London School of Economics and Political Science

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Intra-ethnic competition and inter-ethnic conflict:
Serb elites in Croatia and Bosnia, 1990-1995

Nina Fallentin Caspersen

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During the conflict and war in Croatia and Bosnia, Serb leaders frequently emphasised the need for unity: the need for homogeneity in the face of impending challenges. However, disunity and rivalry prevailed among the Serb leaders and only became more acute as the conflict intensified. This intra-Serb competition has received little attention in the literature on the Yugoslav conflict and competition *within* groups is furthermore under-analysed in the theoretical literature on ethnic conflicts. But intra-ethnic competition significantly affects the positions adopted by ethnic leaders and parties, and an examination of these dynamics is therefore important for the study of ethnic conflicts and wars. Through an in-depth analysis of intra-Serb elite rivalry in Croatia and Bosnia, this thesis explores the impact of intra-ethnic competition. It argues that intra-Serb competition constituted a significant independent dynamic in the Yugoslav conflict and without it one cannot fully understand the escalation of the conflict, the outbreak of war and the continuous rejection of peace settlements. The Serbian regime played a significant role through the supply of resources, but the thesis will find that Slobodan Milošević was not always able to control the local Serb leaders. The victory of hardliners was the prevalent, but not the only, dynamic in the intra-Serb competition. Hardline dominance was generally contingent on the control of economic and coercive resources, and not based on appeals to popular sentiments; it was not about elites successfully 'playing the ethnic card'. Based on these findings a preliminary theory of the impact of intra-ethnic competition in inter-ethnic conflict will be suggested. As a corrective to existing theorising, it will argue that intra-ethnic competition does not necessarily lead to radicalisation, not even in a situation of war and polarisation. Popular support is, moreover, not the only resource of importance for the competing elites and radicalisation need not be driven by popular demands.

Part III: Conclusion

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List of acronyms

DPB: Democratic Patriotic Bloc (Demokratski patriotski blok)

DS: Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka)

DSS: Democratic Alliance of Socialists (Demokratski socijalistički savez)

DSS: Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska stranka Srbije)

FRY: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

HDZ: Croatian Democratic Community (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica)

HSP: Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska stranka prava)

HVO: Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko vijeće odbrane)

ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

JNA: Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslovenska narodna armija)

JSDS: Yugoslav Independent Democratic Party (Jugoslavenska samostalna demokratska stranka)

JUL: Yugoslav United Left (Jugoslovenska ujedinjena levica)

LS: Liberal Party (Liberalna stranka)

NDH: Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna država Hrvatska)

RS: Serb Republic (Republika Srpska)

RSK: Republic of Serb Krajina (Republika Srpska Krajina)

SAO: Serb Autonomous Region (Srpska autonomna oblast)

SDA: Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije)

SDP: Social Democratic Party (Socijaldemokratska partija), earlier SKH-SDP/SK-SDP

SDF: Serb Democratic Forum (Srpski demokratski forum)

SDS: Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka)

SDSS: Independent Democratic Serb Party (Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka)

SFOR: Stabilisation Force, in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SGV: Serb Civic Council (Srpsko građansko vijeće)

SK-SDP: League of Communists – Party for Democratic Change (Savez komunista – Stranka demokratske promjene)

SKH-SDP: League of Communists of Croatia – Party for Democratic Changes (Savez komunista Hrvatske – Stranka demokratskih promjena)

SK-PZJ: League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia (Savez komunista – Pokret za Jugoslaviju)

SNS: Serb National Party (Srpska narodna stranka)

SNS: Serb National Alliance (Srpski narodni savez)

SNSD: Serb Independent Social Democrats (Srpski nezavisni socijaldemokrati)

SNV: Serb National Council (Srpko nacionalno vijeće)

SPO: Serbian Renewal Movement (Srpski pokret obnove)

SPRS: Socialist Party of Republika Srpska (Socijalistička partija Republike Srpske)

SPS: Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička partija Srbije)

SPS: Serb Party of Socialists (Srpska partija socijalista)

SRS: Serb Radical Party (Srpska radikalna stranka)

SRSJ: League of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia (Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije)

SSS: Independent Serb Party (Samostalna srpska stranka)

'Only unity saves the Serbs' is the famous call for unity in the Serb nationalist doctrine.[1] But even though this doctrine was ideologically adhered to by most of the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia, disunity was, in the period 1990-95, the dominant characteristic of Serb politics: divisions between leaders, between competing Serb parties and eventually also between leaders in the Serb statelets and in Belgrade. The call for unity is not only found in Serb nationalist discourse, but is an integral part of nationalist ideology: the claim to homogeneity, the claim that the nation is, or should be, a unitary actor with a single goal. However, the reality in situations of national and ethnic conflicts is often contrary to such claims: it is not a question of unitary nations in a conflict solely spurred by conflicting group needs and interests. As Milton J. Esman argues, "*Factional conflict is inherent in ethnic politics*".[2] Intra-ethnic elite rivalry should be expected and this not only contradicts the nationalist claim to homogeneity and unity, but also affects the political positions adopted by the leaders and thereby the development of the conflict. Without the recognition of such divisions there is no understanding of more moderate voices, of hardliners breathing down the neck of incumbent leaders, of processes of outbidding. Intra-Serb rivalry was pervasive in both Croatia and Bosnia and this significantly affected the positions adopted by the victorious Serb leaders and parties: moderates were marginalised and radicalisation predominated. This intra-Serb competition, constituted an important dynamic in the Yugoslav conflict, but it has, nevertheless, been afforded little attention in existing literature.

The same lack of attention is characteristic of the theoretical literature on ethnic conflicts: while intra-ethnic elite competition may be recognised, it is very rarely made the object of analysis and the effect of divisions *within* groups on the relations *between* groups is genuinely under-analysed. The decisive role of elites in national and ethnic conflicts has on the other hand long been acknowledged: they are the *sine qua non* of conflict regulation and will, furthermore, often have had more than a little to do with causing the conflict in the first place. But, however powerful these elites may be, they will rarely be monoliths: competition is the norm and this can either emanate from within the leader's own ranks or from competing political parties and

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[1] "*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*": the so-called 'ocila' can be traced to St Sava, who in the 12th Century, called for Serb unity in an independent Orthodox Church.

[2] Esman, Milton J., 1994, *Ethnic Politics*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 248.

movements. Such competition, or even the anticipation of its potential emergence, will significantly affect the positions in the conflict that a leader is willing and able to take. The dynamics of internal competition, therefore, ought to be an integral part of the study of ethnic conflict but, in reality, very little theorising exists. One theoretical assumption is, nevertheless, often adhered to: intra-ethnic competition will lead to a radicalisation of the dominant position due to processes of outbidding based on elite appeals to mass extremism. But this assumption requires further analysis: how will leaders react to intra-ethnic challenges? Are popular attitudes decisive in intra-ethnic competition?

This thesis, therefore, undertakes an in-depth analysis of intra-Serb competition in Croatia and Bosnia with a view to building a theory in this relatively undeveloped area of ethnic conflict studies. Intra-ethnic competition influences what strategies are adopted and the political position that emerges victorious; and the purpose of this thesis is to analyse these dynamics of competition and its effect on the positions adopted by the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia. I am not primarily interested in *why* elites choose a certain position but will analyse *how* the political positions adopted by the Serb leaders were affected by intra-ethnic rivalry, including the effect of the increasingly strenuous relations between the local Serb leaders and the Serbian President, Slobodan Milošević. This thesis, moreover, asks how the more moderate forces were marginalised and why the hardliners proved victorious. The empirical findings will, to some extent, depart from existing theoretical assumptions of outbidding and the analysis will be used to suggest a new way of theorising about intra-ethnic competition.

There already exists a vast literature on the causes of the Yugoslav disintegration but the aim of this thesis is not to provide an alternative explanation of its fundamental causes. Four main explanations for the disintegration can be identified: the 'ancient hatred' explanation; the 'national ideologies' explanation; the structural explanation; and the 'political elites' explanation. Due to its focus on intra-ethnic divisions and the crucial role ascribed to elites, the analysis is clearly at odds with the 'ancient hatreds' explanation, which is anyway almost uniformly rejected in the academic literature. The framework is, however, not incompatible with the three other explanations; although the findings will depart from explanations focusing on elites

mobilising antagonised populations by playing the 'ethnic card'. The analysis takes a later starting point than these explanations, a situation that is already conflictual, and analyses one aspect of the disintegration: the intra-Serb elite competition in Croatia and Bosnia. This represents an underdeveloped but important aspect of the Yugoslav disintegration that should be included in order to fully understand the development of the conflict, the outbreak of war and the persistent rejection of peace settlements. The changing relations between Milošević and the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia are frequently cited in the literature and conflicts among the local Serb leaders are also mentioned, but mostly in passing. Actual analysis of the effect of intra-Serb rivalry and of the variables influencing it is decidedly lacking. The aim of this thesis is therefore to fill this important gap in the literature: to analyse the extent of Serb disunity and its effect on the positions adopted by the Serb leaders; their acceptance or rejection of compromise solutions and the use of peaceful or violent means. It will also critically assess the widely held assumption that Milošević was always able to control the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia.

In addition to the empirical goal of analysing the effect of intra-Serb rivalry in the Yugoslav conflict, an auxiliary purpose is theory-building or, in the words of Arend Lijphart, to "*develop theoretical generalizations in areas where no theory exists yet*".[3] Presently no theory exists on the variables that affect the impact of intra-ethnic competition: when will it lead to radicalisation? When are popular attitudes decisive? Based on the empirical analysis, a preliminary theory of these dynamics will therefore be suggested. A comparative approach is well-suited for this purpose since by comparing, both within and between cases, the effect of the differing variables can be analysed: it allows for greater variance. A comparative study can, furthermore, yield initial clues about the generalisability of conclusions, which a single-case study cannot.[4] The two cases were republics in the same state and they can, therefore, be seen as 'comparable cases' that are similar on a large number of variables but nevertheless differ on variables hypothesised to be of importance. Both conflicts were conflicts over statehood, there was a sizeable Serb minority in the republics,

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[3] Lijphart, Arend, 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method". *American Political Science Review* LXV(3): 682-693. p. 692.
[4] Eckstein, Harry, 1975. "Case Study and Theory in Political Science". In: Fred I. Greenstein & Nelson W. Polsby (eds.). *Handbook of Political Science vol. 7*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. p. 107.

Belgrade played a significant role and the dominant Serb party had the same name and similar policies. However, the degree of ethnification of the party systems differed in the pre-war period; the organisations of the main parties were not equally strong; there was variation in the institutional framework; the link between political and (para)military elites was not of equal strength; kin-state involvement had different degrees and forms; and the relative position vis-à-vis the other ethnic group(s) differed. The resulting 'most similar cases' design is suitable for theory development in an area where little theorising presently exists but it is important to note that the generalisability of the findings is limited due to the low number of cases and their many similarities. The dynamics of intra-ethnic competition will in particular be affected by the transitional context and by the highly unstable institutional framework that were common to both cases. Multiparty elections were held before the war but democratic credentials became increasingly problematic and transition ultimately failed with the outbreak of war. During the war the Serb statelets, Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina, were characterised by authoritarian regimes, but another transition was attempted following the end of the war; this time in the context of still ethnicised politics. This context of transition and state collapse results in different dynamics of intra-ethnic competition than in a more stable political context and the effect of this contextual variable will, therefore, be afforded particular importance in the analysis.

Specifically, the following questions will be addressed:

- *How does intra-ethnic elite competition affect the dominant elite position in a conflict?*
- *What influences whether intra-ethnic competition fosters centripetal or centrifugal dynamics?*
- *Is there a difference between inter- and intra-party competition?*
- *To whom do the elites direct their competition? Whose support is crucial?*
- *What effect does ethnification have on political competition?*
- *What impact will a transitional situation have on these dynamics?*
- *How important is the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders?*

This thesis analyses intra-Serb competition in different phases of the conflict and this also includes analysis of a situation in which political competition was not yet limited to an ethnic cleavage and dominated by ethnic parties. The analysis focuses on the effect of ethnification as well as on the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition once politics has become ethnicised. The *dependent* variable is the position of the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia, i.e. the dominant elite position within an ethnic community: is the leader or the dominant party willing to accept inter-ethnic accommodation and compromise? Or do they insist on maximalist demands and violent strategies? The *independent* variable, and the main focus, is intra-ethnic elite competition: rivalry between Serb parties and leaders over power and policies. When analysing the intra-Serb elite competition, three audiences must be included. These audiences are significant in all phases of the conflict, although their relative importance varied significantly. Their significance stems from the resources they supplied the rivalling elites with: resources that were needed to emerge victorious from the competition, such as economic and coercive resources. Some of these resources can also be regarded as goals, in particular the economic resources, but their primary function is as *means* in the competition. The first audience is found within the party/movement or linked organisations and resources include party membership, party structures, financial resources, media access and control of the military. Secondly, what will be termed the kin-state should be considered. Belgrade exerted considerable influence over Serb politics and it is even often argued that the influence was to such an extent that local Serb leaders should not be regarded as independent actors. Intra-ethnic competition differs from conventional political competition since claims are made on behalf of the ethnic group and the kin-state leader is consequently afforded at least symbolic importance and can furthermore supply valuable resources. Finally, the general population is an important audience to the competition and popular support can prove a powerful resource for competing elites. In existing theories, outbidding is about "*mass responsiveness to playing the ethnic card*",[5] but the general population is not the only audience of importance for the rivalling elites. The relative importance of these three audiences is expected to vary in different phases of the conflict and this will *inter alia* affect the significance

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[5] Sisk, Timothy, 1996. *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts.* Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace. p. 17.

of the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders: does the politically relevant audience have to be convinced that the nation is under threat?

As a significant addition to existing literature on the Yugoslav disintegration, the empirical analysis will point to the very high level of Serb disunity throughout the conflict and war. This disunity, at times, included the inability of Milošević to control the local Serb leaders. It will be concluded that the dominance of hardline Serb forces, which proved so important in the development of the conflict and the outbreak of war, was *not* based on the overwhelming power of ethnicity; it was not based on elites successfully playing the ethnic card. Resources other than popular support proved crucial and the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition were largely decided by control of coercive resources. The theory of outbidding holds that radicalisation is the preferred response to intra-ethnic challenges but the analysis will find that radicalisation or defeat were not the only options available to challenged leaders: intra-ethnic competition can also have no effect on the dominant elite position or can even lead to relative moderation. Furthermore, the effect of the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders will be found to vary considerably in different phases of the conflict and the intra-Serb competition was never only an epiphenomenon of inter-ethnic relations. Finally, it will be argued that the dominance of the ethnic cleavage was the result of a political struggle, not an almost automatic outcome resulting from a largely voter-driven process. It was not inevitable, but depended, in particular, on the distribution of resources between ethnic and non-ethnic parties. The empirical analysis will, therefore, demonstrate the importance of intra-Serb competition for the development of the Yugoslav conflict and its findings will question or add to existing theorising in the field, in particular the widely held assumption of outbidding based on elites playing the ethnic card.

Before embarking on the empirical analysis, a theoretical framework for the analysis will be developed. Due to the lack of theorising on the topic, the thesis is primarily inductive but a theoretical framework is nevertheless necessary: firstly, to define and relate concepts and, secondly, to identify variables that are likely to affect the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition. In Chapter 1, important concepts will be defined and existing theorising on intra-ethnic elite competition will be briefly reviewed and discussed. This forms the basis for the development of a framework

for the subsequent analysis. The empirical analysis begins in Chapter 2 with a brief overview of the conflict in the two cases, a discussion of the literature on the Yugoslav disintegration and an analysis of background events and factors. The main empirical analysis in Chapters 3-7 is structured according to the different phases of the conflict and each phase is analysed in terms of the different audiences to which the competing parties and leaders addressed their appeals: party/movement forces, kin-state leaders and the general population. For each phase the impact of relations *between* groups, the inter-ethnic interplay, is also analysed. Chapter 3 and 4 analyse and compare intra-Serb competition in pre-war Croatia and Bosnia. Chapter 5 and 6 cover the wartime period, while Chapter 7 tracks post-war developments in both cases and concludes on the findings from the previous chapters. Chapter 8 summarises the conclusions and suggests a preliminary theory of the impact of intra-ethnic elite competition in inter-ethnic conflicts.

Part I: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1
Ethnic Elites and Intra-Ethnic Competition

The importance of elites in the Yugoslav conflict and war is widely acknowledged, and political leaders such as Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman and Alija Izetbegović were often portrayed in the media as synonymous with the people that they vowed to represent. The underlying media assumption of homogenous, monolithic communities was a convenient myth rather than reality, but the great significance of elites nevertheless remains and it is generally accepted in the academic literature on the Yugoslav disintegration.[1] In the theoretical literature the crucial role of elites in conflict regulation is likewise emphasised and there is also increasing evidence of elite initiated conflicts.[2] But even though they are crucial actors in situations of conflicts, these leaders are rarely unconstrained: they will more often than not find themselves constrained by competing elites or by the fear that such rivals will emerge. Serb leaders were, in both Croatia and Bosnia, constrained by competition from oppositional elites, who often perceived radicalisation as a fast-track to power, and this consequently limited the positions that the leaders could take without jeopardising their hold on power. In order to study the development of the Yugoslav conflict, and inter-ethnic conflicts in general, one therefore needs to analyse these dynamics of intra-ethnic competition.

The framework for the empirical analysis of intra-Serb competition in Croatia and Bosnia will have a fairly open and general character: it will be structured around variables hypothesised to be of importance but the more substantive conclusions will be arrived at inductively. Due to lack of theorising on intra-ethnic elite competition in ethnic conflicts, this framework will be developed using inputs from a variety of different theories such as theories of party competition, democratic transition and conflict regulation. By identifying dimensions of analysis and hypothesised variables

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[1] See e.g. Andjelić, Neven, 2003. *Bosnia-Herzegovina: the end of a legacy.* London: Frank Cass. p. 27.

[2] Reilly, Benjamin, 2001. *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 177.

of importance in the theoretical discussion, the aim is to overcome Duverger's vicious cycle: the impasse between theory and practice and the difficulty of data collection without the guidance of a suitable theory.[3] After outlining and discussing the theoretical framework, its application in the empirical analysis will be discussed. Firstly, this chapter will however address some preliminary issues: what is meant by elites; how is intra-ethnic elite competition addressed in existing theories; which overall dimensions of analysis should be included in the framework?

1.1 Definitions

By now I have already entered into a minefield of contentious concepts such as 'ethnic' and 'elites' and before proceeding any further, I should make my usage clear.

Ethnic: In my usage the term 'ethnic' does not signify anything inherent or permanent. What is decisive are the labels used, the way in which the conflict is legitimised. For example, if the dominant discourse is one of a conflict between Croats and Serbs, then I will characterise it as an ethnic conflict regardless of whether its actual causes are found elsewhere and/or it lacks majority backing.[4] Especially in early phases of a conflict, a great degree of fluidity in ethnic identities is to be expected, but as conflicts intensify there is a tendency for ethnicity to become reified: its proponents seek to make it static and rigid, thereby lending it a homogenising quality that it did not possess to being with. What is 'ethnic' and, therefore, what is 'intra-ethnic' should not be regarded as static: it is likely to change with the course of the conflict and may very well reflect the interests of sub-groups within the delineated ethnic groups.

Ethnification: When politics is ethnicised, the dominant cleavage in the political competition is the national or ethnic cleavage and this takes precedence over all other cleavages. For example, a process of ethnification had taken place in the first Bosnian multiparty elections in November 1990 and the dominant cleavage was an

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[3] Biezen, Ingrid van, 2003. *Political Parties in New Democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. p. 6.
[4] In the Yugoslav context, the most appropriate term to use would be 'national' rather than 'ethnic', but this presents some linguistic problems when referring to dynamics within and between the national communities: intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic is less open to misunderstandings than intra-national or especially inter-national.

ethnic cleavage, whereas the Croatian elections six months earlier were primarily fought on the issue of Yugoslavia's future.

Intra-ethnic elite competition is defined as elite competition over dominance within an ethnic group. The boundaries of this competition are not static and it encompasses competition both within and between political parties/movements, as well as competition with non-ethnic parties over the definition of politics. Intra-ethnic competition does not necessarily differ from 'conventional' political competition in terms of its goals: competition over power, status and policies. However, one of the issues concerned is the claim to authenticity: the claim to being the legitimate representative of the ethnic group. The broader term *intra-ethnic dynamics* refers to both relations between elites as well as elite-mass linkages.

Dominant elite position in ethnic conflicts: By dominant elite position is meant the position adopted by the leader of a community or the strongest party, i.e. the winner of the intra-ethnic elite competition. This position should be seen as the standpoint taken on the ethnic conflict: are they willing to accept inter-ethnic accommodation which entails some form of compromise? Or do they insist on pursuing maximalist goals using all possible means? In both cases a process of radicalisation took place: initially the dominant Serb leaders adopted a relatively moderate position and were willing to accept compromises, whereas the wartime, radical leaders insisted on joining the territory under their control with Serbia and were willing to use military means to achieve that goal.

Who are the elites?

The actors of importance in the intra-ethnic competition are characterised as *elites* and the elites of primary interest for my focus are political elites. The concept used is based on influence on the policy process: the elites have significant influence over policies directly affecting the development of the conflict. Non-incumbent elites are encompassed insofar as they constitute a threat to the current leaders or possibly a potential threat in case of a significant change in position. The elites most important to ethnic conflicts are found in the political and possibly the military realm. National and ethnic conflicts are primarily cast in terms of political rather than economic goals: which state is the territory to be part of? How do we protect our identity? This does *not* mean that economic interests will not influence the conflict but it does mean that

the conflict will primarily be fought in the political or military arena. The cases in this analysis are both offspring of a communist system which was characterised by the dominance of politics over all other spheres of social life. An analysis of major *political* actors is therefore necessary in order to understand the direction of societal developments.[5] Political elites are in a position to take authoritative decisions regarding peace and war: will war be declared; will a peace settlement be accepted? It may, however, also be necessary to include actors exerting their influence from behind the scenes: people who have significant influence on political outcomes without being in formal positions of power. Moreover, despite the predominance of politics, the army in the former Yugoslavia was accustomed to relative independence from civilian leaders[6]. Civilian leaders may lack control of military leaders who can consequently act as effective veto holders when it comes to issues of peace and war. As we will see in the empirical analysis, the rivalling elites were furthermore highly dependent on coercive resources and their links with military and paramilitary leaders were, therefore, crucial for the outcome of the intra-Serb competition. Civilian control over military and paramilitary leaders should be regarded as a variable, especially following the collapse of the state and the outbreak of war.

This definition with its focus on political power does not mean that the broader conception of elites, which also focuses on societal position, is without relevance.[7] Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia were 'new elites' who lacked the societal position of the 'old elite' which can lead to greater insecurity and different political behaviour than with elites who are not only elites in the narrower sense.[8] Leaders coming to power on the back of nationalism will, furthermore, likely have different linkages with the general population than elites with different bases of power.[9]

An additional group of actors that can be termed *sub-elites* should also be considered since their support is often crucial for a leader's hold on power. Such actors include

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[5] Malešević, Siniša, 2000. "Ethnicity and Federalism in Communist Yugoslavia and Its Successor States". In Yash Ghai (ed) *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-ethnic States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 149.

[6] Gow, James, 2003. *The Serbian project and its adversaries: a strategy of war crimes*. London: Hurst. p. 53.

[7] E.g. the elite concept used by classical elite theorists such as Vilfredo Pareto.

[8] Thanks to Eric Gordy for making this point.

[9] Knight, Alan, 1998. "Historical and Theoretical Considerations". In Mattei Dogan & John Highley (eds.) *Elites, Crises and the Origins of Regimes*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 40.

party officials and higher-ranking military officials: actors who are not leaders but who form part of an audience to which the competing elites must appeal. As Timothy Sisk argues, these actors can be of great importance in conflict development,[10] they affect the positions that the leaders are willing and able to take.

