any surprise. As the most industrially and economically powerful region of Yugoslavia, Slovenians were extremely skeptical of abdicating their right to pursue their own economic policy, particularly if that meant increasing financial support for the less developed republics and provinces. Furthermore, Slovenia felt that financing Yugoslavia's National Army (JNA) was a fruitless endeavor

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.



having no or very little legitimacy considering there were no perceived threats from abroad.

The trend towards an independently minded Slovenia only became more pronounced as Serbia and, particularly Milosovic, dramatically increased the amount of nationalist rhetoric injected into the political landscape. Clearly, the efforts at reform in Serbia amounted to a substantial redirection from the decentralized constitution of 1974. The result of Serbian reform efforts was to initiate an atmosphere of skepticism in the eyes of Slovenian elites towards Serbia's efforts at increased centralization and federal superiority at the expense of regional sovereignty

Slovenia's political stance emphasized provincial and republican rights by giving each an equal vote in the Federal decision-making process. In contrast, Serbia pursued a policy which would base the power of each provincial and republican vote on the basis of majority rule, thereby, for all practical matters, eclipsing the sovereignty of the less populated republics and provinces as well as ushering in a real possibility for a tyranny by the majority.

Instead, many Slovenian elites argued that the federation should pursue an asymmetrical route. As Lenard Cohen stated, "the notion of federal asymmetry referred to an arrangement whereby each republic would negotiate its own terms of power sharing and power distribution with the central government in federation."<sup>16</sup> The pursuit of asymmetrical federalism acknowledged the necessity articulated by the Slovenes that a strong federal government was needed in order to harness their collapsing economy and engineer a comprehensive policy for recovery based on consensus. However, as

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

indicated earlier, the Serbian proposal called for federal voting based on majority rule. In Slovenia's judgment this policy would result in Serbia's demographic predominance.<sup>17</sup> One of the staunchest critics of Serbia's suggestions was Slovenia's Communist party leader Milan Kucan. The following statement by Kucan reflects the clear difference between the Slovenian and Serbian camps:

Can the imposition of majority decision making in a multinational community by those who are the most numerous be anything else but the violation of the principle of equality of nations, the negation of its sovereignty and therefore the right to autonomous decision making... We will only live in such a Yugoslavia in which sovereignty is ensured, as the permanent and inalienable right to self-orientation of all the nations... where we will regulate common issues in a federal state according to the principle of agreement.<sup>18</sup>

While political and economic discourse continued at the top, Slovenian nationalism was manifesting itself increasingly among the younger generation. The rise of independently minded youth served to articulate criticisms towards the Yugoslav federation and its undemocratic structure. Also among the ideological dynamics characterizing the disenfranchised youth were increased appeals for the rise of Slovene nationalism. Echoes of the fascist past could also be heard in the background. Meanwhile, Slovenian intellectuals were beginning to engineer their own nationalist aspirations. To a large degree, such nationalist appeals reflected the Serbian memorandum and Serb nationalist rhetoric. The growing criticisms attacking the federal government eventually translated into several critical events finally pushing Slovenia into an all-out nationalist assault against the federal government and particularly the JNA--Yugoslavia's national army.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

Commonly referred to as the Slovene Spring of 1988, the formative event surrounded indictments cast by the Slovenian journalists against the Yugoslav People's Army. In February 1987, Slovenian intellectuals released a memorandum outlining a national program for Slovenia in the journal Nova Revija. The memorandum made several appeals for the revival of Slovenia's culture that was perceived as being eclipsed by the creation of Yugoslavia. Most importantly, however, the memorandum called for the independence of Slovenia and dismemberment of Yugoslavia. Milan Kucan, head of Slovenia's Communist party, offered little indictment of the memorandum and more or less simply dismissed it as an unoriginal rehashing of old ideas. However, as Little and Silber stated, the dismissive reaction by Kucan was a clever political maneuvering preventing him and his Communist Party from stepping on any feet.<sup>19</sup>