1.2 Literature on intra-ethnic competition and ethnic conflict

The position adopted by ethnic leaders is crucial for the success of conflict regulation, but conflict regulation theories usually afford little analysis to the impact of intra-ethnic competition, beyond some general assumptions. This is especially the case in one of the most influential theories: Lijphart's consociational democracy. The consociational approach argues that given elite willingness to co-operate in a power-sharing government, mass antagonisms and polarisation can be overcome and stability can be fostered.[11] Consociational theorists therefore assume that elites are driven by motivations that differ from those of their more radically inclined mass publics. [12] However, despite the importance afforded to elite motivations, the consociational theory lacks a theory of these motivations. And not only that: it tends to assume that leaders are entirely voluntaristic actors, unconstrained by competing elites or by the general population. There is a working assumption of monolithic representation and deferential masses, and the theory therefore overestimates the latitude enjoyed by leaders in situations of ethnic conflict.[13] In Donald Horowitz's words: "*Compromisers can readily be replaced by extremists on their flanks*".[14]

Other theorists acknowledge the importance of intra-ethnic elite competition and regard such competition rather than the ethnification of politics as the main barrier to moderation: if the elites were monolithic within their own ethnic groups, then an ethnic party system need not be debilitating for the prospect of conflict regulation. As Paul Mitchell argues: "*ethnically exclusive but stable party segments could be the*

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[10] Sisk, 1996: 84.

[11] E.g. Lijphart, Arend, 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

[12] Tsebelis, George, 1990. *Nested Games: Rational choice in comparative politics*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press. p. 162.

[13] Horowitz, Donald, 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. p. 574. Barry, Brian, 1975. "Review article: Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy". *British Journal of Political Science* 5(4): 477-505. p. 500.

[14] Horowitz, Donald, 1997. "Self-determination: politics, philosophy, and law". In Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka (eds.) *Ethnicity and Group Rights*. New York, NY: New York University Press. p. 439.

building blocks for a negotiated resolution of conflict.[15] Sisk similarly asserts: *"cohesive and confident ethnic groups - with clearly legitimate and broadly supported leadership - can deliver at the bargaining table".*[16] But monolithic representation is not the norm in situations of ethnic conflict: leaders will usually face intra-ethnic competition or at least be aware that such competition may emerge.[17] Horowitz therefore argues: *"a principal limitation on interethnic co-operation is the configuration of intraethnic competition, both present and anticipated"* and leaders therefore have to be concerned with both political competition and mass sentiments.[18]

The most commonly held view is that this intra-ethnic elite competition will lead to radicalisation and that it will therefore render conflict regulation profoundly difficult.[19] The proponents of this view contend that in an ethnic party system, the most effective political strategy will be to adopt extreme positions that play into mass antagonisms.[20] Leaders willing to compromise will face outbidding by more extreme rivals and therefore not have the necessary leeway: they will either have to radicalise or face defeat. The emphasis is thus on the destabilising aspects of intra-ethnic competition, and Mitchell argues that the more intra-segmental party competition, the less likely is the ability to co-operate inter-segmentally.[21] This argument is also often found in empirical literature. For example, James Fearon and David Laitin in their review of Gerard Prunier's *The Rwanda Crisis* assert, *"It is thus hard to imagine a coherent account of the genocide and the fragility of all peace accords*

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[15] Mitchell, Paul, 1995. "Competition in an ethnic dual party system". *Ethnic and Racial* Studies 18(4): 773-796. p. 776.

[16] Sisk, 1996: 16.

[17] See e.g. Esman, Milton, 2000. "Ethnic Pluralism: Strategies for Conflict Management". Paper presented at the conference, "Facing Ethnic Conflicts", Center for Development Research, Bonn, 14-16 December; Horowitz, 1985: 343, 574-9.

[18] Horowitz, 1985: 574. Horowitz, Donald, 2000. "Some Realism about Peacemaking". Paper presented at the conference, "Facing Ethnic Conflicts", Center for Development Research, Bonn, 14-16 December. p. 6.

[19] See e.g. Rabushka, Alvin; Shepsle, Kenneth, 1972. *Politics in Plural Societies; A Theory of Democratic Instability.* Columbus, OH: Merrill. Pappalardo, Adriano, 1981. "'The Conditions for Consociational Democracy: A Logical and Empirical Critique". *European Journal of Political Research* 9(4): 365-390. p. 369-70. O'Leary, Brendan, 1989. "The Limits to Coercive Consociationalism in Northern Ireland". *Political Studies* 18(4): 562-588. p. 575, 579. Horowitz, 1985: 359. Mitchell, 1995: 779.

[20] Horowitz, 1985: 331, 346. Reilly, 2001: 9-10. Sisk, 1996: 17. Mitchell, 1995: 777.

[21] Mitchell, 1995: 779.

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that does not analyse how the divide between moderate and extremist ethnic leaders drove both into violent actions against the ethnic other".[22]

However, other consequences of intra-ethnic competition are sometimes acknowledged. Sisk argues that strong intra-ethnic splits can actually facilitate inter-ethnic accommodation since it fosters incentives for cross-ethnic alliances.[23] Horowitz, similarly, asserts that intra-ethnic competition can both lead to radicalisation and to cross-ethnic alliances.[24] Intra-ethnic divisions are, furthermore, crucial in his prescription of the Alternative Vote system for conflict regulation.[25] Horowitz's theory implicitly relies on the existence of cross-cutting cleavages and he, like Seymour M. Lipset, emphasises their moderating influences since they create the basis for cross-ethnic interests and alliances. In the theory of cross-cutting cleavages, the moderating character stems from the mediating effect cross-cutting cleavages have on divisions between groups.[26] However, the existence of cross-cutting cleavages also results in divisions and likely competition *within* the groups. Intra-ethnic competition is two-sided and given the prevalence of such competition in ethnic conflicts, it is an important task to analyse its dynamics. Such systematic analysis of intra-ethnic competition is presently lacking and it is the objective of this thesis to provide it.[27]

Based on the dominant theoretical assumption of outbidding, one would expect that the intra-Serb competition in the two cases led to a radicalisation of the Serb position and that this radicalisation, and hence hardline dominance, was founded on appeals to mass antagonisms. But the argument for outbidding rests on a rather simplified view of political competition and depends on the overwhelming power of ethnicity: intra-ethnic competition is determined by appeals to extreme popular sentiments and

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[22] Fearon, James D.: Laitin, David, D., 2000. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity". *International Organization* 54(4): 845-877. p. 866

[23] Sisk, 1996: 16.

[24] Horowitz, 1985: 359-60. Horowitz, Donald, 1990. "Ethnic Conflict Management for Policy-Makers". In Joseph V. Montville (ed.) *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*. Toronto: Lexington. p. 122.

[25] See e.g. Horowitz, Donald, 1991. *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 5.

[26] See e.g. Lipset, Seymour M. 1960. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. p. 88-9.

[27] As Esman argues the implications of intra-ethnic divisions "*have not been examined sufficiently or systematically in the literature on ethnic politics*". Esman, 1994: 20.

the only direction of such competition is therefore radicalisation. According to Chaim Kaufmann, ethnic leaders are unlikely to be receptive to compromise under conditions of violence and hyper-nationalist mobilisation, and even if they were, they cannot act without being discredited and replaced by hardline rivals.[28] This argument, however, raises the question of what will happen if ethnification is not dominant and/or if the conflict is not violent, such as in the pre-war period in the two cases. The approach, moreover, regards the mass population as the only audience to intra-ethnic elite competition and popular support as the only resource of importance.

Part of the strategy for political elites focuses on authenticity – it is a struggle over what defines a real Serb, a real Croat etc. – and this, by implication, determines who has the right to speak for the ethnic group.[29] This struggle involves issue of representativeness, i.e. who has the support of the community, but it also involves a struggle over political positions: which interpretation is the 'true' representation of the interests of the ethnic group? Hence, not only effectiveness in appeals to the general population matters in the competition. The general population may not even be the most important audience when it comes to securing and maintaining power since resources other than popular support can be more effective and, furthermore, readily available. The Serbian regime was, in both Bosnia and Croatia, a very significant additional audience to the intra-Serb competition and Belgrade provided the rivalling elites with, especially, economic and military resources. These elites, furthermore, had access to resources emanating from within their own party or movement and the party/movement therefore constituted another important audience. In the conflict literature, there is increasing emphasis on resources when explaining the outbreak of violent conflict; Fearon and Laitin, for example, stress the importance of *opportunities* for insurgency and argue that state collapse is an important factor in the outbreak of war.[30] Their analysis is, however, mostly focused on the distribution of resources between different groups, in particular the state and insurgents, whereas this analysis mainly focuses on the distribution of resources *within* ethnic groups: the relative power of moderates and extremists. Resources used

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[28] Kaufmann, Chaim,1996. "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Wars". *International Security* 20(4): 136-75. p. 156.

[29] Gagnon Jr., V.P. 1995. "Ethnic conflict as an intra-group phenomenon: A preliminary framework." *Revija za sociologiju* 26(1-2): 81-90. p. 88.

[30] Fearon, James D.; Laitin, David D., 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War". *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75-90.

in such rivalry can also be regarded as goals in themselves, as argued in the literature that emphasises the importance of 'greed' in ethnic conflicts.[31] But the focus of this analysis will be on resources used as *means*; it is not primarily concerned with elite motivation but rather with the dynamics of their competition and its outcome.

Thus, the different audiences to which the leaders owe their power should be included in an analysis and they will consequently form the basis of the theoretical framework. These audiences provided the competing Serb elites with both political and non-political resources but the effectiveness and availability of these resources varied in different phases of the conflict and were in particular influenced by the outbreak of violence. In addition to the three audiences – party/movement forces, kin-state leaders and the general population – the intra-Serb competition was, therefore, also affected by the conflict situation as well as by the position of leaders from the other ethnic group(s). The final part of the theoretical framework will address this inter-ethnic interplay.

1.3 Theoretical framework:
Intra-ethnic competition and inter-ethnic conflict

The purpose of this theoretical discussion is to develop a framework for the empirical analysis: it will be used to identify variables that are likely to affect the direction and outcome of intra-Serb competition. The framework is based on the different audiences to which the elites appeal: the audiences that supply them with resources needed in the competition. The first part of the framework considers the dynamics of competition within and between parties: the internal workings of such competition, the impact of institutional factors and the importance of state, party and movement resources.

Competition between and within parties

Intra-Serb competition was rife in both cases and involved competition within and between parties, as well as with military leaders and independents. In the pre-war period this also encompassed competition between ethnic and non-ethnic parties,

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[31] E.g. Collier, Paul, 2000. "Doing Well out of War". In Mats Berdal & David M. Malone (eds.) *Greed & Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner.

which was crucial for the ethnification of politics and for the subsequent radicalisation of the dominant position. The intensity of competition was even greater during the war when there was an array of competing parties, factions, independent candidates and (para)military leaders. Competition *between* parties will often have a significant influence on competition *within* parties and in a very fluid political environment it can be difficult to make a clear distinction, but the two forms of competition should nevertheless be treated as separate since their audiences differ. Competition between parties will, at least nominally, be about appeals to the general population whereas intra-party rivalry will be directed at party officials and members. Attitudes among these audiences is, nevertheless, not the only variable of importance for the direction and outcome of intra-ethnic competition.

Competition between parties/movements

Competition between parties or between movements is competition over power: competition over the authority to make binding decisions and over access to the spoils of power. However, the dynamics of this competition depend crucially on the political system: support from which audiences and access to which resources is decisive for gaining power? One of the primary means to gaining power is the maximisation of popular support. But how is this most effectively accomplished if the ethnic cleavage dominates political competition?

The competition for votes in an ethnic party system takes on a distinct character: due to the near absence of floating voters between ethnic parties, political competition is argued to be about mobilising the faithful. The best way to do so, Horowitz argues, is by using inflammatory and polarising rhetoric.[32] But party competition in pre-war Croatia and Bosnia was not dominated by these dynamics: the newly established Serb parties were faced with significant competition from non-ethnic parties and the strategies used in the competition differed from the extreme strategy outlined by Horowitz. The marginalisation of the non-ethnic rivals, furthermore, proceeded at different speeds in the two cases and was far from an inevitable outcome. In order for the Serb parties to emerge victorious, the ethnic cleavage had to become dominant,

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[32] Horowitz, 1985: 331.

and ethnification of political competition therefore constitutes an important variable in the analysis of intra-ethnic elite competition.

The argument of outbidding is based on this ethnification of politics and it, furthermore, regards popular attitudes as the driving force behind intra-ethnic competition: gaining power depends on securing popular support and in order to achieve this goal, the elites will take the most extreme positions and play into mass antagonisms. But the importance of popular attitudes should be regarded as variable, and one of the decisive factors influencing its importance is the regime type, which may well change during the course of the conflict. The regime underwent a considerable change in both Croatia and Bosnia with the intensification of conflict and the outbreak of war: from a transitional system increasingly marred by undemocratic tactics, to an authoritarian system in the two Serb statelets during the war, to a second democratic transition in the post-war period. Party competition persisted throughout, but the incumbent party will, in a context of flawed democracy, be able to use the state apparatus to manipulate elections or even repress challengers, so that the risk of defeat is reduced significantly. Control of state resources can decisively tilt the competition in one party's favour; above all in a situation of authoritarianism and warfare, but even in nominally democratic systems. The distribution of resources may be highly skewed towards one party thereby giving it an advantage in the intra-ethnic competition and greater leeway in inter-ethnic relations.[33] Resources of importance in party competition include resources such as effective party organisation, campaign money and access to the media, but in a non-democratic setting these may be surpassed by control over the police and other coercive resources. Depending on the regime type and the distribution of resources, intra-ethnic competition will, therefore, not necessarily reflect popular attitudes and due to the potential importance of the above-mentioned resources, the competing elites will also have to consider attitudes found within the party/movement or linked organisations, including the army.

In addition to the regime type, other aspects of the institutional framework will also influence the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition. The electoral system is one such

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[33] Laver, Michael, 1975. "Strategic Campaign Behaviour For Electors and Parties: The Northern Ireland Assembly Election of 1973". *European Journal of Political Research* no. 3: 21-45.

factor that Horowitz argues can influence whether moderates or hardliners will be victorious.[34] Furthermore, the configuration of competition also affects the direction and outcome of intra-ethnic rivalry: how many parties are there, what is their relative size, what is the ideological distance between them?[35] If the opposition is highly fragmented, this will prove much less of a challenge to an incumbent party and have less influence on its position. Finally, it matters what issues the incumbent party is challenged on: is it only the national or ethnic issue or are other issues salient in the competition? And can challenges therefore be pre-empted through radicalisation?

Intra-ethnic party competition will consequently not only be influenced by popular attitudes but also by the context in which the competition takes place: by the degree of ethnification of the party system; the institutional framework and the distribution of resources, including links with military forces; as well as by the number of competing parties and the issues of salience. These factors will influence the direction of competition and its outcome: how will an incumbent party react to challenges? Which strategies will the opposition use? Who will win in the competition?

Competition from within the party/movement

With Eric Nordlinger as a notable exception,[36] the theories of conflict regulation that pay some attention to intra-ethnic competition usually limit themselves to a focus on competition *between* parties. However, in certain situations, the issue of party or movement cohesion can surpass it in importance and the main threat to a leader often comes from within his/her own ranks: from the party, the movement as such, or the state apparatus. Processes of outbidding can occur within, as well as between, parties and in the two cases the former often proved to be the more significant challenge.

Due to the threat from hardline elements in the party or movement, Nordlinger argues that structured elite predominance is a necessary condition for conflict

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[34] Sisk, 1996: 16. Horowitz, 1991: 196.

[35] E.g. Sartori argues that in case of polarised pluralism, the distance between the extreme parties and the emergence of the centre as an additional pole make it irrational for the parties to moderate; they will simply lose out in the electoral competition. Sartori, Giovanni, 1976. *Parties and Party Systems.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 135-6, 349-50.

[36] Nordlinger, Eric, 1972. *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies.* Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. p. 64-68.

regulation: the top leader must be able to control the party and have the political security to risk engaging in inter-ethnic compromise.[37] Such control will be strongly influenced by organisational variables: how strong are the central party structures? What kind of authority does the leader have over the party? In a transitional situation the party apparatus is generally weak and the leader correspondingly strong,[38] and one could therefore expect the threat of reduced party cohesion to be a problem of minor importance to the leader. However, if the leader is challenged from within, he or she will lack the organisational apparatus that would strengthen an incumbent leader in a more developed party system. Moreover, newly created parties are generally more vulnerable to intra-party conflicts since initial consensus on the party's position can quickly be undermined.[39]

In a situation of weak party structures and increasingly tense conflict, a particularly important resource in intra-party struggles is control over military or paramilitary forces. In Rodney Barker's words: *"Tank-commanders, after all, not only have guns: they have the state's guns, and their defection places those whom they previously served in double jeopardy"*.[40] Barring the possibility of persuading the military of the sense in the leader's position, its loyalty is crucial. Such loyalty can have different bases and may reflect calculated self-interest, but the key is that the control of resources, including coercive resources, is of great significance for the dynamics of intra-party competition.

Fractionalisation characterised both the Croatian and Bosnian version of the Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka, SDS), which became the dominant party in the Serb community. However, this fractionalisation only led to a leadership change in the Croatian case. One of the reasons for this difference in outcome was the different strength of the factions facing the two leaderships, as well as the organisational structure of the parties. Moreover, the issues on which the factions challenged the leadership also differed and this influenced the leadership's ability to respond: if factions are based on more than one cleavage, it opens up for different ways of accommodating the challenge. As Sartori argues, one should, therefore, not

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[37] Nordlinger, 1972: 56, 73.
[38] Biezen, 2003: 205-6.
[39] *Ibid.* 216.
[40] Barker, Rodney, 1990. *Political Legitimacy and the State.* Oxford: Clarendon. p. 111.

only consider the size and stability of a faction and the organisation of the party as such, but also the ideological or political conflicts underlying the division.[41] In addition, the faction's control of resources will be of great importance for the challenge that it is able to mount. These variables will influence how a leader responds to intra-party challenges: whether or not it will be necessary to radicalise the party's position in order to retain control or if other means are available. The question of party cohesion is consequently not a simple question of control or no control, nor does it simply depend on attitudes among party members.

In this section, I have sought to argue that intra-ethnic competition is affected by a number of variables found within the realm of this competition itself; it is not necessarily led by popular attitudes as argued in the theory of ethnic outbidding.[42] What kind of regime is it? What is the nature of competition faced by the incumbent party? Is the leader challenged by internal dissent? How many resources do the rivals possess? Different forms of resources are available to the competing parties and leaders: *democratic* resources such as support from the general population or from party members; other *political* resources such as party organisation and media access, which can be unfairly distributed; *economic* resources such as campaign finances or assets that can be used to establish patron-client linkages[43] or buy support in other ways; and *coercive* resources which can, to some extent, be acquired if the elites posses economic resources and include military, paramilitary and police resources.

Kin-state involvement

In the literature on the Yugoslav disintegration, the Serbian regime is usually assigned overwhelming influence over the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia who are consequently relegated to the role of puppets. Sisk emphasises the importance of such transnational, or rather trans*state*, linkages since through these linkages *"many ethnic groups derive critical moral and material support"*.[44] When the elites make claims to speak for the ethnic group, this group is not necessarily delineated by state borders, and another state whose majority shares ethnicity with one of the groups

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[41] Sartori, 1976: 76-80.
[42] Elite autonomy from popular attitudes will be further discussed below.
[43] Kitschelt, Herbert; Mansfeldova, Zdenka; Markowski, Radoslav; Tóka, Gábor, 1999. *Post-Communist Party Systems*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. p. 48, 57.
[44] Sisk, 1996: 19.

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may choose to become involved or may even have initiated the conflict. Since the ethnicity is shared, this state and its leader are part of the intra-*ethnic* dynamics of the conflict and this gives a potentially significant role to the kin-state leader who may be recognised as the legitimate leader of the whole ethnic group or at least afforded great importance. In his theory of nationalism, Brubaker sets up a triadic structure of relational fields: a nationalising state, a minority and a kin-state, which he terms ethnic homeland.[45] The kin-state asserts "*the right, even obligation, to defend*" the interests of its co-ethnics, and Brubaker highlights its importance in the emergence of extreme nationalism and ethnic conflicts.[46]

Belgrade, frequently, functioned as a very tangible and active influence on the intra-Serb competition in the two cases and provided both rhetorical and material support. The Serbian President was consequently an audience to which the rivalling elites had to appeal. Despite the gradual cooling of relations between Milošević and the leaders in the Serb statelets, which occurred during the war, many local leaders continued to recognise the authority of the Serbian President and often referred to him as their president. Relations with Belgrade, however, became a salient issue in the intra-Serb competition, which Milošević thus participated in by proxy, insofar as local elites with differing views on relations with Belgrade fought his political battles. Brubaker emphasises that the three fields are not fixed or given, but nevertheless conceives of them as separate fields. This, however, overlooks the possibility that the leaders of the 'ethnic homeland' can be directly part of the intra-ethnic competition and not just be an external influence. The separation between the local minority and the ethnic kin-state should be seen as a matter of degree: the local leaders are more or less autonomous from the kin-state and the spectrum would be from mere puppets to autonomous actors who are in explicit conflict with the kin-state. The extent and degree of kin-state involvement can itself be a matter of divisions and therefore form part of the political struggle.

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[45] Brubaker, Rogers, 1996. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[46] *Ibid.* 57.

Elite-mass relations

Despite occasionally asserting Milošević's overriding legitimacy, as the 'President of all Serbs', the competing elites in Croatia and Bosnia frequently made claims to be speaking for the local Serbs, to being their true representative. But to what extent were the elites constrained or led by the general population, by the people that they claimed to represent and protect?

If the elite is completely united, the general population will have great difficulty influencing elite positions, or as Robert Putnam argues, elite integration is a sufficient condition for oligarchy.[47] Elite competition, on the other hand, raises the possibility of mass influence: popular support is a resource that will in some situations be decisive in the competition. Sisk argues that outbidding refers to mass responsiveness to playing the ethnic card,[48] but this responsiveness and its significance in intra-ethnic competition will depend not only on attitudes in the mass population but also on who is playing the card *and* in which situation. The importance of popular attitudes will vary in different conflicts and its importance is arguably greatest if the conflict has not turned violent and is fought with political means. In Croatia and Bosnia one would consequently expect popular attitudes to be of greatest significance in the pre-war and post-war period, although there will also be limitations in these phases.

Elections were part of the intra-Serb competition in the pre-war and the post-war period in both cases, and in the Serb-controlled areas in Croatia during the war. But despite the holding of elections the importance of popular attitudes is not a given and the impact of popular attitudes is generally debatable, even in a situation of electoral contestation. At one extreme, elite theories assert elite influence over the general population to be substantial: masses are prone to the 'heard instinct' and politicians can, therefore, easily lead them by the nose.[49] The opposite pole of the discussion would argue that elites will always 'follow their followers' and popular sentiments are therefore the only factor of importance for elite competition and its outcome. The

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[47] Putnam, Robert D., 1976. *The Comparative Study of Political Elites.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. p. 131.

[48] Sisk, 1996: 17.

[49] Dunleavy, Patrick; O'Leary, Brendan, 1987. *Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy.* Houndsmills and London: MacMillan. p. 154.

polar views of elites 'following their followers' or 'leading them by the nose' are echoed in the original versions of rational choice and party identification theories of party competition, as formulated by Anthony Downs and Donald Stokes.[50] The scholarly debate has, however, converged somewhat between these two extremes and attempts have been made to synthesise the theories.[51] The specifics are not essential for our purposes, but the key is that party identification is a variable and the autonomy the elites have from popular attitudes is also a variable.

But how relevant is party identification and elite-mass linkages in a transitional context? Most commentators of post-communist systems contend that due to the recent emergence of party alternatives, party identification has not had a chance to develop.[52] The political situation must, therefore, be expected to be highly fluid and volatile, parties may lack a clear idea of voter preferences and, therefore, only to a limited extent be guided by these.[53] This is put even stronger in the 'tabula rasa' view of post-communist systems, which holds that due to the atomisation of society and lack of social class relations, parties that engage in programmatic competition are unlikely to emerge.[54] Such views, however, exaggerate the lack of differentiation in post-communist societies and furthermore presuppose a radical split with the communist past which cannot necessarily be taken as a given.[55] In terms of elite-mass linkages in a transitional situation there are, moreover, alternatives to programmatic appeals. Kitschelt et al point to the possible importance of charismatic leadership or clientelistic exchanges, i.e. linkages not based on programmatic appeals but still of a recent origin.[56] Nationalism is one basis on which such linkages can be built and this is frequently argued to have been the basis of the Serb leaders' popular legitimacy. But these linkages will not leave the leaders unconstrained. As David Beetham argues: "*A given power relationship is not legitimate because people*

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[50] Downs, Anthony, 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. Campbell, Albert Angus; Converse, Philip E.; Miller, Warren E.; Stokes, Donald E., 1960. *The American Voter*. New York, NY: Wiley. Stokes, Donald E., 1963. "Spatial Models of Party Competition". *American Political Science Review* 57: 368-377.

[51] See e.g. Laver, Michael; Hunt, W. Ben, 1992. *Policy and Party Competition*. New York, NY: Routledge. Kamieniecki, Sheldon, 1985. *Party Identification, Political Behavior and the American Electorate*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

[52] Kitschelt et al, 1999: 6. Biezen, 2003: 44.

[53] Gunther, Richard; Sani, Giacomo; Shabad, Goldie, 1986. *Spain after Franco: The making of a competitive party system*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. p. 4.

[54] Kitschelt et al, 1999: 391.

[55] Lewis, Paul G., 2000. *Political Parties in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge

[56] See e.g. Kitschelt et al, 1999: 6.

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believe in its legitimacy, but because it is justified in terms of their beliefs".[57] If legitimacy is based on exogenous beliefs and values in the general population, such legitimacy also constrains the leaders since it will be eroded if they depart from these beliefs and values. Legitimacy based on nationalist mobilisation consequently puts a limit on the policy shifts that the leader can make without losing the support of the mass population: *"legitimacy can constrain as well as sustain elite power"*.[58] Or as Horowitz argues: *"No doubt politicians will later find that it is easier to kindle a fire than to quench one"*.[59]

Such linkages with the general population can, therefore, provide the elites with a certain measure of autonomy from popular attitudes, but they are not left unconstrained. There are, however, a number of other factors that can weaken the link between the elites and the general population, even in a situation of electoral choice. As already mentioned, a highly fragmented opposition will find it difficult to beat an incumbent party regardless of popular attitudes. Information is, moreover, essential for the voters to be able to influence elites in line with their preferences, but, in some situations, information can be obstructed to such an extent that it is difficult to speak about elite-mass linkages at all.[60] The choice for the voters is furthermore limited to the parties that choose to contest elections and these will also be motivated by goals other than vote maximisation thereby not fully reflecting voter preferences.[61] Finally, more than one cleavage can be politically salient and elites can, to some extent, ignore voter distribution on one political dimension by competing on another.[62]

Even in a fairly free electoral situation, limitations on the impact of popular attitudes on intra-ethnic competition are consequently expected. One of the most important factors influencing the significance of the general population is the distribution of resources: the level of resources available to different parties will affect how

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[57] Beetham, David, 1991. *The Legitimation of Power*. London: MacMillan. p. 11.
[58] Putnam, 1976: 137.
[59] Horowitz, 1985: 332.
[60] Putnam, 1976: 150.
[61] For party goals and strategies in different arenas see e.g. Sjöblom, Gunnar, 1968. *Party Strategies in a Multiparty System*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
[62] Evans, Geoffrey; Duffy, Mary, 1997. "Beyond the Sectarian Divide: The Social Bases and Political Consequences of Nationalist and Unionist Party Competition in Northern Ireland". *British Journal of Political Science* 27(1): 47-81.

dependent they are on securing popular support as well as their possibility for manipulating the expression of popular attitudes. Such tendencies will naturally be even more pronounced in a non-democratic regime, where the leaders have additional means at their disposal for countering opposition and rendering popular attitudes unimportant. Through control of the media an authoritarian leader will, moreover, have greater possibility for manipulating mass sentiments. The importance of popular attitudes will, therefore, vary in different contexts, in different phases of conflict, and is not necessarily significant for the strategies adopted in intra-ethnic elite competition or for the outcome of this competition. Its importance is influenced by the regime type, by the configuration of competition and by the nature of elite-mass linkages.

Outbidding and radicalisation

The varying importance of popular attitudes is significant since the theoretical assumption of outbidding and radicalisation rests on the ability of elites to appeal to mass antagonism in their struggle for power. But the general population is not the only politically relevant audience and popular support is not the only resource of which the elites can make use. Competing elites at least have to take into consideration attitudes found within their parties or movements when deciding what position to adopt, and for the Serb elites in Croatia and Bosnia the kin-state was also a decisive audience. The relative importance of these different audiences and the resources they supply will be greatly affected by the political system in place, as well as by the conflict situation, to which I will turn shortly. As a consequence the direction of intra-ethnic competition is not determined solely by popular attitudes and playing the ethnic card will not guarantee victory, even in case of antagonised mass sentiments. To put it in simple terms: given the possession of significant resources the leader can take a position that runs counter to popular opinion. This option is made even more possible in cases where the opposition is fragmented and therefore weak. Moreover, if issues or cleavages other than the conflict and war become politically salient, the leaders can more easily manoeuvre on the ethnic issue without finding themselves outrivaled. Even if extreme popular attitudes are, erroneously, assumed a priori, radicalisation is therefore not the only possible outcome of intra-ethnic competition.

The preceding focus on intra-ethnic dynamics – on elite competition between and within parties, kin-state involvement and elite-mass relations – does *not* imply that the development of the conflict and the intra-ethnic dynamics themselves are not also influenced by relations with the other ethnic groups. In fact, I would argue that there is a complex interplay between intra-ethnic elite competition and inter-ethnic relations.

Intra-ethnic competition and inter-ethnic interplay

Intra-ethnic competition was a constant feature of Serb politics in Croatia and Bosnia in the period 1990-1995 but its degree and severity varied considerably. Horowitz argues that one of the most important factors accounting for the degree of such competition is the "*collective sense of how many parties an ethnic group can afford without weakening itself in ethnic conflict*".[63] According to this argument, the position of the group and the perceived need for unity are consequently crucial and intra-ethnic competition is, to a large extent, determined by the *inter*-ethnic interplay, or it at least provides a bottom-line.

A related argument is often heard from national and ethnic leaders who claim that their radicalisation is but a *response* to the radicalisation of their opponents. As the Serb leaders in Bosnia argued, they had tried everything to find a peaceful solution, but the Bosniak and Croat leaders were unwilling to compromise and their co-operation threatened the Serb people.[64] Changes in the position of the leaders are thereby argued to be a reactive response to the conflict situation, driven by the proclaimed motive of defending the nation. Arguments for viewing ethnic conflict as the rational pursuit of organised group interest are also widespread in the theoretical literature, e.g. the interconnectedness of disadvantaged minorities and nationalist mobilisation is stressed.[65] In line with this argument, Esman holds that the power of ethnic leaders rests on the existence of actual threats posed by another ethnic group and that the collective interests of the community limit intra-ethnic competition.[66]

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[63] Horowitz, 1985: 349

[64] See e.g. Butorović, N., 1992. "Više nema jedinstvene BiH". *Borba*, 6 March, p. 3. Pejanović, Mirko, 2002. *Through Bosnian Eyes: The political memories of a Bosnian Serb*. Sarajevo: TKD Šahinpašić. p. 63, 65.

[65] See e.g. Gurr, Ted Robert, 1993. *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace.

[66] Esman, 1994: 28, 248-9.

Likewise, theories that emphasise situations of stalemate as the main incentive for elites to moderate also point to the importance of inter-ethnic relations.[67] The relative position of the ethnic groups would, therefore, be expected to influence the strategies adopted by the leaders and, in this respect, there are important differences between the two cases. In the Bosnian case there are three significant ethnic groups, while there are only two in the case of Croatia. A tripartite relationship opens up for shifting alliances, which is generally held to have a moderating effect on elite positions, while the bipartisan constellations is held to be the least stable.[68] The relative size of the groups also differs. The Serb community in Bosnia constituted 31 per cent of the 1991 population and even though the Bosniaks were the largest group with 44 per cent, the Serbs were not faced with an ethnic majority group. In Croatia, on the other hand, the Serbs constituted 12 per cent of the 1991 population and were faced with a dominant Croat majority of 78 per cent.[69]

If national interests are the primary motivation for elite positions, then inter-ethnic relations will be decisive for intra-ethnic competition: how is 'our' nation threatened? What can be achieved in negotiations, etc? The perceived position of the opposing group and expectations of future moves affect the positions that the leaders are willing and able to take, and a useful argument found in both theoretical and empirical literature is that radicalisation on one side breads radicalisation on the other side and that we can, therefore, observe spirals of radicalisation.[70] But although this is indeed often the case, one should not overlook the instances when radicalisation is not reciprocated or when radicalisation occurs without prior radicalisation of the other side, or is primarily caused by other factors. As will be shown in the empirical analysis, there are examples of this in both cases and the dynamics are more complex than a spiral of radicalisation would suggest. The elites are faced with constraints and opportunities emanating from within their own groups: they have to focus their attention on two fronts and cannot refrain from dealing with

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[67] See e.g. Zartman, I. William, 1995. "Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflicts". In his (ed.) *Elusive Peace: negotiating an end to civil war.* Washington DC: The Brookings Institution.

[68] Lijphart, 1977: 55.

[69] According to the 1991 Yugoslav census.

[70] See e.g. Woodward, Susan, 1995. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and dissolution after the Cold War.* Washington DC: Brookings Institution. p. 354. Hislope, Robert, 1997. "Intra-ethnic conflict in Croatia and Serbia: Flanking and the Consequences for Democracy". *East European Quarterly* xxx(4): 471-494. p. 472.

intra-ethnic competition. John Darby and Roger MacGinty argue that the loss of followers is a greater threat to political leaders than the collapse of a peace process: *"it is in the nature of political leadership"*.[71] Or rather: support from politically relevant audiences will have to take priority. The situation is thereby one of what George Tsebelis terms *"nested games"*: the elites are both actors in the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic arenas and may, therefore, pursue seemingly irrational behaviour in one due to constraints in the other.[72] Consequently, intra-ethnic competition will not merely be an epiphenomenon of relations between ethnic groups.

The importance of the position of 'opposing' leaders is arguably greatest if popular attitudes are of significance for the intra-ethnic competition: the elites will have to persuade the general population that their position is justified in view of the threat, or lack thereof, posed by the other group. The other audiences may, on the other hand, be influenced by other incentives, e.g. material benefits, and hence be in less need of such persuasion. But the relative importance of these audiences is, in turn, affected by the phase of the conflict and hence by the inter-ethnic interplay: popular attitudes are expected to be of greater importance in a non-violent conflict than in a violent conflict. Moreover, there are different forms of interplay: the intra-ethnic competition can be influenced by the policy of the 'other side', by the military and demographic balance and by the phase of the conflict. The result is a complex interplay between intra-ethnic competition and inter-ethnic relations: dominant elite position is the dependent variable of the study, while inter-ethnic relations can be described as an intervening variable. Inter-ethnic relations will not only be affected by intra-ethnic competition but will, in turn, affect this competition. The argument of this thesis is thus that intra-Serb competition had a significant impact on the development of the conflict in Croatia and Bosnia, but this competition was itself influenced by inter-ethnic relations: by the phase of the conflict, by the military and demographic balance, and by the position of Croat and Bosniak leaders.

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[71] Darby, John; MacGinty, Roger, 2000. "Conclusion: the Management of Peace". In their (eds.) *The Management of Peace Processes*. Houndmills: MacMillan. p. 257.
[72] Tsebelis, 1990: 164-72.

Conclusion

The purpose of this theoretical discussion has been to develop a framework for the empirical analysis and identify variables hypothesised to affect the impact of intra-ethnic elite competition. Intra-ethnic competition is the *independent* variable of the analysis, and the primary focus, while the dominant elite position is the *dependent* variable. The leaders owe their power to intra-ethnic dynamics and in their rivalry they must consider the reaction of different audiences. In the two cases, the rivalling Serb elites had to consider the following audiences that supplied them with resources needed in the competition: forces within their party or movement; the general population and the kin-state. The relative importance of these audiences will differ in different institutional contexts, in different conflict situations and with different degrees of ethnification of political competition, and is therefore expected to differ in the different phases of the conflict in Croatia and Bosnia.

Figure 1.1 Intra-ethnic competition and dominant elite positions
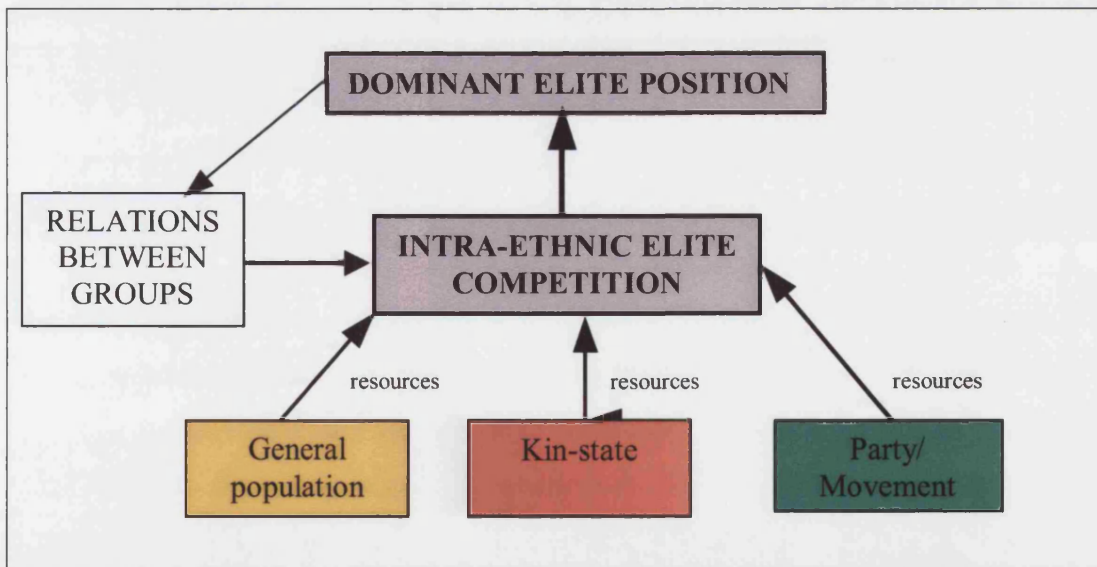
As an important corrective to existing theorising, I hypothesise that intra-ethnic elite competition will not necessarily be characterised by ethnic outbidding based on appeals to extreme popular attitudes and I have identified a number of variables that are expected to affect intra-ethnic competition: its direction and outcome. The audiences and variables will help structure the empirical analysis and will assist the building of a preliminary theory of intra-ethnic competition in ethnic conflicts. The first two variables, issues in the competition and configuration of competition, are

hypothesised to influence the dynamics of competition, while the institutional framework and the two context variables, ethnification and violence, are hypothesised to affect the relative importance of different audiences and the resources they supply.

Figure 1.2 Audiences and variables influencing intra-ethnic competition

Audiences:
- Party/movement, incl. military forces
- Kin-state leaders
- General population

Variables:
- Issues in the competition
- Configuration of competition
- Institutional framework

Context variables:
- Violence
- Ethnification
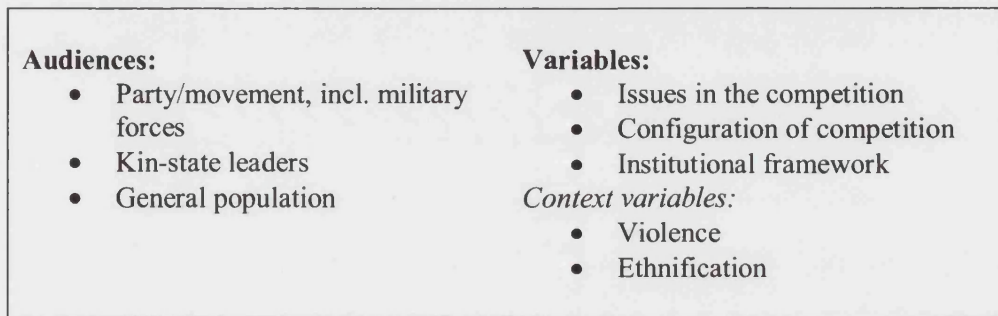
In addition to these audiences and variables, the interplay with the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders will be analysed, and since the dynamics are hypothesised to differ in different phases of the conflict, the empirical analysis will be divided into different phases: the pre-war and wartime phases will be analysed in depth and post-war developments will briefly be tracked to identify continuity and change.

Figure 1.3 Relational fields and intra-ethnic competition
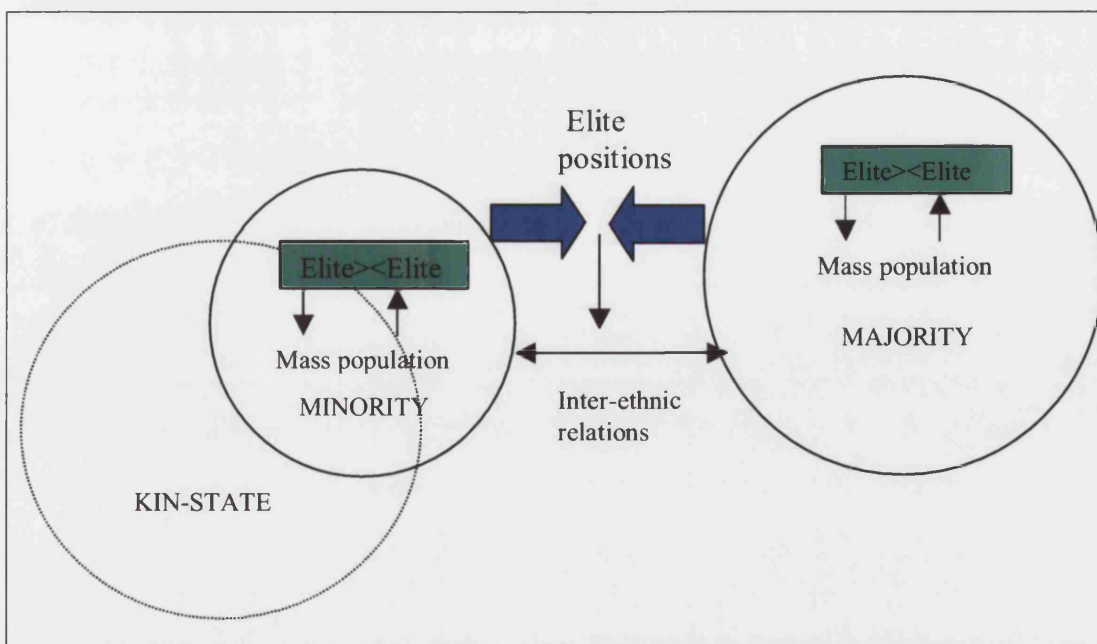
1.4 Empirical analysis:

Serb elites in Croatia and Bosnia, 1990-1995

By comparing intra-ethnic competition among the Serb elites in Croatia and Bosnia, some variables can be held constant since the elites belong to the same ethnicity and since Serbia is the kin-state in both cases. Both conflicts were, furthermore, conflicts over statehood and the Serb minority was sizeable in both Croatia and Bosnia. While the cases are therefore similar in many ways, the dynamics of intra-ethnic elite competition nevertheless differed between them and they differed on some of the variables hypothesised to be of importance: ethnification did not proceed at equal speed; there were differences in party structures; kin-state involvement had different degrees and forms; and the relative strength of the ethnic groups differed. Within the cases the hypothesised differences in different conflict phases can also be analysed. The timeframe of the analysis is 1990 to 1995. In 1990, the first Serb parties were formally established and the first multiparty elections were held; it therefore seems an appropriate starting point for the analysis of political competition, even if preceding developments will also be considered in the analysis. 1995 marks the end of the war and consequently an obvious endpoint, although post-war developments will also briefly be analysed.

Each of the empirical chapters covers a different phase of the conflict and is structured according to the dimensions identified above: 1) *Intra- and inter-party competition*. This part of each chapter will analyse the form and direction of the competition: what were the dominant dynamics? What state/party/movement resources dominated? The process of ethnification will, in the pre-war period, be afforded particular importance: how did the ethnic cleavage become dominant? 2) *Kin-state involvement*. This section will analyse the changing forms of Serbia's involvement and its impact on the local dynamics of intra-ethnic competition: how was it linked with ethnification and the phase of the conflict? Did local divisions augment Belgrade's influence? Could its support be substituted for other resources in the political competition? 3) *Relations between the elites and the general population*. In existing theorising, intra-ethnic competition is held to be decided by elites playing the ethnic card and appealing to radical mass sentiments. This section will critically analyse this argument and the importance of popular attitudes for intra-Serb

competition in Croatia and Bosnia: was it fundamentally driven by popular demands? Under what circumstances did popular attitudes have the greatest effect on the direction and outcome of elite competition? 4) *Inter-ethnic interplay.* The conflict situation and the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders are expected to affect attitudes found among the three audiences, the relative importance of these audiences and, more directly, the strategies chosen by the leaders. This section will analyse how the interplay thereby affected the direction and outcome of the competition: how did it impact on the ethnification of politics? Was support from some audiences more influenced by the position of 'opposing' leaders than others? Why did the Serb leaders sometimes not respond to changes in the position of the opposing leaders? When was simultaneity in either radicalisation or moderation observed and when did the patterns diverge? The influence of *international factors* will also be included in this section, since the changing policies of the international community impacted on the military balance and the space for manoeuvre available to the Serb leaders. It consequently influenced the strategies adopted. International factors also had a significant impact on Belgrade's changing position and its influence will therefore also be analysed in the sections on kin-state relations. Finally, in the post-war phase international authorities became an important additional audience which directly influenced the distribution of resources between competing elites, and this will be covered in the concluding empirical chapter.

Methodology

The empirical analysis is based on a number of different sources reflecting the complexity of intra-ethnic elite competition. There are few secondary sources available and most of the analysis is consequently based on primary sources. The positions of the elites are assessed by analysing political programmes, public statements, actual actions, second-hand accounts of negotiations as well as interviews. The same sources are used to analyse the dynamics of elite competition, but they are supplemented by analysis of electoral results, transcripts from the trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), interviews with local observers as well as analyses and reports from local media. Surveys and electoral results are used in the analysis of popular attitudes. A caveat is, however, in order: the data needed for analysis of popular attitudes could largely be obtained for

the pre-war and post-war period, but for the wartime period it is scarce at best, which of course limits the analysis somewhat. Instead, I have mostly had to focus on the forms of constraint that popular attitudes could pose rather than on the actual attitudes.

The analysis relies heavily on interviews with key actors in the two cases. The shortages of other sources necessitated such an approach, but it also provided an opportunity to obtain information on the inner workings of elite competition among the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia that is not otherwise publicly available. The assessment of elite divisions and competition is made difficult by the ambiguities and secretiveness that is an integral part of the political game,[73] especially in the case of a violent conflict, and interviews are a way of getting closer to uncovering the publicly unknown conflicts, divisions and alliances. Aside from this 'objective' function of the interviews, there are also 'subjective' benefits: interviews are the best way to obtain information on the motives underlying elite behaviour. However, the more subjective side to interviews also presents methodological problems since the interviewees may have an interest in presenting themselves in a more beneficial light or be more or less creative with the truth. To avoid this risk, information obtained from interviews was checked with other interviewees and/or secondary sources. In total the interview material consists of 44 interviews: 27 related to Croatia and 17 related to Bosnia.[74] The interviewees were mostly political leaders, but a few interviews were with journalists, academics and international officials. The key selection criterion for political leaders was that they had been involved in, or witnessed, the intra-Serb competition and therefore had personal knowledge of events taking place. Some former leaders were, for rather obvious reasons, not available for interviews since they are presently in custody of the ICTY, are in hiding or have passed away, while others have retired from public life and are not to be found. Despite these constraints, it was possible to interview several actors who took part in the events from very high positions and who, if anyone, must have intimate knowledge of the events.

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[73] Dogan, Mattei, Highley, John, 1998: "Elites, Crises and Regimes in Comparative Analysis". In their (eds.) *Elites, Crises and the Origins of* Regimes. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 19.

[74] See the bibliography for a full list of (attributable) interviews. The larger number of interviews in Croatia is primarily based on the relative lack of secondary sources compared with the Bosnian case and consequent greater need for other sources. In addition, the former and current Serb elites in Croatia were more willing to accommodate my requests for interviews.