The reaction by the Yugoslavia People's Army was an entirely different story. In the minds of the JNA, the nationalist aspirations articulated by the Slovenian intellectuals were a powerful appeal potentially having major implications. It seems as though the JNA had overreacted and may have actually enticed other Slovenians into joining the nationalist bandwagon. Nonetheless, the JNA continually reiterated its adamant disapproval of the material and employed its own rhetorical accusations. As Admiral Mamula, head of the JNA, stated, "they (Slovene intellectuals) negate the national revolution, self-management and non-alignment. They hope to ally with traitors, and use the Catholic Church to seize power."<sup>20</sup> Such rhetorical flourishes only added fuel to the fire of existing tensions and negated the possibility for resolving differences.

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<sup>19</sup> Little and Silber, 49.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

The nationalist memorandum issued by the Slovene intellectuals instigated, what seemed, an almost irreversible panic attack by the army. The memorandum had been perceived as a direct attack against their institution. As a result, the JNA was going to bring to a halt the growing Slovenian criticisms as soon as possible. However, the JNA's task was unsuccessful, and the more they attempted to intervene into the affairs of Slovenia, the more their actions acted as a catalyst igniting Slovenian nationalism. Anti-JNA material began to flourish in response to the JNA's radical and almost insecure response. Mladina, a magazine primarily targeting the youth, charged the JNA with employing undemocratic procedures. Mladina dubbed Mamula the "Merchant of Death" and accused him of living an opulent lifestyle isolated from the needs of the population.<sup>21</sup> This fighting match continued back and forth between the JNA and the Slovenes and grew more intense with each blow. The growing conflict also electrified an already charged atmosphere in Serbia, which began to criticize Kucan and the Slovenian Communist Party for their relaxed, even complicit reaction to Mladina and other Slovene intellectuals who were criticizing the JNA and provoking Slovenian nationalism.

Ensuing was a media war between the independently-minded newspapers of Slovenia and the official voice of the JNA, Narodna Armija. In January 1988, a top-secret document was leaked to Mladina from a military base in Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia. The document revealed a plan outlining the procedure for the implementation of martial law in Slovenia in order to contain any nationalism.<sup>22</sup> Soon after another document was released which was a transcript of the proceedings by the Central Committee in which they discussed concerns over the tensions brewing in Slovenia. The

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

document also disclosed several people who were going to be arrested by the JNA. Finally, the JNA stepped beyond a verbal fighting match and developed plans to apprehend those behind the criticisms of the JNA.<sup>23</sup> On May 13, Mladina published the JNA's intentions that immediately caused a massive uproar among the Slovenes.

Soon after, the JNA apprehended Mladina journalist, Jansa. Immediately, the apprehension aggravated Slovenian opinion. After Jansa, three others were arrested, including the human rights activist, Bavcar. The four men arrested became popularized as the Ljubljana Four and acted as a consolidating force for nationalists and human rights activists alike. As Little and Silber stated, "the arrests were the catalyst which effectively created and organized Slovene opposition movement."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, tensions were exacerbated because the trial was a haphazard endeavor severing the public from the proceedings. Consequently, "as the JNA bulldozed on, the face of Slovene politics changed irreversibly. The leaders shifted towards the dissidents."<sup>25</sup>

#### *Divisive Nationalisms and the Eventual Collapse of Yugoslavia*

Meanwhile Slovenian nationalism was now solidified, growing more intense as Milosovic pandered to and fanned the passions of the Serbs. The following excerpt from Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation captures the atmosphere characterizing Milosovic's march down the road towards Serbian nationalism:

The Slovene spring gave way to the heat of the summer. Throughout Yugoslavia's biggest republic, Serbs turned out by the million for the rallies. They flocked to so-called 'Meetings of Truth' about Kosovo clamoring for Slobodan Milosovic. They resembled religious revivals. The steely Milosovic rode the wave of nationalism, which whipped through Serbia. Having secured absolute control