For the purpose of theory building, case studies are well-suited,[75] especially the ones using 'most similar cases' design.[76] One problem with small-N studies is, however, that one has many variables but only few cases and, therefore, risks losing sight of the most important variables while being enmeshed in details. This problem is partly addressed by the 'most similar cases' design, which reduces the number of relevant variables since the variables that are constant in the two cases can be excluded or controlled for. In addition, the theoretical discussion was used to identify what I hypothesise to be key variables and this will enable the empirical analysis to be more focused and structured.[77]Another risk associated with case studies is selection bias, which impacts on the generalisations that can be made from the analysis. A common mistake is to select the cases on the dependent variable and conclusions resulting from analysis of such extreme cases cannot be generalised.[78] This risk is however mostly associated with 'most different cases' design, and the Croatian and Bosnian cases have not been selected on the dependent variable: the position of leaders in ethnic conflicts. They were selected because the impact of intra-ethnic competition among the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia has received little attention in existing literature on the Yugoslav disintegration and as 'comparable cases' they, moreover, constitute a good basis for theory-building. The risk of selection bias is, furthermore, reduced by the significant variation in the dependent variable in the different phases of conflict. But the 'most similar cases' design does, however, also result in limited generalisability, due to the limited variance in potential independent variables. The transitional context and the collapsing state are likely to have significantly influenced the dynamics of competition and due to the lack of variance in these variables, the concluding chapter will only suggest a preliminary theory: a basis for further empirical analysis in this under-analysed field.

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[75] Ragin, Charles C., 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. p. 16.
[76] Karl, Terry Lynn; Schmitter, Philippe C., 1995. "From an Iron Curtain to a Paper Curtain: Grounding Transitologists or Students of Postcommunism". *Slavic Review* 54(4): 965-978. p. 971.
[77] Lijphart, 1971: 690.
[78] Collier, D.; Mahoney, J., 1996. "Insight and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research". *World Politics*, 49(1): 56-91. p. 59, 67.

Part II: Comparative Study

Chapter 2
Conflict and War in Croatia and Bosnia

Ever since the creation of the *Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes* in 1918, Serb elites have played a crucial role in Yugoslav political developments. This is, of course, no coincidence given that the Serbs constituted the largest ethnic group in both the first and the second Yugoslavia. As an independent state pre-1918 Serbia had, moreover, played a decisive role in the unification of 'South Slav lands' and some members of the Serbian elite in the first Yugoslavia had a preference for viewing Serbia as Yugoslavia's Piedmont, with the accompanying added legitimacy of the Serbian position. The importance of the position of the Serb elites, however, does not only stem from the Serb demographic strength or from Serbia's role in the creation of the Yugoslav state and subsequent dominance of the first Yugoslavia but also from the existence of a considerable Serb population outside the borders of Serbia proper. In both Bosnia and Croatia, there was a sizeable Serb minority: 31 per cent of the 1991 population in Bosnia and 12 per cent in Croatia.[1] The Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia not only affected political life in these republics but also in Yugoslavia more broadly, and they ultimately played a critical role in the disintegration of the second Yugoslavia.

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[1] According to the 1991 Yugoslav census.

Map 2.1 Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (1981)
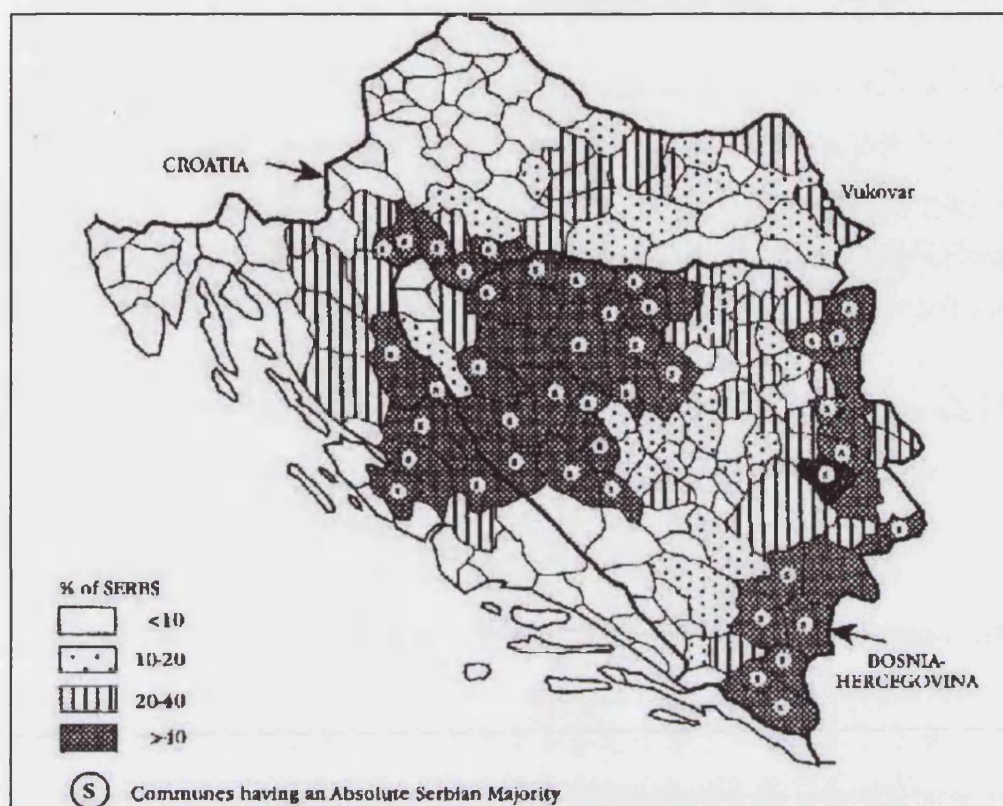
Adapted from Cohen, Lenard, 1995. Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia. Boulder, CL: Westview. p. 141.

Although the Serbs in the two republics were in many ways, different from the Serbs in Serbia, they also encompassed a large segment that harboured wishes for stronger links with the Republic of Serbia.[2] Such sentiments were augmented by the atrocities committed against Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia by the pro-Nazi Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna država Hrvatska, NDH) during the Second World War. NDH's leader, Ante Pavelić, institutionalised a genocidal regime in which the Serbs in the Krajina region especially suffered[3] and the Second World War memories created a perception of being a people under threat, of being the most vulnerable of all Serbs.[4] Tito's Yugoslavia was created as a communist state based on the Partisans' struggle against the Nazis. The political and military ranks of this second Yugoslavia were consequently dominated by Partisans and, since the Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia

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[2] Cohen, 1995 : 127.

[3] Brubaker, 1996: 72. Most of the victims of the Ustaša-regime were Serbs but they also included Jews and Romas as well as dissidents of all nationalities.

[4] Silber, Laura; Little, Alan, 1996. *The Death of Yugoslavia.* London: Penguin. p. 93.

had been over-represented in the Partisan army, also by Serbs.[5] In times of crisis the over-representation of Serbs provided fertile ground for resentment and hence provided Croat and Bosniak leaders with a measure of ammunition for nationalist agitation. As Cohen points out, there were, therefore, three major background factors that made the 'Serb question' in Croatia and Bosnia potentially explosive: historical yearnings among the Serbs for closer ties with Serbia, the Second World War genocide and the relatively privileged position of the Serbs.[6]

The importance of the Serb elites for Yugoslav political development does, on the other hand, not mean that all conflicts in Yugoslavia took an ethnic dimension, that ethnicity was constantly conflictual or even central. Both inter-ethnic co-operation and conflict characterised Yugoslav history and political conflicts were, furthermore, often characterised by *intra*-ethnic divisions since ideological issues were primary.[7] However, the above-mentioned background factors did mean that if ethnicity became conflictual in Yugoslavia, then the issue of the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia would invariably become central. A further factor which adds to the centrality of Serb elite positions was the perception of Serb unity: Serbs have more than any other nation in Yugoslavia been regarded as monolithic. Such perceptions are paradoxical since the Serbs have arguably been the nation most prone to internal divisions, both historically and in the recent conflict, and as Ivo Banac points out, there are "*vast cultural – not just linguistic - differences between the Serbs of the Habsburg Monarchy and those of the Ottoman Empire*".[8] Likewise, Tim Judah argues that Serb politicians are "*adepts at backbiting and flaunting their divisions, especially when the times call for unity*".[9] The intra-Serb divisions in 1990-1995 actually share many similarities with earlier intra-Serb rivalry, such as in the inter-war period when "*the Yugoslav political scene continued to be cross-cut by inter-'tribal' as well as by*

[5] Pavlowitch, Stevan K., 2003. "Serbia, Montenegro and Yugoslavia". In Dejan Djokić (ed.) *Yugoslavism*. London: Hurst. p. 66. Banac, Ivo, 1992. "The Fearful Asymmetry of War: The Causes and Consequences of Yugoslavia's Demise". *Daedalus* 121(2): 141-174. p. 154.

[6] Cohen, 1995: 127.

[7] Jović. Dejan, 2003. "Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism: From Tito to Kardelj". In Dejan Djokić (ed.) *Yugoslavism*. London: Hurst. p. 161, 167.

[8] Banac, Ivo, 1996. "Foreword: The Politics of Cultural Diversity in Former Yugoslavia". In Sabrina P. Ramet. *Balkan Babel*. Boulder, CL: Westview Press. p. xiii.

[9] Judah, Tim, 2000. *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 253.

intra-'tribal' contests between political parties ".[10] Serb politics was in the inter-war period, just as in the 1990s, characterised by internal divisions and shifting positions, and significant Serb forces existed that opposed Belgrade's centralisation.[11] Some of the actors from the 1990s explicitly acknowledge these similarities and both the Yugoslav Independent Democratic Party (Jugoslavenska samostalna demokratska stranka, JSDS) and the Independent Democratic Serb Party (Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka, SDSS) argued that they followed the tradition of Svetozar Pribićević's Independent Democratic Party (Samostalna demokratska stranka, SDS), which was founded in 1924 and espoused a position that was independent from the Belgrade Government.[12] Pribićević's party, furthermore, shares acronym with the dominant Serb party in Croatia and Bosnia in 1990-1995, the Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka, SDS). Intra-Serb divisions have, at times, created incentives for inter-ethnic co-operation, such as when Pribićević joined forces with Stjepan Radić's Croatian Peasant Party in the Peasant Democratic Coalition,[13] but have, at times, also led to radicalisation. In Yugoslav history and in the conflict of the 1990s, the position of the Serb leaders as well as their internal divisions have played a decisive role, and one cannot understand the development of the conflict and the outbreak of war without analysing the position of the Serbs.

The status of the Serbs in Croatia had already been at the centre of the conflict surrounding the 'Croatian Spring' in 1970-1: as demands radicalised, anti-Serb sentiments and calls for Croatian statehood were increasingly heard and the Serbs in Krajina began taking up arms and demanding extensive autonomy.[14] However, at that time the Yugoslav state was not on the brink of collapse and a solution was found – with a not insignificant use of strong-arms tactics by Tito. But history repeated itself with a vengeance in 1990 with many of the same actors, same demands and same means. And this time there was no Tito to quell dissatisfaction; Yugoslav institutions were deadlocked and radicalisation was egged on by Slobodan

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[10] Djokić, Dejan, 2003. "(Dis)integrating Yugoslavia: King Alexander and Interwar Yugoslavism". In his (ed.) _Yugoslavism_. London: Hurst. p. 145.

[11] _Ibid._ 144-5.

[12] Interview Milorad Pupovac, co-founder of the SDSS. Zagreb, 11 August 2003. Zorić, Vukasin. 1990. "JSDS je jugoslavenska". _Danas_, 27 March, p. 6.

[13] Djokić, 2003: 145.

[14] Judah, 2000: 165. Isaković, Zlatko, 2000. _Identity and Security in the Former Yugoslavia._ Aldershot: Ashgate. p. 62. Ramet, Sabrina P. 1992. _Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1963-1983._ Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. p. 112, 117-8.

Milošević. The Serb nationalist movements in Croatia and Bosnia emerged in the late 1980s in the swell of Milošević's 'anti-bureaucratic revolutions'. The first murmurings began in Croatia, in February 1989, when the Serbs of Knin organised to protest against Slovenia's and Croatia's support for the Kosovo Albanians.[15] In July, the same year, the Serb cultural society, Zora, was re-established and it helped organise a mass rally in Krajina to celebrate the Battle of Kosovo. Following this rally, the president of Zora, Jovan Opačić, was arrested and sentenced to three months in prison. This further strengthened the momentum of the emerging movement and in February 1990 the SDS was founded. In Bosnia, the establishment of a Serb movement proceeded more slowly since the Bosnian authorities were cautious not to allow expressions of nationalist sentiments given the ethnic make-up of the republic. Thus, Kosovo mass rallies were not allowed[16] and an institutionalised Serb nationalist movement only emerged with the re-establishment in June 1990 of the Serb Cultural Society, Prosvjeta, and with the formation of the SDS the following month.

The period from the first multi-party elections until the outbreak of war saw an increasing build-up of tensions and radicalisation on all sides. The SDS in both cases adopted progressively more radical positions spurred on by their own internal rivalry, by pressure from Belgrade and by the interplay with the radicalising positions of other ethnic leaders. Following a 10-day war in Slovenia, Croatia was the first republic to descend into open warfare in the late summer of 1991. In Bosnia a precarious partnership between the three nationalist parties kept war at bay for longer, but the Serb leaders were charging an increasingly separate and radical course and, following a last attempt to reach a solution with the Cutilheiro peace plan, war broke out in earnest the day after Bosnian independence had been internationally recognised. In Croatia the radical Serb leaders established the Republic of Serb Krajina (Republika srpska krajina, RSK) while their counterparts in Bosnia proclaimed the Serb Republic (Republika srpska, RS). During the war, several attempts were made at reaching an agreement but most proved futile, often due to the intransigence of the Serb side. In January 1992 the so-called Vance Agreement was,

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[15] Dragović-Soso, Jasna, 2002. *Saviours of the Nation: Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism*. London: Hurst. p. 234.
[16] A major celebration of the Battle of Kosovo was, nevertheless, held on Mount Romanija on 16 August 1989. Andjelić, 2003: 111.

however, reached in Croatia and although it took direct Belgrade intervention to secure RSK acceptance, it succeeded in at least freezing the situation. Proceeding further than a frozen situation nevertheless proved difficult. The RSK leaders refused to budge from their uncompromising position but they were playing a losing hand, which became clear in August 1995 when Krajina was retaken by the Croatian Army. Only in Eastern Slavonia was an agreement reached on peaceful reintegration. Similar intransigence was found among the Serb leaders in Bosnia and this led to a break with Milošević: first over the rejection of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in May 1993 and then more forcefully following the rejection of the Contact Group Plan in August 1994. It was not until the late summer of 1995 when the RS leaders were cornered by internal divisions, Belgrade pressure, NATO bombings and changing military balance, that intransigence finally gave way to greater willingness to accept a compromise solution. Finally, in November 1995, Milošević on behalf of the RS leaders accepted the Dayton Agreement.

In the literature on the Yugoslav disintegration the Serbian regime is commonly assigned decisive influence over the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia, whose status as independent actors is consequently questioned. However, relations between Milošević and the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia underwent a considerable change from 1990 until 1995: Belgrade distanced itself, while the local leaders were able to curtail Milošević's influence and became increasingly independent from the Serbian President. In the pre-war period Milošević's role was mostly that of an uncontested leader who was not in competition with the local leaders and had a very important symbolic role as the 'President of all Serbs'. But as the local leaders took turns falling out with their protector in Belgrade, rivalry began over who was the true interpreter of Serb interests and goals. In this competition disgruntled leaders in the RSK and the RS sought co-operation with opposition forces in Serbia, while Milošević found other players more willing to follow his tune. The influence of Belgrade over Serb politics in Croatia and Bosnia was, however, not limited to political quarrelling over claims to authentic representation of Serb interests. Especially in the immediate pre-war period and in the first years of war, Belgrade's influence was indeed very tangible and helped strengthen the radical forces through the use of media propaganda as well as through the arming and funding of extremists. Moreover, after relations became less cordial, Milošević sought to utilise

the existence of divisions and competition among the local Serbs and, therefore, continued to have a significant impact on the dynamics of intra-Serb elite competition. The relationship between Serbs from Serbia and the Serbs outside Serbia is complex and partly based on a flexible definition of national identity. On one level there is a widespread belief that the two groups constitute one national community, they are all Serbs; but at the same time there exists a belief in strong differences in character and interests between the two groups.[17] Both of these beliefs were used at various times by political actors to expand or reduce the sphere of their own or other actors' influence.

Belgrade's influence on the intra-Serb elite competition in Croatia in Bosnia, therefore, took different forms and varied greatly in its significance. The effect of these fluctuations in the link between Belgrade and the local Serb leaders will be analysed in Chapters 3-7, but it is worth dwelling for a while on the developments in Serbia proper that affected Milošević's attitude towards the Serbs outside the republic.

2.1 Milošević and political competition in Serbia

In his speech at the 1989 Kosovo celebrations, Milošević reinstated the Serb nationalist call for unity when he argued that the Serbian defeat in 1389, as well as, later Serbian failures, had occurred owing to a lack of unity within the ranks of the Serb elite.[18] Following from that sentiment, Milošević later that year adopted the cause of the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and increasingly cast himself in the role of their protector and the guarantor of them remaining in Yugoslavia.[19] Since Milošević had consolidated his power on nationalism's back, the Serbs outside Serbia were of at least some importance for his continued hold on power, and Milošević could expect constraints, even from his own ranks. As Mihaljo Marković, who became vice-president of Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička partija Srbije, SPS), said: "*I got involved in politics to save the Serbs of Eastern Croatia*".[20]

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[17] Thomas, Robert, 1999. *Serbia under Milošević*. London: Hurst. p. 205-6.
[18] Cohen, Lenard, 2002. *Serpent in the Bosom: The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milošević*. Boulder, CL: Westview Press. p. 145.
[19] See e.g. Sell, Louis, 2002. *Milosevic and the destruction of Yugoslavia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 108-110.
[20] Cohen, 2002: 167.

Nevertheless, Milošević's relations with the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia underwent considerable changes over the years, and these changes were affected by developments in Serbia, especially by challenges to Milošević's powerbase and the increasing dissatisfaction brought on by international isolation and sanctions.

Cutting the puppets' strings

In the deepening Yugoslav crisis, Milošević's hold on power initially seemed secure. This dominance was aided, in no small way, by changes to the Serbian Constitution which were enacted prior to the first multi-party elections in December 1990 and which would allow Milošević's SPS to continue with a one-party system under the guise of a formally democratic structure.[21] The electoral system translated the SPS's plurality of votes into an absolute majority in Parliament, and parliamentary resistance was, therefore, not of great concern. Extra-parliamentary opposition did, however, prove of greater concern when the opposition arranged a mass demonstration in Belgrade on 9 March 1991 against Milošević's authoritarian rule. These demonstrations were led by Vuk Drašković, leader of the Serb Renewal Movement (Srpski pokret obnove, SPO), who, from a continued nationalist viewpoint, accused Milošević of war-mongering and called for negotiations in order to realise the interests of the Serbs.[22] The Serbian state-controlled media fought back by carrying articles quoting Serbs from Croatia who warned that they would be left at the mercy of Croatian nationalists if the Serbian Government continued being undermined.[23] One of the upshots of the demonstrations was the adoption of a dual strategy: Milošević officially espoused a more moderate line and accepted the principle of a confederation but behind the scenes he promoted a crisis atmosphere in order to deflect attention away from the challenge to his position.[24] The increasingly tense situation in Croatia and the eventual outbreak of war reinforced the call for unity and consequently strengthened Milošević's hold on power.

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[21] Cohen, 2002: 162 . See also Gordy, Eric, 1999. *The Culture of Power in Serbia*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press. p. 37.

[22] Gagnon Jr., V.P., 2004, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p. 102.

[23] Thomas, 1999: 83.

[24] Gagnon, 2004: 103-4. Sell, 2002: 137-8

Despite obvious evidence to the contrary, the Serbian government vehemently denied that Serbia was at war. But the consequences of war could not be denied and they were strongly felt in Serbia. The lack of popular enthusiasm for the war was illustrated in 1991 when the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslovenska narodna armija, JNA) had great difficulty mobilising soldiers and draft dodging and desertion took place on a significant scale.[25] The opposition was still weak but it gradually began to condemn the war. Drašković had abandoned his staunchly nationalist position and in October 1991 he criticised the Serb leaders outside Serbia: *"It is not the first time ... that the heart of the nation ... finds itself in disagreement with the nation's periphery"*.[26] At the same time, however, Drašković still supported the involvement of the SPO-linked paramilitary, the Serbian Guard, which he considered to be protecting the Serbs in Croatia.[27] A more clear anti-war position was taken by the Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka, DS) which stated: *"We want to stop this shameless and senseless war immediately"*.[28] Nevertheless, the outbreak of war had greatly aided Milošević's strategy of destructing alternatives and the opposition lacked influence.[29] At the time, the position of the regime was that Serbia was defended in Knin but despite such assertions, Milošević – probably realising that the war did not gain him many popularity points – did not act as a typical war-leader and he, for example, never visited Serbian forces at the front.[30]

One of the political actors who was more than willing to defend Serbia outside the republic was Drašković's former colleague in the SPO Vojislav Šešelj, leader of the Serb Radical Party (Srpska radikalna stranka, SRS). Officially the Belgrade Government distanced itself from Šešelj's radicalism and his Serb Radicals, therefore, performed the function as a more extreme opposition to Milošević. In reality, however, Šešelj was useful for Milošević. Until the war in Croatia started Šešelj was a marginal political figure but following expressions of support for Milošević, he became the *"officially acceptable extremist"* in the Serb-controlled parts of Croatia and he was given unprecedented prime time in the Serbian state media. Milošević

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[25] Cohen, 2002: 197.
[26] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Kidnappers and Hostages". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 142, 13 June.
[27] Thomas, 1999: 108.
[28] *Ibid.* 107.
[29] Gordy, 1999: 24. Gagnon, 2004: 107-8.
[30] Sell, 2002: 150.

could use someone to do his dirty jobs[31] and his co-operation with the radical Šešelj provided protection against any risk of outbidding.

Although Milošević was not challenged by significant opposition on the war issue, it nevertheless began to be a liability. The failure of the JNA to win decisively, the threat of international sanctions against Serbia and the looming war in Bosnia made Milošević willing to accept the Vance Plan in late 1991. This brought about an unexpected conflict with the President of the RSK, Milan Babić, but after successfully orchestrating his ousting, the Belgrade Government could focus its attention on Bosnia. Meanwhile, the opposition parties used the end of fighting in Croatia to launch a renewed offensive against the Milošević regime but when war broke out in Bosnia, the call for unity for a while dampened their fervency.

It would, however, not be long before Milošević was to encounter the first significant opposition against the war, and this came from people whom Milošević had expected to be his loyal supporters. In April 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established and, as its President, Milošević appointed the former dissident and famous nationalist author, Dobrica Ćosić. As Prime Minister, Milan Panić, a rich American businessman of Serb origin, was chosen. Milošević hoped that by appointing these two figures he would be able to broaden his appeal and present a more moderate image at home and abroad.[32] But the Ćosić-Panić team was not content with being Milošević's lapdogs and they increasingly asserted their independence. Panić even launched a peace offensive and became a rallying point for Serbia's otherwise divided democratic opposition, and he decided to challenge Milošević in the December 1991 Serbian presidential elections. To make matters worse for the Serbian President, he was also faced with rifts within his own party and in June 1992 a reformist faction broke away from the SPS.[33] This opposition did not, however, make Milošević abandon his projects in Croatia and Bosnia. On the contrary, he began taking a harder line and boycotted reconciliation talks with Croatia that Panić had promoted and, in his fight against Panić, he aligned himself with the Radicals. During the election campaign Milošević, however, adopted a more

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[31] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Of love and hate". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 182, 27 March.
[32] Thomas, 1999: 122.
[33] *Ibid.* 122.

moderate rhetoric and stressed the need for ethnic tolerance.[34] This vague positioning and use of repressive measures proved successful: Milošević defeated Panić in an election marred by great irregularities and, by May 1993, he had also managed to rid himself of Ćosić.[35] The opposition from Panić and Ćosić, therefore, did not alter Milošević's relations with the Serbs in Knin and Pale: if anything, it strengthened his resolve.

The holding of elections in late 1992 had greatly increased the strength of the Radicals whose support became vital for the SPS's hold on power and the two parties entered into a formal coalition.[36] Such co-operation could be expected to lock the Serbian President into an uncompromising position, but Milošević was faced with cross-pressure since the situation in Serbia was deteriorating: economic sanctions had been imposed in May 1992 and the economic crisis was approaching catastrophic proportions. Therefore, beginning in the spring of 1993, Milošević cast himself in the new role as peacemaker and increasingly distanced himself from the leaders in the two Serb statelets. But the new peace-promoting image led Milošević on collision course with his supporters in the SRS who vehemently opposed the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. When the strategy to coerce the Pale leaders into acceptance failed, Milošević consequently had to consolidate his power in Serbia knowing that this humiliation could be utilised by the opposition. In alliance with Šešelj, Milošević, therefore, went against the individuals in Serbia who had supported the plan.[37]

This renewed alliance and the reversion to radicalism was, however, short-lived and the Serbian President soon began distancing himself from Šešelj, who was no longer of use. In September 1993 the main committee of the SPS attacked Šešelj's "primitive chauvinism" and stated: "We care about Bosnia-Hercegovina, the Republika Srpska and the Serbian people outside Serbia, but that is no reason for a politico from Sarajevo, such as Šešelj, to preach to Serbia".[38] Thus the leader of the Radicals was not only attacked for his radicalism but his legitimacy to have a say in

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[34] Gagnon, 2004: 114.
[35] Cohen, 2002: 209-214.
[36] Thomas, 1999: 136.
[37] *Ibid.* 156.
[38] *Ibid.* 178-9.

Serbia was also rejected due to his origins outside Serbia proper. The SPS had thereby made a decisive move away from its previous ideology and the fear of outbidding from the increasingly popular Radicals was not decisive for the strategy chosen by Milošević, although he had initially been forced to reverse his position. However, in order to make sure that the opposition, from one or the other side of the political spectrum, would not capitalise on the Belgrade-Pale rift, the Serbian Government renewed its campaign against the independent media and stepped up its attacks on all oppositional forces.[39]

The cooling of relations between Belgrade and the leadership in Knin and Pale led to a marked change in the rhetoric used by official Belgrade when describing the Serbs outside Serbia. When relations were still unproblematic, the need for assisting them was stressed and it was emphasised that this was also Serbia's fight. However, Milošević later accused the local Serbs of taking Serbia hostage and of being responsible for the hardship suffered in Serbia due to international sanctions.[40] In her public diary Mira Marković, Milošević's wife, in May 1994 wrote: *"...the representatives of those Serbs (mainly outside Serbia) who think that the war is their only option ... should not impute that option to the whole of the Serbian people"*.[41]

Once Milošević had abandoned the Greater Serbia project, it was in his interest to have as little focus on the Serbs outside Serbia as possible and, when the Croatian forces retook Western Slavonia and Krajina, it was all but ignored by the Serbian Government. Nevertheless, the anger and humiliation caused by Operation Flash and Operation Storm seriously concerned Milošević, who allegedly confessed to the Croatian envoy, Hrvoje Šarinić, *"the situation [in Serbia] is very difficult and I will soon be unable to control it"*.[42] The Dayton Agreement, therefore, came as a welcome lifeline to Milošević and he made sure to describe it as a great vindication of his position. Within his own party, Milošević ensured, by expelling possible vocal critics, that significant critique would not surface and that his rule would remain unchallenged.[43] But despite such moves, the failure of Milošević's project of the late

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[39] *Ibid.* 223-4.
[40] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Kidnappers and hostages". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 142, 13 June.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Sell, 2002: 243.
[43] Thomas, 1999: 245-6.

80s and early 90s was apparent: he had failed to unify the Serbs, Serbia was isolated internationally and the economic situation remained disastrous.[44]

Milošević's popularity had declined considerably, especially in urban areas, and this became clear in the local elections in November 1996 when Milošević's SPS lost Belgrade and more than a dozen other cities to the coalition of opposition parties, Zajedno.[45] When Milošević arranged for the courts to annul the results, this triggered mass demonstrations and Milošević's power was, for the first time since 1991, significantly challenged, and this time there was no looming war to distract anyone's attention. Milošević eventually had to give in and recognise the election results but he managed to secure his own political survival. The Serbs outside Serbia were far from prominent in Zajedno's political rhetoric but, following the setback over the 1996 elections Milošević, nevertheless, returned to a more nationalist position. Members of the 'nationalist' wing in the SPS, who had earlier been pushed aside, found their way back and Milošević emphasised the need for links with the Serbs beyond the Drina. Consequently, on 28 February 1997 an 'Agreement on Special Relations' was signed between the FRY and the RS.[46] Milošević was at this point adverse to any opposition that might emerge and if he could not ignore the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia, he at least wanted leaders he could control and who would not add to the opposition against him.

Thus, the kin-state leader's relations with the local Serbs were, in all three phases of the conflict, significantly affected by political competition in Serbia. Changes in Milošević's relations with the leaders in Knin and Pale were brought on by the shifting strength of the opposition, by international involvement or by other factors that could serve to weaken or strengthen Milošević's hold on power. Outbidding from more extreme rivals was, however, not Milošević's greatest concern: his strategy was to destruct alternatives[47] and as long as more extreme rivals could not be considered such threatening alternatives, their outflanking was not of immediate concern. Milošević was not unconstrained when it came to abandoning the Serbs in the neighbouring republics: their fate was of least symbolic importance for the

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[44] Cohen, 2002: 250.
[45] *Ibid.* 251.
[46] Thomas, 1999: 326, 331.
[47] Gordy, 1999: 7.

Serbian President and the local leaders could, therefore, seek to make Milošević responsible. The Belgrade Government could, on the other hand, point to the prevalent Serb infighting and stubborn intransigence and claim that it could do nothing in the face of such irresponsibleness. Furthermore, it systematically changed the rhetoric used when referring to the leaders of the Serbs outside Serbia and denied their legitimacy to have any influence in Serbia proper. Moreover, Belgrade was aware that it was one of the most decisive 'audiences' to which the rivalling elites could appeal and this provided the Government with considerable means for influencing or ousting obstinate local leaders. Despite Belgrade's considerable influence on intra-Serb rivalry in Croatia and Bosnia, the local leaders should not be regarded as mere puppets. The leaders in the RSK and the RS played an increasingly independent role and the deteriorating relations between Belgrade, Knin and Pale significantly affected the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition in the two statelets. As an important addition to existing literature on the Yugoslav disintegration and war, the following chapters will show how Milošević was at times unable to control local Serb leaders: his support was initially the *sine qua non* of political power but his influence was reduced during the war.

2.2 Explaining the Yugoslav disintegration

To describe the literature on the Yugoslav disintegration as vast would be an understatement. There is a plethora of books from the whole range of social science disciplines that analyse the disintegration or various aspects of it. Some common trends can, nevertheless, be detected and in terms of identifying the main causal factors, there seems to be four main explanations. These can be characterised as: the 'ancient hatred' explanation; the 'national ideologies' explanation; the structural explanation; and the 'political elites' explanation. The first, the ancient hatred thesis, has been almost uniformly rejected by scholars but, nevertheless, enjoyed great prominence in the media and allegedly also among certain policy makers. The explanation focusing on national ideologies is primarily associated with Ivo Banac and his analysis of conflicting Serbian and Croatian visions of Yugoslavia.[48] Contrary to this ideological focus, the structural explanations have a much more material basis and primarily focus on the 1974 constitution and/or the underlying

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[48] Banac, 1992. Banac, Ivo, 1984. *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

systemic decay and economic crisis. Finally, the 'political elites' explanations take their starting point in the late 1980s and attribute the primary reason for Yugoslav disintegration to the self-interested behaviour of a few political elites, in particular Milošević.[49]

Intra-ethnic elite competition as under-analysed aspect

Although this thesis will invariably be influenced by competing explanations of the Yugoslav disintegration, I do not wish to offer an alternative explanation and, therefore, will not engage directly in the above debate. First of all, my analysis starts at a later point than would an analysis aiming to explain the disintegration. The starting point of my research is a situation that is already conflictual and it would therefore be erroneous to claim to be explaining the root causes of this conflict. Furthermore, I analyse *one* aspect of the disintegration and the war: the intra-Serb elite competition in Croatia and Bosnia. While the positions of the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia represent an important factor in the Yugoslav disintegration, it is not claimed to be the only factor of importance. The research also includes an analysis of the interplay with Belgrade and with the rhetoric and actions of other ethnic leaders, but these factors are largely treated as intervening variables and, therefore, not analysed in their own right. Hence, I will not claim to identify a causal explanation for the disintegration as such.

What I am arguing is that intra-Serb elite competition is an under-analysed aspect of the Yugoslav disintegration; an aspect which is needed in order to fully understand the development of the conflict: the radicalisation of positions, the outbreak of war and the continuous rejection of settlements. It will consequently fill an important gap in the literature on the Yugoslav disintegration and provide a corrective to some common assumptions. This is, however, not to say that analysis of intra-ethnic elite competition is entirely absent from existing literature and it has been used to explain political developments in both Croatia and Serbia. For example, Susan Woodward attaches great importance to political competition within the national communities as

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[49] This categorisation is strongly influenced by a typology presented in Dević, Ana, 1997. "Anti-War Initiatives and the Un-Making of Civic Identities in the Former Yugoslav Republics". *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10(2): 127-156. p. 140-142.

a cause of radicalisation.[50] As Fearon and Laitin put it in their review of Woodward's *Balkan Tragedy* "*the political dynamics between moderates and extremists are an important part of Woodward's story*".[51] Similarly, Eric Gordy in his *The Culture of Power in Serbia* analyses how Milošević maintained power through the destruction of alternatives.[52]

Even though, intra-ethnic competition is decisive in these analyses of political developments, they are not primarily concerned with the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition, or rather with the variables influencing intra-ethnic competition and its effect on the dominant elite position. Moreover, such attention to intra-ethnic competition is decidedly lacking when it comes to Serb politics in Croatia and Bosnia, including analysis of relations between the local Serb leaders and the Government in Belgrade. There is a pronounced tendency to view the Serbs as monolithic and hence afford little attention to internal divisions. Moreover, there is a lack of focus on internal republican developments since most analysis is centred on the Belgrade-Zagreb-Sarajevo axis. The increasingly strained relations with Belgrade are frequently cited in the literature and the rivalry among the local Serb leaders is also mentioned, although mostly in passing, but it is not made the object of in-depth analysis. With two partial, but important, exceptions: the work of Robert Hislope and V.P. Gagnon Jr. In his two articles on intra-ethnic competition, Hislope analyses outbidding affecting Milošević and Tuđman, and, more briefly, outbidding within the Croatian SDS.[53] Hislope's analysis, however, falls short of identifying variables affecting this outbidding and does furthermore not touch on intra-ethnic competition among the Bosnian Serbs or on relations with Belgrade. In his excellent analysis of 'demobilisation' in Croatia and Serbia, Gagnon affords some space to intra-Serb rivalry in Croatia when he argues that violence was a strategy used by the elites to "*silence, marginalize, and demobilize challengers and their supporters in order to create political homogeneity at home*".[54] While Gagnon and I reach similar

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[50] Woodward, Susan, 1995. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and dissolution after the Cold War*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution. p. 353-4.

[51] Fearon; Laitin, 2000: 867

[52] Gordy, 1999.

[53] Hislope, Robert, 1997. "Intra-ethnic conflict in Croatia and Serbia: Flanking and the Consequences for Democracy". *East European Quarterly* xxx(4): 471-494. Hislope, Robert, 1998. "The Generosity Moment: Ethnic Politics, Democratic Consolidation and the State in Yugoslavia (Croatia), South Africa and Czechoslovakia". *Democratization* 3(1): 64-89

[54] Gagnon, 2004: xv.

conclusions concerning the lack of importance of popular attitudes, my analysis differs in important respects. Firstly, our starting points are different: Gagnon's analysis is, contrary to this thesis, not primarily concerned with intra-ethnic competition, but rather with the link between elites and the mass population, and with countering approaches that place primacy on popular mobilisation in explaining the Yugoslav conflict. Secondly, while this thesis will argue that intra-Serb rivalry was not primarily decided by elites 'playing the ethnic card', I do not discount the importance of popular support to the same extent as Gagnon does, but qualifies its importance in different phases of the conflict. Finally, Gagnon's analysis does not include the Bosnian Serb rivalry or the link between the local Serb leaders and Belgrade. It does therefore not offer a full analysis of Serb disunity in the Yugoslav conflict.

In terms of the rivalling explanations of Yugoslavia's disintegration, most are compatible with a focus on intra-ethnic elite divisions, since the analysis takes as its starting point a situation that is already conflictual. The aim is to analyse an important aspect of the further development of the conflict: the intra-Serb competition and the effect this had on the position of the Serb leaders. The analysis is, nevertheless, leaning towards a combination of two types of explanations: firstly, the structural explanation in order to explain the power of republican elites, their incentives to focus on the republic as their locus of power, as well as the economic crisis and the effect this had on popular sentiments. Secondly, the analysis unsurprisingly presupposes the importance of political elites: their interests, constraints, deliberate choices and miscalculations are regarded as crucial for the development of the conflict. This elite focus is shared by the majority of the literature on the former Yugoslavia. Neven Andjelić argues that, since the Yugoslav system in the late 1980s and early 1990s was still tightly controlled from above, much of what happened will have to be explained in terms of elite behaviour.[55] During the war, this elite control only became stronger and the influence of popular attitudes in war-affected areas was almost non-existing: a continued elite focus, therefore, seems defensible. Such a focus should, nevertheless, not descend into reductionism and an argument that *only* the elites should be analysed. On the contrary, the degree and

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[55] Andjelić, 2003: 27.

form of elite predominance should be established empirically and this research will question the proposition that the dominant elites were the ones who most effectively appealed to mass antagonisms. This thesis clearly departs from the 'ancient hatred' explanation but the findings are also at odds with an explanation much more prevalent in the academic literature: that the conflict was driven by elites 'playing the ethnic card'.

An aspect of the structural explanation which is not generally afforded a prominent position in the literature on Yugoslavia is the transitional context. However, the emergence of ethnic parties, the first multiparty elections, the ethnification of politics and political competition in general were bound to be affected by the transition from a communist system: it affected party developments, party competition and linkages between the elites and the voters.

Communist legacy and political competition

Kemal Kurspahić argues that, due to Yugoslavia's better standard of living, more open borders and greater freedom of the press, its citizens were less enthusiastic about dramatic changes.[56] He argues, in other words, that the communist system enjoyed greater legitimacy in Yugoslavia than in other East European countries. The legitimacy of the system was, however, far from undamaged and the 1990 elections were not only characterised by an ethnic cleavage, or by a cleavage based on the future of Yugoslavia, but also by a reformed communists vs. anti-communists divide. Moreover, the League of Communists had, in Bosnia, experienced a marked decline in support since the so-called Agrokomerc scandal in 1987. This corruption scandal penetrated the highest echelons of the League of Communists of Bosnia and almost all high-ranking officials were replaced within a year.[57] But the scandal also had longer-term consequences: the new leadership was weak and inexperienced and the legitimacy of the party and the system was irreparably weakened.[58] Although the erosion of support was most marked in Bosnia, republican leaderships elsewhere also faced uncertainty when contemplating a transition to democracy. But the League of Communists in both Croatia and Bosnia were nevertheless convinced that they could

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[56] Kurspahić, Kemal, 2003. *Prime Time Crime: Balkan media in war and peace.* Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace. p. 24.
[57] Andjelić, 2003: 61.
[58] *Ibid.* 64, 69. Kurspahić, 2003: 8-9.

win freely contested elections and, in Croatia, they even designed the electoral system so that a plurality of the votes would translate into an absolute majority and thereby, supposedly, ensure communist dominance. Even though they failed to achieve these expected victories, the reformed communists in Bosnia and Croatia provided a non-ethnic alternative to the emerging ethnic parties and together with other left-leaning parties they made the ethnification of politics far from a foregone conclusion. In Serbia, on the other hand, the League of Communists of Serbia under the leadership of Milošević chose to reform itself with a strong nationalist touch and, rather than countering the nationalist forces, it promoted and encouraged them and, therefore, helped foster the ethnification of politics.

More broadly, the transitional situation had a strong impact on political competition. Political parties were not formed until late 1989 or early 1990 and they were primarily formed on an ethno-national basis. Most of the ethnic parties were political movements rather than conventional political parties: they lacked cohesion and had weak programmatic identities, undeveloped party organisations and weak societal linkages. The significance of the ethnic cleavage was strongly influenced by the Yugoslav institutional structure and the already conflictual relations between the republics, but it also reflected a lack of well-defined socio-economic cleavages, which is a common trait in post-communist transitions.[59] Moreover, Yugoslavia lacked well-organised anti-communist opposition parties, or opposition alliances, as existed in other East European countries such as Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.[60]

It is often argued that communist and nationalist ideologies share many similarities and that a post-communist transition therefore favours nationalist and ethnic parties. Thus, Živko Surčulija argues that nationalism can serve as a substitute for communist utopia since both ideologies are collectivist, nationalism offers peoples a new utopia and communist elites will find nationalism attractive as a way of retaining power.[61] While one should not overestimate the legitimising function of the communist utopia, this argument points to important aspects of the attractiveness of nationalism both for

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[59] Kitschelt et al, 1999: 391.
[60] Radošević, Slavo, 1996. "The collapse of Yugoslavia: Between chance and necessity". In David Dyker & Ivan Vejvoda (eds.) *Yugoslavia and After*. London and New York: Longman. p. 76.

the elite and for the general population. For the elite it offered an opportunity to gain or stay in power, a way of providing a *"quasi-democratic"* authorisation for authoritarian rule.[62]

In terms of mass political culture, the communist legacy also left its imprint and facilitated the victory and dominance of nationalist parties and leaders. The population was used to one-man, one-party rule and unfamiliar with democratic competition, and Ivan Vejvoda argues that the communist monopoly had created a sense of political impotence and futility in the population, which barred political engagement.[63] Consequently an authoritarian political culture is often held to prevail in the former Yugoslavia:[64] an expectation that elites are supposed to lead and the population supposed to follow. In an oft-quoted story, the Serbian politician Vuk Drašković met a peasant who expressed great enthusiasm for him and vouched that if Drašković became president then he would surely vote for him![65] Yugoslavia in 1990 was, in many ways, still a traditional patriarchal society, which privileged the populist and nationalist movements since they could draw on the tight connection with primary groups, including the ethnic group.[66] Although pre-established ties between elites and the general population in a transitional situation would be expected to be negligible,[67] a strong acceptance of authority can, nevertheless, hamper the development of pluralistic politics and encourage a tendency to close ranks behind an emerging leader. Mirjana Kasapović uses the term *"plebiscitary emotionalism"* to describe political competition in which support and loyalties are linked to the character of candidates and not to actual political context. This was

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[61] Surčulija, Živko, 1996. "Nationalism and the Destruction of the Former Socialist Federation". In Stefano Bianchini & Dušan Janjić (eds.) *Ethnicity in Postcommunism*. Belgrade: Institute of Social Sciences. p. 113-4.

[62] Tomanović, Velimir, 1996. "Nationalism, Transition and Democracy". In Stefano Bianchini & Dušan Janjić (eds.) *Ethnicity in Postcommunism*. Belgrade: Institute of Social Sciences. p. 156. See also Kaldor, Mary, 1993. "Yugoslavia and the new nationalism". *New Left Review* no. 197: 96-112. p. 109.

[63] Vejvoda, Ivan, 1996. "Yugoslavia 1945-91: from decentralisation without democracy to dissolution". In David Dyker & Ivan Vejvoda (eds.) *Yugoslavia and After*. London and New York, NY: Longman. p. 22.

[64] See e.g. Kasapović, Mirjana, 1992. "The structure and dynamics of the Yugoslav political environment and elections in Croatia". In: Seroka, Jim; Pavlović, Vukasin (eds.) *The Tragedy of Yugoslavia: the failure of democratic transformation*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe. p. 28.

[65] Sell, 2002: 127.

[66] Golubović, Zagorka, 1996. "The causes of ethno-mobilisation in the Former Yugoslavia". In Stefano Bianchini & Dušan Janjić (eds.) *Ethnicity in Postcommunism*. Belgrade: Institute of Social Sciences. p. 162.

[67] Biezen, 2003: 44.

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reflected in a Croatian survey from 1990, in which 75 per cent of those interviewed said that they sought "*a brave, tireless and true leader in whom the people could trust*".[68] Such an authoritarian political culture will limit the influence popular attitudes have on the position of leaders and hence increase their room for manoeuvre. While the deference of the mass population should not be exaggerated, the post-communist transition, therefore, must be taken into account when discussing elite autonomy and the ethnification of politics.

2.3 Ethnic conflict?

In the subsequent chapters, the Yugoslav conflict will, as a convenient shorthand, be described as national or ethnic. This usage is by no means meant to identify the *causes* of the conflict; what it does address is the legitimation used by the leaders: they claimed to represent 'their' nation and argued that it was threatened and in need of protection. The Croats, Serbs and Muslims were recognised as nations in the Yugoslav Constitution and the most appropriate term to use, therefore, would be 'national' rather than 'ethnic' conflict. However, this presents some linguistic problems when referring to dynamics within and between the national communities: intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic is less open to misunderstandings than intra-national or, especially, inter-national. While it presents some conceptual problems, the term 'ethnic' will, therefore, mostly be given preference. But, as Mary Kaldor has pointed out, the national identities in the former Yugoslavia became ethnic in the sense that people were born into them and could not change them;[69] influenced by the conflict and the politics of radicalisation they became exclusive and ascriptive.

The use of the term 'national' or 'ethnic' should, nevertheless, not blind us to the fact that these divisions were, at times, still fluid and that the groups were internally divided. In terms of the Serb elites, it is, for example, striking how reluctant the urban elite was to define itself in ethnic terms.[70] Other divisions continued to be of importance and one should not forget that there were Serbs fighting in both the Croatian and the Bosnian army. Only a few years before the outbreak of war, ethnic

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[68] Kasapović, 1992: 42.
[69] Kaldor, 1993: 108.
[70] See Chapters 3-4.

tensions and ethnic divisions were difficult to register in Yugoslav surveys.[71] As late as 1989, researchers concluded that ethno-centrism was not widespread, with 90 per cent of Bosnian respondents describing inter-ethnic relations as 'good' or 'very good'.[72] In surveys covering the whole of Yugoslavia, the ethnic distance between Serbs and Croats was found to be particularly low: only 7 per cent mutual rejection in 1985.[73] Nevertheless, even if relations were generally not conflictual, divisions still remained, especially in rural areas far away from the more multi-ethnic Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo. In the case of Bosnia, Andjelić even speaks of two parallel worlds, while Sumantra Bose asserts that several Bosnias co-existed in the pre-war period.[74] Although the characteristics of urban Bosnia might have dominated public rhetoric, rural Bosnia was demographically more significant: Bosnia's five largest towns accounted for barely 25 per cent of the population in 1992 and outside these towns attitudes and inter-community relations were of a markedly different character.[75] Moreover, the Yugoslav institutional structure was from the late 1960s, built on national identity, and Woodward argues that people in 1990 voted in terms of the politically relevant categories of this system, since they did not have time to shape new political identities.[76]

The pre-1989 existence of national divisions should therefore not be overlooked, nor should the collective Serb memories from the Second World War, the Yugoslav institutionalisation of national identity and the resentment against alleged Serb dominance. These factors facilitated the ethnification of politics and provided ammunition for extremists. However, 'nationality' or 'ethnicity' is, in the following analysis, not ascribed much independent explanatory value. Intra-ethnic elite competition is the main variable of interest and the focus of the research is the effect this had on the position of the leaders. It is argued that the ethnification of political competition was not a given in the first multiparty elections; it was part of the political struggle. Nor was the radicalisation of the dominant forces and the marginalisation of the moderates an inevitable outcome. The background factors

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[71] Gagnon, 2004: 34.

[72] Malešević, 2000: 163; Golubović, 1996: 161.

[73] Marković, Vera, 1996. "Three misconceptions of nationalism as revealed through empirical experience". In Stefano Bianchini & Dušan Janjić (eds.) *Ethnicity in Postcommunism*. Belgrade: Institute of Social Sciences. p. 167.

[74] Andjelić, 2003: 134. Bose, Sumantra, 2002. *Bosnia after Dayton*. London: Hurst. p. 17.

[75] Bose, Sumantra, 2002. *Bosnia after Dayton*. London: Hurst. p. 14.