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

over the Serbian League of Communists, he turned first on the two provinces of Serbia, then on Montenegro, and finally on Yugoslavia itself. The emergence of nationalism was vaunted as the rebirth of dignity.<sup>26</sup>

Wary of Serbia's adamant position highlighting the importance of a one man, one vote concept, Slovenia, in 1989, adopted an amendment to their constitution which protected them from any possibility of Serbia imposing its will without Slovenia's consent. In essence, the provision adopted in 1989 protected Slovenia from federal incursions into their internal affairs because of a federally declared emergency, which would eclipse the sovereignty of Slovenia. Clearly, the adoption of the emergency provisions significantly formalized the disagreements between Slovenia and Serbia.

On November 1989, tensions grew to their highest level between Serbia and Slovenia when Slovenia denied the entrance of Serbs into the eastern region of Ljuljana because they were going to protest. The immediate reaction by the Serbs was the complete severing of all business and government links with Slovenia.

Growing discontent continued in Yugoslavia. As Table 4 indicates, sentiment among the public grew increasingly weary of Yugoslavia as a whole. Taking the place of a pan-Slavic identity was an increased provincial identification threatening Yugoslavian unity. By January 1990, the federal government and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia were in serious trouble as tensions continued brewing. On January 20, 1990, the growing divisive politics of the Communist party became clearly apparent when the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned because of its inability to compromise on an introduction of a multiparty system.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

Table 4 The Personal Attachment of Citizens in Yugoslavia to Different Levels of Territorial Organization, May-June 1990 (in percent)

Ethnic Group	Local	Level of Territorial Affiliation	
		Republican/ Provincial	Yugoslavia
Slovenes	51	66	26
Croats	45	51	48
Macedonians	31	52	68
Moslems	43	50	84
Yugoslavs	25	32	71
Montenegrins	37	47	80
Serbs	36	51	71
Albanians	48	47	49
Hungarians	60	62	79
Others	37	43	58
Total Sample	39	52	62

Source: Lenard Cohen. Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics In TRansition (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press,1995) 173.

By July 2, 1990, Slovenia and Macedonia approved constitutional amendments openly declaring sovereignty within Yugoslavia. On the same day Croatia pursued similar changes clearly identifying the beginning of the end for Yugoslavia. Also, Serbia effectively stripped Kosovo's and Vojvodina's sovereignty while Albanian delegates to the Kosovo Assembly declared their divorce from Serbia's domain. Yugoslavia, for all practical purposes, was now fragmented.

In November and December of 1990, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia won overwhelmingly in open elections in Serbia and Montenegro while losing devastatingly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On February 20, Slovenia confirmed their sovereign aspirations and voted to implement a phased transition towards secession from the federation. Soon afterward Croatia followed suit with formal recognition of its secession by October 8. Similar developments soon occurred in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. By January 15, 1992, the European Community officially recognized the sovereignty of the preceding countries, and Yugoslavia was now "officially" dismantled. Eventually war would sweep across the countryside, taking the lives of thousands of innocent people.

This chapter has provided several important illustrations. First, analysis focused on the continual down-spiraling economy of the 1980's. Also, the decreasing legitimacy of the Communist party became apparent. In addition, an attempt was made to demonstrate the important factions that developed in response to the federal government's efforts to consolidate its power.

Most important were the developments emerging between Slovenian and Serbian elites. Taking a position emphasizing decentralization, Slovenian elites resisted



centralizing efforts proposed by the federal government. Conversely, Serbian elites, particularly the influential President, Slobodan Milosovic, desired a strong, centralized federal government emphasizing republican and provincial voting rights based on majority rule. The schism, which existed between the two countries, developed into an irreversible course leading to the eventual dismemberment of Yugoslavia.

Chapter four also attempted to illustrate the role elites played in both Serbia and Slovenia. Particularly instrumental in setting a nationalist agenda were the drafting of both the Serbian and Slovenian memorandums. These developments, coupled with complicit leadership, initiated the rise of nationalism.