[76] Woodward, 1995: 124.

outlined above are, nevertheless, of importance as *background* conditions: they affect the nature of political competition, the development of political parties and linkages between the elites and the general population.

Chapter 3
Intra-Serb Competition in Pre-War Croatia:
Ethnification and radicalisation

The introduction of multipartism launched a new Serb elite onto the political scene in Croatia; an elite which claimed to represent the homogenous interests of the Serbs. However, disunity prevailed and became even more dominant as the conflict intensified. In their quest for power, the Serb elites, moreover, had to compete with non-ethnic parties and, in this competition, the nature of 'the political' was at stake.[1] The Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka, SDS) managed to achieve dominance in the Serb community and subsequently radicalised its position but the ethnification of politics was necessary for this victory and the outcome depended on the dynamics of political competition. This chapter will analyse how the ethnic cleavage became dominant, how the process of ethnification affected political competition and why radicalisation ensued. The SDS itself was plagued by intra-party strife that led to a radicalisation of the party and the ultimate takeover by hardliners who pursued a policy more in tune with Belgrade's wishes. The dynamics of this competition and the audiences decisive in the hardline takeover will also be analysed: was it a question of hardliners more successfully playing the ethnic card?

Theoretically, the emergence of ethnically defined parties is generally held to lead to a radicalisation of politics; a radicalisation which is primarily voter-driven. Horowitz argues that once an ethnic mass party is created, other parties will be pressured to define themselves in ethnic terms in order to compete effectively and, in the resulting ethnic party system, the most successful parties will be those who use inflammatory and polarising rhetoric.[2] An ethnic party system is, furthermore, seen as being prone to politics of centrifugal outbidding, since leaders who choose to moderate risk being branded with the stigma of betraying the nation by more extreme leaders who can successfully appeal to the general population.[3] However, Horowitz takes as his starting point an already successful ethnic party, a party that has managed to become a mass party, and such success cannot be taken as a given. Ethnic parties will face

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[1] 'Non-ethnic parties' are defined as parties that do not compete on the ethnic cleavage and direct their appeals to all ethnic groups. 'Non-ethnic forces' include these parties as well as intellectuals and party deputies who insist on retaining a non-ethnic definition of politics.
[2] Horowitz, 1985: 306, 331, 333.
[3] Hislope, 1997: 472.

competition from non-ethnic parties and this competition needs to be analysed in order to understand the impact of ethnic parties on the radicalisation of politics. Moreover, resources other than popular support can be used in this competition and be decisive for both ethnification and radicalisation.

The pre-war phase was a transitional phase and this influenced the nature of political competition: the parties were newly established, weak party structures were the norm and political positions and programmes were yet to be consolidated. Societal groupings were restructured, while new parties were searching for their social bases and programmatic profiles, and this transitional context facilitated electoral mobilisation along ethno-national rather than socio-economic lines.[4] The transition from communism weakened the non-ethnic parties and strengthened the ethnic ones. Even before violence broke out, the situation was, therefore, far from conventional political competition and as sporadic violence began, coercive resources gained importance in the political competition. In addition to competition with non-ethnic parties, the main challengers for the Serb leaders came from within their own ranks and intra-party struggles intensified as ethnification of political competition progressed and the non-ethnic alternatives became marginalised. The intra-Serb competition reflected different views of the goals and strategies in the inter-ethnic conflict, ideological differences as well as personal power ambitions. Such competition would be expected to lead to a radicalisation of the political competition and this was, indeed, what happened. But this still leaves some questions: what were the factors causing this radicalisation? What resources were used by the winning forces in the party? How were they able to marginalise more moderate factions?

After analysing the dynamics of competition, the ethnification of politics and the use of party and movement resources, this chapter will turn its attention to the other audiences of importance for the intra-Serb competition: the kin-state and the general population. Given the ethnification of politics and the casting of the conflict in ethnic terms, the kin-state cannot be ignored and, furthermore, it possessed resources needed by the rivalling SDS elites. Belgrade intellectuals had played an important role in the political organisation of the Serbs in Croatia, in particular Dobrica Ćosić

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[4] Šiber, Ivan; Wenzel, Christian, 1997. "Electoral Behaviour in Croatia". In Ivan Šiber (ed.) *The 1990 and 1992/3 Sabor Elections in Croatia*. Berlin: Sigma. p. 80-1.

who helped organise the SDS in both Croatia and Bosnia and handpicked their leaders.[5] However, for the further development of Serb politics, political and military leaders played a more important role than these intellectuals: they were better able to supply the resources most needed in the intra-Serb competition, especially coercive resources. The influence of kin-state leaders can be predominantly based on their position as leaders of the *kin*-state or as leaders of the kin-*state,* i.e. it can be mostly symbolic and closely linked with the process of ethnification or it can primarily be based on the state resources to which they have access. Both forms of influence proved important in the pre-war intra-Serb competition in Croatia. Theoretical discussions of intra-ethnic elite competition are usually focused on the issue of outbidding, which is argued to be about *mass responsiveness* to playing the 'ethnic card'. But was popular support that important in the intra-Serb competition? Or was its importance dwarfed by other resources and hence other audiences to which the rivalling elites addressed their appeals? Finally, inter-ethnic relations are often seen as the primary cause of elite positioning in ethnic conflicts. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of this interplay with inter-ethnic relations and its effect on the direction and outcome of the intra-Serb competition. How was the process of ethnification affected? Was radicalisation a response to radicalisation of the 'other side'?

3.1 Ethnification of politics and marginalisation of moderates

The clear winner of the first Croatian multi-party elections in April-May 1990 was the Croatian Democratic Community (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, HDZ). But despite the victory of a predominantly ethnically defined party, non-ethnic parties still played an important role: the SDS only won a minority of the Serb votes and the issue of the future of Yugoslavia did not merely reflect an ethnic cleavage. The ethnification of politics did, however, gain speed after the elections and both non-ethnic parties as well as more moderate voices within the SDS became increasingly marginalised.

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[5] Dragović-Soso, 2002: 237

Gradual ethnification of politics: the 1990 elections

The SDS was founded in Knin in February 1990 under the leadership of psychiatrist Jovan Rašković. Initially the party took a fairly moderate position and in its programme it advocated democracy, human rights, national equality as well as cultural autonomy for the Serbs and the re-drawing of administrative borders to create Serb-majority regions and municipalities. The SDS clearly supported the continued existence of the Yugoslav Federation and vowed to protect the interest of the Serbs in Croatia.[6] However, since the national cleavage was not the only political cleavage of importance, the SDS would, in the competition for the Serb vote, face significant competition from non-ethnic parties.

The SDS and its non-ethnic rivals

Anticipating such competition, the leader of the SDS, Jovan Rašković, agreed with Mile Dakić that the latter would form a nominally non-ethnic party, the Yugoslav Independent Democratic Party (Jugoslavenska samostalna demokratska stranka, JSDS), which would appeal to Serbs who would otherwise vote for the reformed communists.[7] This agreement was not publicly known and the official policies of the parties differed, although they both supported the preservation of the federal structure: the JSDS denied being a Serb party and it presented itself as a Yugoslav party open to all nations. It also did not share the SDS's staunch anti-communist stand and was more based in the Yugoslav Partisan tradition.[8] The co-operation between these two parties reflected the incomplete ethnification of politics and the SDS knew that it would have problems capturing the non-ethnic ground. Constituting the ethnic cleavage as the dominant cleavage was, thus, part of the political struggle.

The reformed communists in the League of Communists of Croatia – Party for Democratic Changes (Savez komunista Hrvatske – Stranka demokratskih promjena, SKH-SDP) emphasised their determined resistance to Milošević and independence from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, but at the same time advocated the

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[6] Srpska demokratska stranka, 1990. "Programski ciljevi". *Naše Teme* xxxiv (3-4): 774-781.
[7] Interview Mile Dakić, Belgrade, 29 August 2003.
[8] Babić, Jasna, 1990. "Mile Dakić: Zamjena za savez komunista". *Danas,* 13 March, p. 15. Zorić, Vukasin, 1990. "JSDS je Jugoslavenska". *Danas,* 27 March, p. 6. Jugoslavenska samostalna demokratska stranka, 1990. "Politički program – deklaracija". *Naše Teme* xxxiv (3-4): 747-751.

preservation of the federal structure.[9] The party had, contrary to Belgrade's expectations, not split along ethnic lines[10] and it could, therefore, still appeal to the Serbs in Croatia who were opposed to the prospect of Croatian independence. In its appeal the party was, furthermore, assisted by fielding some well-known candidates of Serb ethnicity. In an attempt to counter the strength of the incumbent party, both the SDS and the JSDS accused the SKH-SDP of being a 'Croat-centric' party,[11] thereby insisting on imposing an ethnic cleavage. But this strategy was largely to no avail. The SKH-SDP was very successful in its appeal to the Serb voters: the SDS's support was concentrated in Krajina (in Knin, Donji Lapac and Gračac)[12] and the majority of the Serbs in Croatia supported the SKH-SDP, while the SDS only won 13.5 per cent of the Serb vote.[13] The JSDS had never been accepted as a non-ethnic party by the media and it fared even worse than the SDS, winning less than 0.5 per cent of the total vote. In the SKH-SDP the significant support among Serb voters, however, raised concerns among some factions who rejected that the party should become the representative of the Serbs in Croatia.[14] Conflict within the SKH-SDP was increasing and this helped the SDS strengthen its position.

The SDS becomes dominant

Due to the SDS's poor showing in the elections, the large majority of Serb representatives in the Croatian Parliament were from the SKH-SDP. This minority position was probably one of the reasons why the five SDS representatives staged a walkout shortly after the constitution of Parliament.[15] However, from what was now its extra-parliamentary position, the SDS noisily advertised itself as the only representative of the Serbs.[16] The party was aided in its efforts by Franjo Tuđman's Government which, from the beginning, recognised the SDS as the representative of

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[9] Zakošek, Nenad, 1997a. "Political Parties and the Party System in Croatia". In Ivan Šiber (ed.) *The 1990 and 1992/3 Sabor Election in Croatia*". Berlin: Sigma. p. 42. Savez komunista Hrvatske: Stranka demokratskih promjena, 1990. "Za miran, sretan život u suverenoj i demokratskoj Hrvatskoj". *Naše Teme* xxxiv (3-4): 622-647.

[10] Interview Dušan Plećaš, Secretary of the SKH-SDP's Council. Zagreb, 26 March 2004.

[11] Srpska demokratska stranka, 1990. Babić, Jasna, 1990. "Mile Dakić: Zamjena za zavez komunista". *Danas,* 13 March, p. 15.

[12] Grdešić, Ivan; Kasapović, Mirjana; Šiber, Ivan; Zakošek, Nenad, 1991. *Hrvatska u izborima.* Zagreb: Naprijed. p. 224, 229.

[13] Gagnon, 2004: 35.

[14] Jajčinović, Milan, 1990. "Lineja koja dijeli". *Danas,* 5 June, p. 18-19.

[15] This followed an incident when the president of SDS Benkovac was allegedly assaulted with a knife. Thompson, Mark, 1992. *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia.* London: Vintage. p. 260.

[16] Čulić, Marinko, 1990. "Pohod udruženih voždova". *Danas,* 10 July, p. 13-15.

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the Serbs in Croatia. This strengthened the party, which also became stronger due to growing institutionalisation: at the time of the elections the party was only properly organised in the Knin area,[17] but this was now extended to Western and Eastern Slavonia.[18]

In its struggle to achieve dominance in the Serb community, the SDS was, furthermore, greatly aided by the growing conflict within the SKH-SDP. Since the party decided to reform in 1989, there had been some divisions between the stronger reformers in the SDP-faction and the more hesitant ones in the SKH-faction of the party. But as the conflict intensified, these divisions began to overlap with divisions between Croat and Serb officials, with the latter accusing the leadership of being too willing to co-operate with the HDZ Government. This led to attempts in June 1990 by the local party committee in Petrinje to distance itself from the central leadership in an initiative which the party's leader, Ivica Račan, characterised as an attempt to break up and divide the SKH-SDP on national grounds. The conflict persisted and, in September 1990, the Petrinje committee dissolved itself and the majority of the members joined the Socialist Party of Croatia (Socijalistička partija Hrvatska).[19] The conflict in the SKH-SDP and the view of many Serb party officials that it was becoming a Croat party led a large number of Serbs to leave the party, including most of the Serb Members of Parliament. However, some stayed in Parliament and continued to seek to influence the SKH-SDP leadership. Simo Rajić, a prominent Serb MP, became Deputy Speaker of Parliament in September 1990 but resigned after only four months on the post, citing the impossibility to promote Serb-Croat relations in Croatia.[20] Rajić also left all posts in the SKH-SDP and criticised Račan and the party for not supporting his efforts.[21] These internal divisions severely weakened the party in the struggle over ethnification and its initial greater possession of resources did not prove significant in the competition with the SDS. Finally, the

[17] Kovačević, Drago, 2003. *Kavez: Krajina u dogovorenom ratu.* Belgrade: Srpski demokratski forum. p. 29-30.
[18] Interview Veljko Džakula, SDS leader in Western Slavonia. Zagreb, 12 August 2003
[19] Marinković, Gojko, 1990. "Raskol Hrvatskih Komunista". *Danas,* 12 June, p. 10-12. "SKH-SDP više ne postoji". *Borba,* 14 September 1990, p. 3.
[20] Rajić, Simo, 1991. Resignation letter to the Sabor Presidency, 4 January 1991. Author's copy. Maloča, Mladen, 1991. "Odlazak usamljenog jahača". *Danas,* 8 January, p. 16-17.
[21] Interview Simo Rajić, Zagreb, 19 March 2004.

SDS strengthened its position vis-à-vis the SKH-SDP by employing a range of non-democratic measures and pressuring local SKH-SDP officials out of public office.[22]

From a minority position in the Serb community, at the time of elections, the SDS was thus strengthened in the subsequent months by a combination of factors: by the increasing weakness of its rival, by actions of the Croatian Government, by the improved institutionalisation of the SDS and by the use of non-democratic pressures. As a result, the SKH-SDP was marginalised and the SDS found itself in a progressively more comfortable position, close to achieving monolithic status within the Serb community. Goran Hadžić, who was later to become president of the Serb Republic of Krajina, argues that, in 1990-91, there was no alternative to the SDS for the Serbs in Croatia and people would support the party whoever its leaders were.[23] But the party still suffered from poor organisation: it was more a political movement than a structured political party[24] and, after the de facto defeat of the SKH-SDP, it soon came to open conflict between the SDS's factions. This internal competition strongly affected the position adopted by the party.

Intra-party outflanking

During 1990 and culminating in early 1991, the leader of the SDS, Jovan Rašković, became increasingly constrained by hardliners in the party who forced him to take an ever more uncompromising position and attacked his willingness to negotiate with the Croatian Government. Therefore, from its formation in early 1990, the demands made by the SDS underwent a gradual radicalisation. In late June 1990 the Community of (Serb) Municipalities of Northern Dalmatia and Lika was founded,[25] and on 25 July the so-called Serb Assembly was held in Srb in Krajina. The Assembly constituted the Serb National Council (Srpko nacionalno vijeće, SNV) as its executive body and the gradual change in demands was reflected in the *Declaration on Sovereignty and Autonomy of the Serb People* which was adopted by the assembly. The declaration stated, "... *the Serb people in Croatia have the right to autonomy. The content of that autonomy will depend on the federal or confederal*

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[22] Gagnon, 2004: 145-6.
[23] Interview Goran Hadžić, Belgrade, 30 October 2003.
[24] Interview Veljko Džakula, Zagreb, 12 August 2003.
[25] "Odluku o osnivanu i konstitusanju Zajednice općina sjeverne Dalmacije i Like". Dakić, Mile, 1994. *The Serbian Krayina: Historical Roots and Its Birth.* Knin: Iskra. Enclosure no. 3.

structure of Yugoslavia". The degree of autonomy demanded therefore depended on the future status of Yugoslavia: "*In case of a confederal state structure of Yugoslavia, the Serb people in Croatia have the right to political-territorial autonomy*".[26] In his book *Luda Zemlja*, Rašković stated that territorial autonomy would also be demanded in case Yugoslavia ceased to exist.[27] However, the declaration stated that the future of Yugoslavia could not be determined without the participation of the Serb people and Rašković the following day declared: "*In the event that Croatia secedes, the Serbs in Croatia have a right to decide in a referendum with whom and on whose territory they will live*".[28] It was, therefore, unclear what would be demanded in case Yugoslavia dissolved.

The assembly also decided to hold a referendum on the declaration of autonomy. This referendum was, however, declared illegal by the Zagreb Government and following rumours that its holding would be prevented, roadblocks were mounted by cutting down trees, which effectively barricaded the Knin region; an event which came to be known as the 'log revolution'. The referendum went ahead on 19 August and close to 100 per cent of the Serb voters supported the proposal for autonomy. Subsequently, on 30 September, autonomy was declared.

Despite this radicalisation, Rašković's position in the party was by no means secure. He had failed to build a cohesive core of leaders and two of the founders of the party, Jovan Opačić and Dušan Zelembaba, became dissatisfied early on with what they regarded as their lack of power in the party.[29] They were, furthermore, known as hardliners and their dissatisfaction was also with Rašković's political stance. The fallout therefore reflected both personal ambitions and political differences, and furthermore also regional differences between Serb majority areas in Krajina and the rest of Croatia. Rašković had already, in May 1990, been pressured by hardliners to suspend relations with the Croatian Parliament,[30] but the pressure increased exponentially when Tuđman's adviser in late July 1990, decided to leak a transcript of secret negotiations between Tuđman and Rašković. This transcript was seriously

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[26] "Deklaracija o suverenosti i autonomiji Srpskog naroda u Republici Hrvatskoj". Author's copy.
[27] Rašković, Jovan, 1990. *Luda Zemlja*. Belgrade: Akvarijus. p. 251.
[28] Woodward, 1995: 120.
[29] Radulović, Srđan, 1991. "Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme*, 25 February, p. 26-27.
[30] Jajčinović, Milan, 1990. "Linija koja dijeli". *Danas*, 5 June, p. 18-19.

damaging to Rašković since it portrayed him as weak and confused, and he, furthermore, reiterated his moderate demands, described the Serbs as a crazy people and admitted having difficulty controlling hardliners in the party.[31] Rašković denied the authenticity of the transcript and sought to bolster his position within the party by making more uncompromising statements.[32] But this did not suffice to quell the criticism and in September 1990 an extraordinary meeting of the SDS main board was called. At this meeting Opačić and Zelembaba made an attempt to replace Rašković as party president but they failed to win sufficient support and consequently resigned from their party functions.[33] Although he survived this attack, Rašković was obviously weakened and Milan Babić, who was the Mayor of Knin, pressured Rašković to leave Croatia and go on a support-raising tour in the US.[34] Babić would then take over the *de facto* leadership of the party.[35]

One of the causes of Opačić's and Zelembaba's discontent had been the number of influential posts given to the party's new *de facto* leader.[36] Rašković saw Babić as an ally and promoted his comet-like career within the party: Babić became president of the SNV and Rašković transferred significant authority to him.[37] However, giving Babić that much power turned out to be fatal since Rašković's protégé eventually decided to turn against his mentor. Babić was, in the beginning, careful not to make extreme public statements and he even managed to reach some local agreements with the Croatian authorities,[38] but he made no secret of his demands for more extensive autonomy and, with the purpose of defeating Rašković, he began to build an alternative power base. The territorial autonomy that he demanded was given its first form when SDS-dominated municipalities were joined together in the Community of

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[31] Transcript published in "Čija je Hrvatska". *Danas,* 31 July 1991, p. 12-15. See also Lovrić, Jelena, 1990. "Bitka za Hrvatsku". *Danas,* 7 August, p. 10-12.

[32] Lovrić, Jelena, 1990. "Bitka za Hrvatsku". *Danas,* 7 August, p. 10-12. Lovrić, Jelena, 1990. "Srpski puč u Hrvatskoj". *Danas,* 21 August, p. 7-9.

[33] ICTY, 2002a. "Transcripts: Prosecutor vs. Slobodan Milošević (IT-02-54)". Transcripts from Milan Babić's testimony, 18 November-9 December 2002. p. 13563. Opačić left the party as such, while Zelembaba remained a member. At the same meeting, the vice-president of the main board, Branko Perić, also resigned. "Ostavke Zelenbabe i Perica". *Borba,* 19 September 1990, p. 4. Stamatović, S., 1990. "Ostavke nisu pobuna". *Borba,* 20 September.

[34] Radulović, Srđan, 1991."Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme,* 25 February, p. 26-27.

[35] Interview Filip Švarm, journalist *Vreme.* Belgrade 13 September 2004.

[36] Radulović, Srđan, 1991."Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme,* 25 February, p. 26-27.

[37] Čulić, Marinko, 1990. "Rob države u državi". *Danas,* 21 August, p. 16-17. Babić, Jasna, 1990. "Čije je oružje". *Danas,* 18 September, p. 13-15.

[38] See e.g. Stamatović, S., 1990. "Građanski ili etnički suverenitet". *Borba,* 5 July, p. 14. Modrić, S., 1990. "Krčenje staza za buduće pregovore". *Borba,* 12 September.

Municipalities. Babić was to use this Community as a powerbase and he extended it by persuading or even forcing other municipalities to join. Moreover, he started building a loyal militia.[39] Letting Babić acquire that much power could, therefore, be seen as a grave mistake by Rašković but it may conceivably have been a political strategy gone wrong. The existence of hardliners gave Rašković an excuse for the radicalisation of the party and also gave him bargaining power since concessions were necessary to avoid *"the collision of two flocks of haws"*.[40]

Babić was, however, not easy to control and he was strengthening his power behind the scenes. Rašković had support in the central structures of the party, especially in the main board which comprised the founders of the party. Babić, on the other hand, relied more on local structures of power centred round Knin: the local SDS committee, the Knin municipal council, the Community of Municipalities and the SNV. This control was enhanced by imposing a hard line on the local SDS organisations and forcing out SDS moderates.[41] During Rašković's stay in the US, Babić radicalised the position of the SDS and its executive board decided that territorial and political autonomy would be demanded even if Croatia accepted a continuation of the Yugoslav federal structure.[42] In late October 1990, it came to the first open conflict between the two leaders: Vojislav Vukćević, who was a close associate of Rašković, vice-president of the SDS and one of the founders of the party, took part in negotiations with the Croatian Government. But when these negotiations were made public, the SDS in Knin denied the legitimacy of Vukćević to act as a negotiator. It was stated that no one but the president of the SNV, Milan Babić, had the right to negotiate on behalf of the Serb people.[43] In response, Rašković issued a letter affirming that Vukćević was the legitimate representative of the SDS and was authorised to negotiate.[44] The conflict further escalated in connection with the December 1990 elections in Serbia, which Rašković wanted the SDS to contest. Babić was against this and in a main board vote on 22 November he beat Rašković with the smallest possible margin: one vote.[45] Less than a month later, the Croatian

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[39] Glenny, Misha, 1996. *The Fall of Yugoslavia.* London: Penguin. p. 17.

[40] Čulić, Marinko, 1990. "Intervju: Jovan Rašković". *Danas,* 29 May p. 13-15.

[41] Gagnon, 2004: 143, 146.

[42] Jajčinović, Milan, 1990. "Stvaranje zapane Srbije". *Danas,* 30 October, p. 26-27.

[43] Vasić, Miloš, 1992. "Babic's Swan Song". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 20, 10 February.

[44] Rašković, Jovan, 1990. "Mišljenje". Document dated 29 October 1990. Author's copy.

[45] Radulović, Srđan, 1990. "Sokolovi u jatu". *Vreme,* 31 December, p. 26.