Finally, the overall goal of chapter four was to demonstrate Paul Brass' argument that the rise of nationalism was precipitated through elite competition. Most important, in this case, Serbian and Slovenian elite competition developed in response to three important factors. First, elite competition developed in response to the deteriorating economy. As a result, Serbia and Slovenia responded with their own proposals to remedy the situation. Second, the political legitimacy of the League of Communists opened the door for alternative nationalist appeals. Third, the overall philosophical differences separating Slovenian and Serbian elites regarding the role of the federal government provided an important catalyst in the rise of nationalism and ultimate disintegration of Yugoslavia.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Chapter One provided a survey of the predominating theories employed in the analysis of nationalism. Analysis focused on the varying presumptions of the Marxist and Cultural Pluralist theories regarding the role of the state in precipitating the rise of nationalism. Cultural pluralists maintain that the state is a neutral instrument or arena in which varying ethnic groups or, in the case of Yugoslavia, republics and provinces compete for resources and opportunities equally. Marxists, on the other hand, have asserted that the role of the state is not a neutral, passive actor, brokering and responding to varying interests. Rather, they argue that the state plays an actively biased role in the distribution of resources and policy.

A significant problem associated with the Marxist and cultural pluralist schools of thought is that they are inadequate tools for accurately identifying the main precipitators of conflict. According to political scientist Paul Brass, a considerable problem with these theories is a limited and inaccurate identification of the units of analysis. Marxists, in general, rely too heavily upon such objective classifications as class as well as such normative classifications as class-consciousness. Conversely, the cultural pluralists overemphasize the permanence of groups and treat them as givens rather than recognizing that groups are, in fact, in a continual state of flux.

Chapter One also analyzed modernization theory, relative group worth theory and rational choice theory. Briefly, modernization theory contended that the rise of nationalism could be attributed to the disproportionate distribution of resources between varying ethnic groups as a nation-state modernizes. However, modernization theory fails to account for those instances in which nationalism arose in pre-modern times. Nonetheless, it still provides an important insight into the effect modernization has on populations.

Relative group worth theory attempts to understand the rise of nationalism as a phenomenon addressing the psychological needs of a society. Thus, the presence of nationalism can be attributed to people requiring psychological fulfillment by identifying themselves with a particular group. However, relative group worth theory fails to look at other important variables such as the role of the state or economic factors in facilitating the rise of nationalism.

Next, analysis considered the role of rational choice theory in explaining the rise of nationalism. Rational choice theory asserts that individuals participate in a nationalist movement if the benefits outweigh the costs. Thus, a Slovenian would want to join a separatist movement if they felt that they would derive greater benefits than if they stayed within the Yugoslav federation.

The final objective of Chapter One was to provide an in-depth analysis of Brass' arguments outlined in his book Ethnicity and Nationalism.<sup>1</sup> According to Brass, primary emphasis should be placed upon the actions employed by competing political elites because those actions undertaken are the main precipitators to conflict. Such actions

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<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Theory and Comparison* (Newbury, California: Sage Publications, 1991),

employed by political elites could include, particularly in nation-states characterized as multi-ethnic, appealing to a respective ethnic groups low socioeconomic status, invoking xenophobia and chauvinism and scapegoating other groups in order to advance political interests.

Chapter Two demonstrated the general historical climate from which contemporary Yugoslavia emerged. This analysis began with a brief identification of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Each significantly shaped the boundaries that evolved over the next five hundred years. Next, analysis concerned the emergence of WWI and the first creation of Yugoslavia.

More important, analysis focused on developments during and after WWII. These developments set the pace for Yugoslavia's independence. Under the charismatic leadership of Tito, the Communist party fashioned a socialist society diplomatically maintaining a balance between the West and the East. The result fashioned a comparatively unique socialist experience witnessing one of the world's fastest growing economies. The Communist leadership also attempted to litigate republican and provincial disputes by offering increased political autonomy through the Fourth Constitution as well as redistributing funds to those republics and provinces lagging behind more economically robust republics and provinces. Unfortunately, such efforts did not dissolve tensions between the federal governments and its republics and provinces.