Parliament enacted a new Constitution, which included cultural autonomy for the Serbs (art. 15) but deprived them of their position as a constituent people. This was a severe setback for Rašković. The day before the Constitution was enacted, the Serb Autonomous Region (Srpska autonomna oblast, SAO) of Krajina was declared by the Community of Municipalities and with this step Babić had once again demonstrated his strength. The SDS in Knin subsequently launched a campaign against Rašković and his ally in Slavonia, Vojislav Vukćević, in an attempt to deliver the final blow to the beleaguered party leader.[46]

Opačić and Zelembaba had, meanwhile, returned to the SDS and, despite their hardline reputation, they were expected to strengthen Rašković due to their antipathy towards the Knin Mayor.[47] Consequently, Rašković decided to challenge Babić directly at a meeting of the SDS main board in mid-February 1991. The issues under discussion were the removal of two Babić loyalists from the main board, changing the SDS statute and Babić's proposal for the creation of an SDS party organisation in Krajina.[48] On the issue of the statute, Babić advocated making joining Serbia the official goal, whereas Rašković supported the preservation of Yugoslavia as the official party policy.[49] In the vote, which was perceived as a vote for or against Babić and his policies, the Knin Mayor was clearly defeated: 38 out of 42 members of the board supported Rašković.[50] Vukćević argues that at that point Babić was *"politically dead"*.[51] However, the moment of triumph was short-lived, since the main board lacked the power to implement its decision.[52] The Babić-led SNV had, for several months, not adopted a single proposal bearing Rašković's seal[53] and, exactly one month after the main board defeat, Babić went on to form a separate party organisation, the SDS of Krajina. While this could be seen as the formation of a new party, the divide between the two parts of the SDS was fluid and Babić argued that he, as leader of the SDS Krajina, spoke for the SDS as a whole. Formal institutions

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[46] "SDS se ograđuje od Raškovića". *Vjesnik*, 1 February 1991, p. 8. Radulović, Srđan, 1991. "Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme*, 25 February, p. 26-27.
[47] Radulović, Srđan, 1990. "Sokolovi u jatu". *Vreme*, 31 December, p. 26.
[48] Radulović, Srđan, 1991. "Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme*, 25 February, p. 26-27. Vresnik, Victor, 1991. "Rašković izjavljuje da će se 'Krajina' prošiti na Slavoniju i Baranju!". *Vjesnik*, 19 February, p. 4.
[49] Interview Vojislav Vukćević, Belgrade, 7 August 2003.
[50] Radulović, Srđan, 1991. "Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme*, 25 February, p. 26-27.
[51] Interview Vojislav Vukćević, Belgrade, 7 August 2003.
[52] Interview Filip Švarm, Belgrade, 13 September 2004.
[53] "Borba za SDS-prijestolje". *Vjesnik*, 20 February 1991, p. 7.

were at this point not of great importance and despite Babić's defeat in the 'main' SDS he was barely weakened. Events unfolded quickly and polarisation was increasing.

Violence first broke out in the Western Slavonian town of Pakrac in early March 1991 when Serb militias confronted the Croatian police.[54] Even though the rebellion failed, the arrest of 400 Serbs still threatened to bring an end to the more moderate SDS leadership in this part of Croatia. The local leader of the SDS, Veljko Džakula, feared that if the arrests were upheld, the local SDS leaders would be killed by the relatives of the people arrested.[55] In order to avoid complete marginalisation by the hardliners, the Slavonian leaders therefore decided to go to Zagreb to seek a solution with President Tuđman and, as a result of these talks, the Croatian authorities released the 400 people. The crisis was, therefore, temporarily suspended.

SDS faction seeks co-operation with non-SDS Serbs

These talks between the Slavonian leaders of the SDS and the Croatian Government coincided with the submission of three proposals for cultural autonomy to the Parliament's special commission on inter-ethnic relations. The most comprehensive of these proposals suggested 'maximalist' cultural autonomy as well as the creation of a Club of Serb Deputies in Parliament. At the meeting, the SDS leaders also proposed the creation of a Club of Serb Deputies and, furthermore, indicated that the SDS deputies might return to Parliament.[56] So, therefore, it seemed that a rapprochement between the SDS and the nine remaining Serb deputies was possible[57] and this could potentially strengthen the moderate faction of the SDS. Such an alliance, however, never materialised: the SDS moderates were becoming increasingly marginalised and, furthermore, co-operation could have met resistance from the leader of the SKH-SDP, who was wary of his party being perceived as the representative of the Serbs.[58]

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[54] Daskalović, Zoran, 1991. "Rat u Pakracu". *Danas*, 5 March, p. 28-29.
[55] Interview Vojislav Vukćević, Belgrade, 7 August 2003.
[56] Krušelj, Željko, 1991. "Srbi u Banskim Dvorima". *Danas*, 19 March, p. 22-23
[57] Number based on list of MPs in Sabol, Željko, (ed.) 1992. *Sabor Republike Hrvatske 1990-1992*. Zagreb: Hrvatski Sabor. In addition to the nine remaining Serb MPs, there were nine other MPs who did not declare their nationality and three MPs of other nationality. 28 Serb MPs had left Parliament, 5 of whom were from the SDS.
[58] Interview Simo Rajić, Zagreb, 19 March 2004.

In April 1991, a new explicitly Serb party was formed: The Serb National Party (Srpska narodna stranka, SNS) under the leadership of Milan Đukić.[59] The party supported a moderate stance, but its ability to serve as an alternative to the SDS was seriously undermined by its close relations with the Croatian authorities and it was regarded as little more than Tuđman's mouthpiece. As late as July 1991, when violence had already broken out in parts of Slavonia, the Serb Democratic Forum (Srpski demokratski forum, SDF) was founded. The then president of the SDF, Milorad Pupovac, argues that the SDF was formed by a group of Serb intellectuals when they realised that the conflict would take *"explicit extreme ethnic dimensions"* and that the non-ethnic parties were not doing anything to stop the conflict.[60] The SDF supported the independence of Croatia within its existing borders[61] and argued for autonomy as a solution to the conflict.[62] Among the founders of the SDF were Rašković and other members of the SDS, and one of those SDS members, Veljko Džakula, argues: *"we wanted to create a large front, where the voice of reason could be heard"*.[63] The SDF constituted the first significant 'ethnic' alternative to the SDS and it tried to prevent the radicalisation of the dominant Serb forces in Croatia but when the initiative was finally under way, when former non-ethnic forces had accepted that this conflict was centred on an ethnic cleavage, the conflict had already spiralled out of control and the SDF was no match for the Knin faction of the SDS.

The hardline SDS had consolidated its position when on 18 March 1991, the Municipal Assembly of Knin adopted the decision to separate SAO Krajina from Croatia and two weeks later it was decided to join Serbia. Similarly, in Eastern Slavonia, the SNV decided in late March 1991 that Vukčević should no longer represent the region and it was declared that the region had joined Serbia. The leader of the Serb Radicals, Vojislav Šešelj, subsequently arrived in Baranja to support the separation from Croatia and he declared that Vukčević should be shot: *"Shoot him down in front of his house like a dog"*.[64] This finally led Vukčević to resign from the

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[59] Podgornik, Branko, 1991. "Osniva se Srpska Narodna Stranka". *Vjesnik*, 6 April, p. 5.

[60] Interview Milorad Pupovac, Zagreb, 11 August 2003.

[61] Promitzer, Christian, 1992. "Political Parties in Croatia". *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 43(3): 41-45. p. 45.

[62] In 1992 Milorad Pupovac wrote, "the Serb minority must be allowed to develop its own territorial, political and cultural autonomy". Pupovac, Milorad, 1992. "A settlements for the Serbs in Croatia". *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 43(3): 46-47. p. 46.

[63] Interview Veljko Džakula, Zagreb, 12 August 2003.

[64] Interview Vojislav Vukčević, Belgrade, 7 August 2003.

SDS leadership later stating: *"I stepped aside in order not to be killed".*[65] With this leadership change in Eastern Slavonia, Babić was further strengthened as he won over another SDS faction. In the summer of 1991, the moderate wing of the SDS still had considerable support in the central structures of the party but the hardliners were in firm control in Knin and Eastern Slavonia. The hardliners achieved their victory through their support in local and regional party structures and through their control of economic, political and especially coercive resources. One audience was crucial in the supply of these resources: Slobodan Milošević, the 'President of all Serbs'.

3.2 Kin-state involvement: Building up and arming extremists

Belgrade's dominant rhetorical response to the HDZ's electoral victory was to argue that the new Croatian authorities had nothing but harmful intentions towards the republic's Serb population. This undoubtedly aided the more extreme forces among the rivalling Serb leaders, but Belgrade's involvement was not limited to this more general fanning of flames, and the Serbian authorities took an active part in the SDS infighting.

Support for radical wing of the SDS

During the course of 1990 and early 1991 Milošević was becoming increasingly frustrated with Rašković and Babić argues that the Serbian President, in early 1991, told him to replace the SDS leader.[66] Rašković had not only showed willingness to negotiate but he also distanced himself from the Serbian President whom he opposed in public and even described as *"a great Bolshevik"* and a *"tyrant".*[67] Rašković, furthermore, decided to let the SDS's branch in Serbia run against Milošević's SPS in the Serbian elections in late 1990, thereby challenging Milošević directly.[68] Babić, on the other hand, had no problems expressing his unreserved support for the Serbian President: on the eve of the Serbian elections he sent a letter of support to Milošević and, after the demonstrations on 9 March 1991, he reiterated his support and

[65] Švarm, Filip, 1996. "Interview Vojislav Vukcevic: Unlearned lessons". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 253, 10 August.
[66] ICTY, 2002a: 13565.
[67] Rašković 1990: 328. Čulić, Marinko, 1990. "Pohod udruženih voždova". *Danas*, 10 July, p. 13-15. Lovrić, Jelena, 1990. "Bitka za Hrvatsku". *Danas*, 7 August, p. 10-12.
[68] Radulović, Srđan, 1991. "Ko režira deobe: Šta se događu Kninu". *Vreme*, 25 February, p. 26-27.

described Drašković as Tuđman's "cat's paw".[69] These letters demonstrate that the Serb leaders in Croatia were not merely passively following Belgrade's moves; Babić was very actively wooing for Milošević's support knowing that it could prove decisive in his rivalry with Rašković. Babić was willing to follow Belgrade's lead and in his efforts to make Milošević start betting on a different horse he was, furthermore, aided by being less anti-communist than Rašković who often denounced Milošević due his believe in socialism.[70]

Belgrade's involvement in the internal SDS rivalry was of two main forms: arming of the paramilitary police and support for Babić through the state-controlled media. In the Belgrade media, a public profile was created for the formerly relatively anonymous Mayor from Knin; an image of him as a champion of Serb patriotism, the undisputable leader of Serbs in Croatia and a key figure for implementing the 'all Serbs in one state plan'.[71] The military side of the involvement started earlier with the radical elements in the Serb movement being armed and organised by the Serbian security service and the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, by the JNA and by semi-private channels organised by retired generals like Dušan Pekić.[72] In this aspect of Belgrade's involvement, the then police inspector in Knin, Milan Martić, played a key role and from the log revolution and until the JNA began interfering in March 1991, his police represented the only law in Krajina.[73] These so-called Martićevi were organised by the Serbian security service and came to function as a form of parallel structure in Krajina: they were never subjected to the JNA's control and took dictate directly from Belgrade.[74] The military side of Belgrade's involvement may not have been directly targeted to assist Babić but to strengthen radical elements in general and to ensure control over developments. However, through an alliance with Martić, Babić had access to military resources and, therefore, was considerably advantaged in his competition with Rašković, who only possessed resources of a political nature.

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[69] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Love that'll never die". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 113, 22 November.
[70] See e.g. Lovrić, Jelena, 1990. "Rašković u kućinama". *Danas*, 7 August, p. 11.
[71] Cerović, Stojan, 1992. "Troubles with a bit player". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, 13 January.
[72] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Love that'll never die". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 113, 22 November. Vasić, Miloš et al, 1995. "The Fall of Western Slavonia". *Vreme News Digest* no. 188, 8 May. Sell, 2002: 116.
[73] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Milan Martic's Flying Circus". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 116, 13 December.
[74] Gow, 2003: 80. Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Milan Martic's Flying Circus". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 116, 13 December.

Through the supply of resources necessary in the intra-SDS competition, Belgrade played an important role in Babić's victory and in the marginalisation of the more moderate faction of the SDS. Babić realised the importance of Belgrade's support and actively pursued it, emphasising the special position enjoyed by the Serbian President. Rašković, on the other hand, attempted to become directly part of the elite competition in *Serbia* thereby clearly overstepping Milošević's limits and provoking his anger. Despite deliberately seeking Belgrade's support, Babić turned out to be harder to control than Milošević had anticipated. After consolidating his power within the SDS, Babić also began asserting his independence, and he already in March 1991, challenged Milošević's right to reach agreements on behalf of the Krajina Serbs and reminded the public that Milošević was the President of Serbia, *not* of Krajina.[75] For a while though, the mutual mistrust seemed to evaporate after the JNA intervened on behalf of the Serbs in late March 1991, thereby giving Knin a sign that they would get the needed support from Belgrade.[76] At the time, the stance of the international community also still seemed to favour the Serb position: in March 1991, both US and EC leaders expressed their support for the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.[77] But over the next year, the international position changed considerably, which caused a change in Belgrade's strategy[78] and consequently a rift with the Serb leaders in Croatia.

In conclusion, Belgrade's involvement was very significant for the direction and outcome of intra-Serb competition in Croatia. But it was not only one-sided: the hardliners were actively seeking Belgrade's support and were, furthermore, asserting their independence following their victory. The process of ethnification was, as expected, accompanied by the symbolic importance of the kin-state leader, but the importance of kin-state involvement increased significantly when non-democratic resources became of greater importance in the competition. The great significance of such resources would suggest the limited importance of popular attitudes in the intra-Serb competition.

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[75] "Milan Babić: Hrvatska nema suverenitet". *Danas,* 26 March 1991, p. 24. Radulović, Srđan, 1991. "Nedosledni Babić". *Vreme* 1 April, p. 11.
[76] Silber; Little, 1996: 145.
[77] Burg, Steven L.; Shoup, Paul S., 1999. *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention.* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. p. 80.
[78] *Ibid.* 84.

3.3 General population: Radicals lacking popular support

The SDS managed to achieve dominance from a minority position at the time of the elections. Was this change in the party's fortunes driven by changing popular attitudes? Was its subsequent radicalisation?

1990 elections: Support for non-ethnic alternative

At the time of the 1990 elections, ethnic divisions were still not dominant and most of the Serb voters supported the SKH-SDP. According to a poll conducted shortly before the elections, 44 per cent of the Serb voters would support the SKH-SDP, 22 per cent the SDS and 14 per cent the JSDS.[79] This even overestimated the support enjoyed by the SDS since, at the elections, only 2 per cent of all voters supported the party, which translates into around 13.5 per cent of the Serb vote.[80] It would seem, therefore, that a part of the Serb electorate decided in the last minute to close ranks behind the SKH-SDP or refrained from voting. This indicates a fairly low level of polarisation or ethnification.

Due to this incomplete ethnification of politics, the SDS knew that it would have problems capturing the non-ethnic ground and the JSDS was, therefore, designed to attract Serb voters who would otherwise be more inclined to support the reformed communists. Judging from pre-elections surveys, this profiling of the parties was successful and the supporters of the two parties differed significantly in their political attitudes (Table 3.1). While the SDS was an all-Serb party, the JSDS also attracted other nationalities: 23 per cent Yugoslavs, 5 per cent Croats and 5 per cent Muslims. Among the Serb respondents the JSDS supporters were, furthermore, markedly less religious than the supporters of the SDS. In terms of political attitudes the Serb JSDS supporters were more inclined to advocate the preservation of the existing federal structure, whereas the SDS's supporters advocated a more centralised federation or even a unitary state. In addition, the majority of the JSDS's Serb supporters did not feel that Serbs were discriminated against, whereas the majority of the SDS's supporters argued this to be the case and consequently regarded inter-ethnic relations in Croatia as the most important election issue.

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[79] Pre-election survey "Anketa: Izbori 1990." Fakultet političkih znanosti, Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. This and the following datasets were kindly given to me by Professor Ivan Šiber.
[80] Gagnon, 2004: 35.

Table 3.1 Serb supporters of the SDS, the JSDS and the SKH-SDP

	SDS	JSDS	SKH-SDP
Percentage of Serbs among supporters	100 pct	66 pct	28 pct
Percentage who are not religious*	35 pct	69 pct	79 pct
Support for preservation of federal structure*	16 pct	46 pct	36 pct
Percentage who agree that Serbs and Croats are equal*	14 pct	56 pct	63 pct

*Only Serb respondents. The differences between the parties are all significant at the 0.001 level (the two latter at the 0.000 level). Data from "Anketa: Izbori 1990".

As the leaders of the two parties had expected, the supporters of the JSDS were, therefore, closer to the attitudes of SKH-SDP supporters. There were, however, important demographic differences between the two groups with the SKH-SDP's Serb supporters being more urban and better educated. The Serbs who supported the SDS and the JSDS were generally less urban and less educated than the Serbs who supported the reformed communists (Table 3.2). This suggests that socio-economic differences were of significance, even if an actual cleavage was not well-established and socio-economic issues were not prominent in the campaign.

Table 3.2 Demographic characteristics of SDS, JSDS and SKH-SDP supporters

	SDS	JSDS	SKH-SDP
Residence in rural areas	48 pct	50 pct	33 pct
Education: 8 years or less	19 pct	28 pct	16 pct
Education: University degree	13 pct	6 pct	18 pct

Only Serb respondents. The differences between the parties are all significant at the 0.000 level. Data from "Anketa: Izbori 1990".

The JSDS had only managed to attract Serbs who, in terms of demographic characteristics, were closer to the SDS's voters but who supported a non-ethnic position. Judging from the election results, these voters were few and far between. The SDS's supporters expressed views that could be difficult to accommodate but the party's poor showing in the elections suggested that such attitudes would not present a significant problem. One must, however, consider that the disappointing result for the SDS was partly explained by its poor organisation: the party was only properly organised in the Knin-area and this naturally hampered its electoral

performance elsewhere.[81] Moreover, even though the SDS had not performed well, the election results did not signify that a socio-economic cleavage dominated political competition;[82] and the ethnic cleavage was to become increasingly more important after the elections. The transitional situation and the lack of a well-established socio-economic cleavage therefore aided the SDS.

Post-electoral ethnification

After the elections, the SDS loudly questioned the SKH-SDP's right to represent the Serbs in Croatia. The SDS's assertions were mostly based on the SKH-SDP's co-operation with the new Croatian authorities and on it being a non-ethnic party, but the SDS leaders, furthermore, pointed to declining Serb support for the reformed communists. Based on this alleged alteration in support, the SDS demanded new elections in order to demonstrate their legitimacy as the Serb representative. Such elections were never granted but the reduced support for the reformed communists was not just dreamed up in the SDS headquarters, and surveys point to a sharp decline in support for the SKH-SDP among Serbs. Thus, in August 1990, only 24 per cent of the surveyed Serbs had a positive view of the party's leader, Ivica Račan, compared with 47 per cent in June and 33 per cent in July. From being the staunchest supporters of the SKH-SDP, the Serbs had become the group with the least positive view of the party's leader.[83] At the same time, 75 per cent of the Serb respondents had a positive view of Rašković and 67 per cent indicated their support for the SDS-organised referendum on Serb autonomy.[84]

But what caused this rapid decline in support? Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain any surveys of dissatisfied SKH-SDP supporters, but attitudes among the party's Serb supporters shortly before the elections, nevertheless, give an indication. Most of the party's supporters said that they would vote for the party due to its programme and when asked to list values of importance to them in the election campaign, three were clearly predominant: Yugoslav community (76 per cent), peace and security (61 per cent) and national equality (59 per cent).[85] By August 1990 the

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[81] Kovačević, 2003: 29-30.
[82] Šiber; Wenzel, 1997: 83.
[83] Jović, Dejan, 1990. "I Tuđman i Rašković rastu". *Danas*, 28 August, p. 30-33.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] "Anketa: Izbori 1990".

Serb voters could increasingly argue that the SKH-SDP had failed on all three accounts. The preservation of Yugoslavia was looking less likely, peace and security was seriously under threat and national equality was undermined by the new Croatian authorities with whom many Serb SKH-SDP voters felt that their party was working too closely. The party's support for the amendments to the Croatian Constitution especially proved highly unpopular. The SKH-SDP, on the other hand, argues that the main problem was that many of the Serb party members could not accept that the party had reformed, that it was no longer the League of Communists.[86] They, thus, argue that it was mainly an ideological cleavage rather than a national one.

While the support for the SKH-SDP among the Serb voters therefore declined markedly over a very short period of time, the increased support for the SDS was never tested at the polls and the SDS's removal of local SKH-SDP councillors was certainly not given a democratic mandate. The SDS, moreover, underwent a considerable radicalisation from the elections and until the outbreak of war. Did this change in the party's position enjoy the support of the Serb voters? If we compare Rašković's support in June 1990 with his support in August 1990, i.e. after the referendum on autonomy, then we find a small increase: in June, 69 per cent had a positive view of him but, in August, this had risen to 75 per cent. But this increase in support was accompanied by a growing number of Serbs who had a negative view of the SDS leader: from 3 per cent in June to 14 per cent in August.[87] It is, moreover, not clear that support for Rašković should be interpreted as support for a more radical course. The August survey was conducted after the leaking of talks between Rašković and Tuđman, which in the eyes of SDS hardliners revealed the party leader as being too moderate. Also, support for the referendum (67 per cent) was lower than the support for Rašković.

Judging from the available survey data, it does appear that the Serb electorate abandoned the SKH-SDP; they abandoned the main non-ethnic party which seems to indicate that ethnification was also characteristic of the general population and not

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[86] Interview Dušan Plećaš, Zagreb, 26 March 2004.

[87] Jović, Dejan, 1990. "Ugled novih vođa". *Danas,* 26 June, p. 14-17. Jović, Dejan, 1990. "I Tuđman i Rašković rastu". *Danas,* 28 August, p. 30-33. In the latter survey the number of respondents from Knin was lower, which could cause an underestimation of the radicalisation.

just of elite competition. However, there is no clear evidence that support was transferred to the SDS in the same proportions or that the continued radicalisation of the SDS was supported. It should be recognised that there was no real alternative to the SDS: the JSDS was marginal and the SKH-SDP made clear its disinclination to be the representative of the Serbs in Croatia. But the SDS was eager to legitimise their radicalisation and one way of doing so was through referenda.

Referenda in support of radicalisation

In July 1990, the SDS leadership decided to hold a referendum on autonomy, partly to counter claims that the Serb Assembly did not represent the opinions of the Serbs in Croatia.[88] The result showed overwhelming support for autonomy and this gave added impetus to the continued radicalisation of the party. The exercise was repeated by Babić in the spring of 1991, when Serb voters were asked to vote on joining SAO Krajina with Serbia and remain in Yugoslavia. Again, the result was overwhelmingly supportive: according to the Krajina authorities, 93 per cent supported the proposal and in the Knin-area the turnout was reported to be a staggering 99.7 per cent.[89] With this result, Babić's hardline faction could point to increased legitimacy for their position. These referenda, however, should not be seen as a perfect test of public opinion: the democratic credentials were doubtful,[90] the 'urban Serbs' did not take part and the voters, therefore, only represented a minority of the Croatian Serbs. Rašković explained the absence of the 'urban Serbs' with the greater fear that he argued existed in the cities[91] but, if previous patterns are anything to go by, less support could have been expected from the Serbs in the cities. Babić's support base was in the Knin region and this was also the centre of his 1991 referendum. But even though the referenda cannot be seen as a precise reflection of popular opinion, they do indicate that the SDS was supported by a large part of the Serb population and they played an important role in strengthening the party. In the increasingly tense atmosphere and with the successful elimination of alternatives, the SDS hardliners managed to take the voters along, but this does not mean that the process was driven by popular demands.

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[88] Interview Vojislav Vukćević, Belgrade, 7 August 2003.
[89] Stamatović, S., 1991. "Za prisajedinjenje – 93 od sto". *Borba,* 14 May, p. 4.
[90] There were no voter registers and in August 1990, 48,000 people are reported to have voted in Belgrade. Goldstein, Ivo, 1999. *Croatia: a history.* London: Hurst. p. 219.
[91] Lovrić, Jelena, 1990. "Jovan Rašković: To se ne može zaustaviti". *Danas,* 21 August, p. 8.

Popular attitudes and marginalisation of moderates

The clearest example of the lack of importance of popular attitudes for the radicalisation of the Serb position is the leadership rivalry within the SDS. Rašković's popularity among the Croatian Serbs and among SDS supporters was unmatched but it was not enough for him to hold on to power. His popularity remained intact after the leaking of his talks with Tuđman but it was not sufficient when Babić enjoyed the support of local and regional party structures, paramilitary formations and Belgrade.