Chapter Three primarily focused on illustrating Yugoslavia's declining economic situation that significantly impacted Yugoslavia's ultimate dissolution by paving the way towards divisive nationalism. Deteriorating economic conditions fall in line with Brass'

contention that in order for the ultimate catalyst of elite competition to precipitate the rise of nationalism there must be a declining economic atmosphere. Thus, Yugoslavia clearly experienced a rapid economic decline. The result created a significant disparity between the republics and provinces. Furthermore, those better-off republics and provinces such as Slovenia were compelled to pay higher taxes to the lesser developed republics and provinces. The growing disparity created tensions between the more economically advanced republics and the federal government and facilitated the reification of republican identity at the expense of pan-Slavism.

Next, Chapter Three argued that the rise in tensions between the federal government and the republics and provinces revealed a political context conducive for the rise of elite competition as outlined by Brass. Similarly, such developments also demonstrated the role of the state in igniting conflict. Clearly, each republic and province had their own agenda on how the federal government should proceed with reform. Emerging as the most important dispute was the conflicting relationship established between Serbia, Slovenia and the federal government. Consequently, ideological differences provided the opportunity for rising political elites to adopt nationalist platforms in order to forward regional objectives.

Chapter Four focused on the period from 1985 to the collapse of Yugoslavia. There were several objectives sought in this chapter. First, the chapter attempted to demonstrate the declining socio-economic conditions. Second, a more in-depth analysis focused on the predominating developments shaping the eventual rise of nationalism. These included an analysis of Milosovic's meteoric rise to the top of the Serbian Communist party and eventually to the position of President of Serbia. The significance

in illustrating Milosovic's rise was to point out his desertion of anti-nationalism and his adoption of nationalism. Also demonstrated was his successful attempt in fanning the passions of the Serbian crowd, which transformed Serb Socialist politics into nationalist politics. Along the same line, the chapter illustrated the increasing schism characterizing Serbia, Slovenia and the Federal government.

Third, Chapter Four attempted to demonstrate Brass' thesis that elites precipitate the rise of nationalism by including both the Serb and Slovenian Memorandums. Forwarded by the academic and intellectual elites, both Memorandums illustrated the role elites played in sparking nationalist politics.

Clearly, the primary focus of this thesis has focused on those dynamics characterizing political developments at the federal and provincial levels. Thus, by illustrating the dynamics accompanying competing elites between the main republics and the federal government of Yugoslavia, the goal was to assess the accuracy of Brass' theory.

Also important was the role of the state as an important catalyst influencing the likelihood for the rise of nationalism. Thus, the policies the state applied towards the varying republics and provinces in Yugoslavia contributed significantly to the rise of nationalist aspirations. For example, Slovenia felt they were unfairly contributing to those republics and provinces less economically developed. On the other hand, Serbia felt that the power of the federal government was being eclipsed by the autonomous aspirations of Kosovo and Slovenia. Despite the reasons behind their concerns, this example broadly illustrates the potential role the state plays in sparking an environment conducive for the rise of nationalism.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, this thesis attempted to illustrate the importance behind Brass' theory. As discussed in chapter one, emphasizing elites as the main precipitator of nationalism stands in stark contrast to those theories embodying primordial arguments arguing that the rise of nationalism is historically rooted. Also, the Marxist school in general failed to identify those components initiating the rise of nationalism. Although making important contributions highlighting the significance of economic factors in stimulating the rise of nationalism, Marxism denied analysis acknowledging the complex dynamics associated with the rise of nationalism. If events were inevitable, for instance, then why even try to prevent similar situations from developing into widespread conflict in other regions of the world? Such arguments seem overtly pessimistic and consume energy that could have otherwise been spent on developing alternative policies facilitating conflict resolution. Most importantly, this analysis has sought to provide an instrument from which to identify the main precipitators of nationalism.

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