When Babić began his assent to the top of the SDS, his ratings approached those of the party leader, but never surpassed them: in September 1990, 84 per cent of the SDS's supporters had a positive view of Rašković, while 76 per cent held that opinion of Babić. Similarly, in November 1990, 71 per cent of the Serbs had a positive view of Babić and 76 per cent had a positive view of Rašković.[92] However, as their internal rivalry became public and Babić radicalised his position, his support among the Serbs plummeted. Thus, in December 1990, only 54 per cent of the Serbs had a positive view of Babić compared with Rašković's 86 per cent. This meant that Babić was less popular among the Serbs than the federal PM, Ante Marković and Ivan Zvonimir Čičak, then president of the Croatian Peasant Party, both of whom were Croats.[93] Therefore, not only the popular support for radicalisation but also the dominance of the ethnic cleavage among the general population can be questioned. While Babić could not match Rašković's popularity he, as the Mayor of Knin, nevertheless had a popular mandate that Rašković lacked. This may have earned him support in the Knin-region that he could use in the challenge against the party's leader. But while such local popularity may have played some role in the elite competition, the outbidding that took place within the party was not based on greater support in the Serb population: Rašković continued to be more popular than Babić among the Serbs in Croatia and non-ethnic alternatives also seem to have enjoyed popular support, despite declining faith in the SKH-SDP. Babić's victory and the radicalisation of the party was, therefore, based on the availability and effectiveness

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[92] Jović, Dejan, 1990. "Jastrebovi niže lete". *Danas*, 2 October, p. 16-19. Jović, Dejan, 1990. "Slavlju je kraj". *Danas*, 4 December, p. 7-9.
[93] Jović, Dejan, 1991. "Čemu se nadaju". *Danas*, 1 January, p. 28-31.

of other resources: localised party support, non-democratic resources – especially (para)military resources – and kin-state support.

Even in the pre-war period, when elections were held and violence was still not the defining characteristics of politics, intra-ethnic competition was consequently not voter-driven, it was not about who could most successfully play the ethnic card. One of the consequences of this was the use of a vague position by the SDS: a position from which the party could appeal to the middle ground while at the same time seeking to increase tensions. Thus, while the demands were moderate and the need for peaceful means was stressed, the rhetoric was often inflammatory, designed to create inter-ethnic tensions. This brings us to the final aspect of the analysis, the inter-ethnic interplay. Theoretically this is expected to be important, but how significant was it for the pre-war intra-Serb competition in Croatia and the resulting ethnification and radicalisation of politics?

3.4 Inter-ethnic interplay: Lost moments of generosity?

One factor which is often pointed to when explaining the marginalisation of the moderate Serb forces and the SDS's increasing radicalisation is the actions of the HDZ-led Croatian Government. This argument is both straightforward and compelling. In their election campaign the HDZ had targeted the over-representation of Serbs in official positions, and following the election victory many Serbs were fired from their jobs or forced to sign loyalty oaths.[94] In July 1990, amendments to the Constitution were passed which replaced the five-pointed star on the Croatian flag with the šahovnica symbol, which the Serbs associated with the pro-Nazi Independent State of Croatia. The 'Croatian literary language', moreover, became the sole official language and the requirement of a two-thirds majority in decisions on inter-ethnic issues was removed.[95]

Robert Hislope argues that through these actions, the Croatian Government helped fuel Serb radicalism and strongly contributed to the ousting of Rašković from the SDS's leadership: it was a case of lost generosity moments.[96] Mark Thompson

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[94] Silber; Little 1996: 108.
[95] Hislope, 1998: 73-4.
[96] *Ibid.* 75.

similarly argues that the actions of the Croatian authorities made the moderate Serbs look implausible and provided ammunition for the extremists.[97] This argument is also echoed by Susan Woodward, who asserts that the failure of Tuđman to meet the initial demands for cultural autonomy led to a radicalisation of demands and ultimately the change of leadership in the SDS.[98] The question is, however, how decisive these actions were in the competition between Rašković and Babić: was it a case of radicalisation breeding radicalisation? It would, furthermore, be a mistake to view the HDZ or the Croatian Government as wholly unified; there were, in fact, great divisions. How did this fractionalisation of the 'opposing side' affect Serb elite competition? Finally, one more issue must be considered when analysing the interplay: how did it contribute to the ethnification of politics? How did it influence the dominance of the ethnic cleavage?

Ethnification of politics

The victory of the HDZ was a shock to most Serbs and resulted in increased support for the SDS,[99] but the new Croatian Government also aided the party in a more direct way: Rašković was considered the main interlocutor when Serb issues were concerned and, in October 1990, the SDS became formally recognised as the legitimate representative of the Serbs in Croatia. This recognition and the willingness to engage in dialogue with the SDS was obviously influenced by the hesitancy or unwillingness of the SKH-SDP to take on the role as the representative of the Croatian Serbs. However, by negotiating with the SDS and recognising its legitimacy, the Croatian Government also reinforced its own position and its ethnic definition of politics; like the SDS it had an interest in the dominance of the ethnic cleavage. The HDZ was still facing competition from the SKH-SDP and, therefore, also sought its marginalisation. As a consequence of this convergence of interests, the SDS and the HDZ even co-operated on the local level to force SKH-SDP deputies out of office.[100] The interplay between the HDZ-led Croatian Government and the SDS thereby helped reinforce the ethnic cleavage and served to weaken non-ethnic alternatives.

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[97] Thompson, 1992: 269.

[98] Woodward, 1995: 170.

[99] Kasapović, Mirjana, Zakošek, Nenad, 1997. "Democratic Transition in Croatia: Between Democracy, Sovereignty and War". In Ivan Šiber (ed.) *The 1990 and the 1992/93 Sabor elections in Croatia.* Berlin: Sigma. p. 24.

[100] Gagnon, 2004: 145-6.

While the interests of the ethnic leaders therefore overlapped on the issue of ethnification of politics, there was not unanimous backing for this policy within the HDZ. In negotiations with Rašković, Tuđman argued that he had problems justifying to HDZ deputies why he negotiated with the SDS and not with the other Serb deputies who were more numerous.[101] Rašković became increasingly unpopular with Croatian voters and persistently rated as the least liked of all politicians in Croatia, only challenged by Opačić, Babić and other Serb leaders. Furthermore, even though the hawks within the HDZ certainly supported the ethnic conception of politics, they opposed contacts with the SDS leader. Although radicals benefit from the existence of another ethnic party – it legitimises their existence – co-operation is precluded by their hard-line position: if it were possible to co-operate, then a radical stance would not be needed. Therefore, it may paradoxically have been the greater strength of the more moderate wing of the HDZ that helped the SDS obtain the dominant position in the Serb community: its willingness to recognise the SDS as a negotiating partner aided the ethnification of politics.

Weakening of SDS moderate wing

Negotiations with Tuđman were, however, not always to Rašković's benefit: the SDS leader was persistently criticised by hardliners in the party for his alleged softness. Their critique was strengthened by the leaking of the transcript from the Tuđman-Rašković talks, which the hardliners used to support their claim that Rašković did not represent the interest of the Serbs in Croatia, that he was, in fact, playing a double game.[102] The transcript severely weakened Rašković and he never managed to regain his former position of strength. His position was even further weakened when it became clear that the Croatian Government would not meet his demands. One of the biggest failures for Rašković's more accommodating course was the passing of the new Croatian Constitution in December 1990. Although it contained provisions for cultural autonomy, the preamble declared that Croatia was the national state of the Croats and Rašković had thereby failed to achieve his most important demand: that the Serbs retained their constituent status in Croatia. The SDS officially maintained that its position was contingent on the policies pursued by the Croatian Government;

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[101] "Čija je Hrvatska". *Danas,* 31 July 1990, p. 12-15.
[102] Interview Drago Hedl, journalist *Feral Tribune.* Osijek, 11 September 2003.

that the extent of demands depended on the future status of Yugoslavia. It was, therefore, at least nominally, dependent on the position of the Croatian side.

Tuđman's adviser who decided to leak the transcript argues that this decision was based on Rašković's public statements in which he argued that President Tuđman was taking an extreme position. The motive behind making the talks public was thereby to demonstrate the willingness of the Croatian Government to negotiate and to reach a compromise.[103] This was the official position of the Government: they stressed their willingness to find a negotiated solution and, furthermore, argued that the majority of the Serbs in Croatia did not support the radical stance espoused by some Serb leaders.[104] However, there were limits to their willingness to negotiate and this struck at the heart of Rašković's demands: they would not concede constituent status to the Serbs, since this was felt to undermine Croatian sovereignty.[105] Furthermore, while cultural autonomy and, later, some degree of self-government for Knin and Glina were acceptable, more extensive autonomy arrangements were not. On this basis, therefore, it was very difficult to reach a compromise which would have helped Rašković bolster his position within the SDS. Once it became clear that Rašković was no longer in control of the SDS, incentives to negotiate were diminished since Babić was not interested in negotiating a solution within the framework of a Croatian state. At this point, the position of the Croatian Government became increasingly irrelevant for intra-Serb competition.

HDZ factions and Serbs politics

When analysing the inter-ethnic interplay, not only must the actions and rhetoric of Tuđman be considered, but also those of the different factions within the HDZ and the assessment by Serb leaders of their relative strength. Like the SDS, the HDZ was far from unified: it was more a political movement than a political party and despite Tuđman's cohesive power, it contained a number of different factions. These divisions fed into the Government which was prone to constant ministerial

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[103] Interview Slaven Letica, Zagreb, 18 September 2003.
[104] Mesić, Stipe, 2004. *The Demise of Yugoslavia: A Political Memoir*. Budapest: CEU Press. E.g. p. 13, 143.
[105] Interview Slaven Letica, Zagreb, 18 September 2003.

changes.[106] In interviews, Rašković warned against the extreme HDZ factions and argued that they were a reason for his ambivalent position: for his willingness to negotiate, while at the same time using inflammatory rhetoric.[107] Furthermore, Rašković continuously emphasised that his problem was not with Tuđman and he asked the President to publicly distance himself and the HDZ from the hawks.[108] After the elections in 1990 the more moderate wing of the HDZ seemed to be stronger[109] but the radical wing gradually asserted its position. One of the turning points in Eastern Slavonia came when the moderate regional police chief, Josip Riehl-Kir, was murdered by HDZ extremists in July 1991. With this murder, hardline HDZ officials gained the upper hand in both the police and in the civil administration.[110] Similar, if less violent, strengthening of the hardliners was also taking place elsewhere in Croatia.

The existence of the hardliners in the HDZ, their extreme public statements and the possibility that they might become more powerful further weakened the position of more moderate forces in the SDS thereby adding to the party's radicalisation. The existence of hardliners within the SDS and their apparent increasing strength likewise bolstered the HDZ hardliners and facilitated the radicalisation of the party. Fractionalisation on one side risks spurring radicalisation of the other side, since it provides the radicals with ammunition in the internal rivalry, and a spiral of radicalisation may, therefore, result.

Lost moments of generosity?

The position of the Croatian Government, as well as the divisions in the ruling party, therefore affected intra-ethnic competition in the SDS: the radicals could use the alleged extremism of the 'other side' to legitimise their own position and discredit attempts to find a negotiated solution. However, the question is to what extent Babić and his followers needed the extra ammunition. They were already in a good position

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[106] Kasapović, Mirjana, 1997. "Parliamentary elections in Croatia: Electoral models and their effects". In Ivan Šiber (ed.) *The 1990 and the 1992/93 Sabor elections in Croatia.* Berlin: Sigma. p. 57. Silber; Little, 1996: 96.

[107] Like the SDS, the HDZ employed a dual strategy: it generally portrayed itself as a moderate party, but also made use of more extreme rhetoric. Gagnon, 2004: 137-8.

[108] E.g. "Rašković u kućinama". *Danas,* 7 August 1990, p. 11. Čulić, Marinko, 1990. "Intervju: Jovan Rašković". *Danas,* 29 May, p. 13-15.

[109] See e.g. Gaće, Nadežda, 1990. "Na rubu pameti – opet". *Borba* 15-16 September, p. 5.

[110] Silber; Little, 1996: 140. Interview Drago Hedl, journalist, *Feral Tribune.* Osijek, 11 August 2003.

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to outbid Rašković and prevent agreements from being made through the use of intimidation, blockades or even physical assaults. The audience to which the hardliners appealed were intra-party forces as well as the kin-state leader. The latter was not interested in a solution within the framework of a Croatian state and the intra-party forces that mainly mattered were radicalised forces in Krajina, as well as various paramilitary forces who were early on espousing an extreme position. The attitude of the Serb general population was not the driving force in the radicalisation of elite positions and the impact of lost generosity moments, therefore, should not be sought in their influence on mass antagonisms. That said, a more accommodating course from the Croatian Government would likely have reduced the number of followers that the extremists could take along and, furthermore, have strengthened the moderate forces.[111] But it appears unlikely that this would have prevented the radicals in the SDS from becoming dominant: the interplay with the Croatian Government and the HDZ, while certainly important, was not *the* decisive variable for the intra-Serb competition. Thus, the inter-ethnic interplay had a very significant impact on the ethnification of politics and the dominance of the SDS, and it also affected Babić's ability to oust Rašković without it being solely, or even primarily, about 'lost generosity moments'.

3.5 Pre-war ethnification and radicalisation

The ethnification of politics in Croatia had as its starting point a Serb party that only received a minority of the Serb votes: the SDS had not succeeded in 'ethnicising' politics prior to the elections and the main cleavage was the future status of Yugoslavia. However, due to internal divisions in the SKH-SDP, actions of the Croatian Government, institutionalisation of the SDS and its use of non-democratic tactics, the reformed communists soon lost their advantage. As a result, the SKH-SDP became increasingly marginalised and the SDS achieved near-monolithic status in the Serb community. Non-SDS Serb representatives only briefly increased their influence when the moderate wing of the SDS sought co-operation. An ethnically defined alternative to the SDS was not created until violence had already broken out in parts of the country and the alternative lacked the geographically concentrated support on which the SDS had built its power.

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[111] Goldstein, 1999: 217.

Ethnification of politics was part of the political struggle and the speed of ethnification was, therefore, influenced by factors of strength in political competition, which, in this transitional and increasingly tense context, included the use of non-democratic tactics. The dominance of the ethnic party was not due to the overwhelming power of ethnicity; it was not a voter-driven process, although the voters did abandon the main non-ethnic party which had increasing difficulty presenting itself as such an alternative. One important factor in the ethnification of politics, which sets it apart from conventional political competition, was the inter-ethnic interplay. The Croatian Government's recognition of the SDS as the legitimate Serb representative and the local co-operation between the SDS and the HDZ greatly strengthened the ethnic definition of politics. The inter-ethnic interplay also influenced the SDS's radicalisation although the 'lost generosity moments' should not be regarded as the primary factor in the victory of the hardliners.

Within the SDS there was a continuous process of outbidding in the sense that Babić, from a more radical position, sought to undermine Rašković's position. Their rivalry was fuelled by their different positions on the inter-ethnic conflict, by ideological and regional cleavages and, finally, by personal power ambitions. Babić lacked popular support but by building an alternative power base he managed to wrest power from Rašković, resulting in a new leadership with a more extreme position. Babić lacked support in the central structures of the SDS but he relied on support in the local and regional party structures and ensured such support by imposing a hard line from above and removing party moderates. Rašković failed to build a cohesive leadership: he alienated Opačić and Zelembaba, who had the public profile, the hardline reputation and the support in Knin that could have proved decisive in an attempt to defeat Babić. Rašković's intention might have been to give Opačić and Zelembaba posts in the central authorities: they were both elected to the Croatian Parliament and Opačić was supposed to have become deputy speaker of Parliament. But when radical forces compelled Rašković to stage a walkout from Croatian institutions, an imbalance in power was introduced and Rašković did not reconcile with the two co-founders until Babić was already too strong. In addition to support from party structures, the resources of importance in the competition were largely of a non-political nature: Babić controlled the coercive resources and could use these to enforce control. The main audience for the intra-party outbidding was consequently

not the general population: it was local and regional party structures, paramilitary formations and, above all, Belgrade. In Knin, Babić was in full control: he ensured the cohesion of the Serb political scene by keeping people under constant tension and by frequently changing the political framework to suit his needs.[112] Babić knew how to hold on to power in a state of increasing lawlessness.[113] For his hold on power, however, he relied on a very militaristic wing of the SDS, and he therefore likely found himself constrained in the positions he was able to adopt.[114]

One consequence of the gradual ethnification of politics, of the inability of the SDS to successfully play the ethnic card, was the strategic value of a vague position. A position that would not drive away the Serbs still unconvinced by the ethnic definition of politics but would, at the same time, heighten tensions and serve to satisfy hardliners. However, such a vague position also left Rašković open to outbidding. Cultural autonomy in Rašković's demands had no territorial dimension but as the conflict intensified and Rašković became pressured from forces within the party and from Belgrade, territorial autonomy entered the agenda as a demand in case the federal structure of Yugoslavia was altered. In December 1990, Vukćević and Rašković proposed changes to the draft Constitution that would affirm Croatia as part of a federal Yugoslavia and included provisions for cultural autonomy. It, however, also suggested that the Constitution provided the possibility for territorial autonomy in Serb-majority areas.[115] In addition, Rašković in the summer and autumn of 1990 advocated the unification of Croatian and Bosnian Krajina as Serb-majority areas.[116] The demand for autonomy was therefore marked by a considerable ambiguity when it came to the territorial dimension. Even though Babić, before openly clashing with Rašković, also vacillated between antagonistic and moderate rhetoric, he could take advantage of Rašković's vagueness on the issue of autonomy; he strengthened the territorial dimension, thereby creating an alternative power base in Knin, and the ambiguity of Rašković's demands made it difficult for him to

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[112] Vasić, Miloš, 1992. "Babic's Swan Song". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 20, 10 February. Cerović, Stojan, 1991. "Ko je prvi počeo". *Vreme*, 22 April, p. 28-29.

[113] Cerović, Stojan, 1992. "Troubles with a bit player". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, January 13.

[114] Daskalović, Zoran, 1991. "Kula od karata". *Danas*, 26 March, p. 23-24.

[115] Vukćević, Vojislav, 1990a. "Mišljenje i prijedloge u vezi sa izradom i sa-sadržajem nacrta Ustava Republike Hrvatske". Osijek, 2 November 1990. Vukćević, Vojislav, 1990b. "Primedbe na nacrt Ustava Republike Hrvatske". Osijek, 11 December 1990. Author's copies.

[116] "Čija je Hrvatska". *Danas*, 31 July 1990, p. 12-15. Jajčinović, Milan, 1990. "Ispit za Jugoslaviju". *Danas*, 2 October, p. 12-13.

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counter these moves. An intentional strengthening of the radical option may also very well have been part of Rašković's strategy, since the existence of hardline forces within the SDS was something he repeatedly used to improve his own bargaining position.

Intra-Serb competition in pre-war Croatia was, thus, marked by a gradual ethnification of politics, by intra-party outbidding and by the increasing dominance of coercive resources, especially those supplied by Belgrade.

Chapter 4
Intra-Serb Competition in Pre-War Bosnia:
Cohesive, radicalising nationalists

The Bosnian and the Croatian cases share many similarities in the pre-war period: the dominant Serb party had the same name; their policies were almost identical; and the leader of the SDS in Croatia, Jovan Rašković, helped establish the SDS in Bosnia and also helped choose its leader, fellow psychiatrist Radovan Karadžić. Their strategy in radicalising the position of the party, furthermore, followed the same pattern. Initially the position of the party was fairly moderate, if rather vague; the first step in their radicalisation was the establishment of an association of SDS-dominated municipalities; then a Serb Assembly was set up and Serb Autonomous Regions were created; finally a Serb Republic was proclaimed. Despite these obvious similarities, the two parties faired differently in their competition with non-ethnic parties. The Serb nationalists in Bosnia were, from the outset, in a stronger position than their counterparts in Croatia: they could feed off the increasing tensions in the Yugoslav Federation and they were quicker to establish a well-organised party. This position of strength became clear in the first multi-party elections: while the Croatian SDS had only secured a minority of the Serb votes, seven months later the Bosnian SDS won more than 85 per cent of the Serb vote. Ethnification proceeded at different speeds in the two cases and the Bosnian SDS was much more successful in the electoral competition with the non-ethnic parties. This chapter will analyse the reasons for this difference in dynamics.

The dynamics *within* the SDS were, moreover, also different and the causes and consequences of these differences will also be analysed. The Bosnian version of the SDS was, from the beginning, less based on its leader's charisma, but was nevertheless a very cohesive party that was not plagued by the leadership struggles that characterised its sister party. Such cohesiveness would theoretically lead one to expect the SDS in Bosnia to be less influenced by radicalising dynamics, but even though the party's organisation provides some explanation for its cohesiveness, another reason is to be found in the ever-increasing radicalisation of its position.

In addition, there was a significant difference in the relative demographic strength of the two communities, which affected the strategies of the Serb leaders as well as those of the other ethnic leaders: in Bosnia, the Bosniak and Croat leaders knew that they could only ignore the Serbs at their peril, whereas the relatively small size of the Serb community in Croatia seems to have led some Croatian leaders to believe that they would not constitute a significant obstacle to a Croatian nation-state. The resulting differences in the inter-ethnic interplay are marked: the SDS in Bosnia formed an unofficial coalition with the Bosniak SDA and the Croatian HDZ, while the SDS in Croatia was faced with a Parliament with an absolute HDZ majority and a Government which proved highly reluctant to accommodate Serb demands. Finally, the outbreak of war in Croatia, in the summer of 1991, had a significant impact on Bosnian Serb politics and led to a hardening of positions. The outbreak of war was accompanied by a change in the position of the international community; the 'international audience' while not directly supplying resources to the competing elites influenced the Serb leaders through the kin-state and through inter-ethnic relations.

4.1 Serb nationalists become near-monolithic

Most of the Serb voters in Croatia had voted for the reformed communists in the SKH-SDP and support for this party only declined after the elections. But the reformed communists in Bosnia, the League of Communists – Party for Democratic Change (Savez komunista – Stranka demokratske promjene, SK-SDP), found themselves in a weaker position. As described in Chapter 2, the League of Communists of Bosnia had been significantly weakened by the Agrokomerc scandal and this was one of the reasons for the SDS's clear victory. The SK-SDP represented a system in collapse and, even more importantly, lacked experienced leaders.[1] Although the party had distanced itself from the Bosnian Government, it was still blamed for all the wrongs of the system, and it was not sufficient for the party to be the only party with an organised network throughout the republic.[2] In the competition with the SDS, it also mattered that the SK-SDP lacked Serbs among its top-

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[1] The former director of Agrokomerc, Fikret Abdić, nevertheless received the highest number of votes in the 1990 presidential elections, when he ran for the SDA. This would indicate that it was not so much the corruption scandal that weakened the reformed communists, but rather the way it was handled by the League of Communists as well as the resulting inexperienced leadership.
[2] Andjelić, 2003: 159, 174.

candidates.[3] This made it more difficult for the party to counter the nationalist claim that a non-ethnic party could not protect Serb interests.

The SK-SDP was, however, not the only non-ethnic competitor to the SDS. Of other non-ethnic parties should be mentioned the Democratic Alliance of Socialists (Demokratski socijalistički savez, DSS) and the League of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia (Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije, SRSJ). The DSS suffered from the same problems as the SK-SDP: its roots were in the Socialist Alliance of Working People and it was too closely associated with the old regime. But the Reformists, formed by the then federal Prime Minister, Ante Marković, were dangerous for the SDS: they could not be directly identified with the previous regime, Marković's economic programme was successful and he was very popular in Bosnia.[4] Most of the party's leaders in Bosnia were, furthermore, ethnic Serbs. But despite these factors of strength, the Reformists had problems organising themselves and the party lacked a leader in Bosnia who was strong enough to match Marković's popularity.[5] Prominent political actors had declined heading the party and no leader was elected at the party's founding congress, which was held only two months before the elections.[6] It took almost another fortnight before the then Rector of Sarajevo University, Nenad Kecmanović, was finally named party president. The Reformists, moreover, covered an array of political opinions and crucially failed to take a clear position on the issue of Yugoslavia's future.[7] Nevertheless, the nationalist parties recognised the potential danger of the Reformists and chose to fiercely attack the party in a bid to undermine its popular appeal.[8]

The non-ethnic parties, on the other hand, primarily directed their competition against each other and consequently augmented their already pronounced weakness, as they failed to provide a unified, viable alternative to the nationalist parties. Some of the leaders were aware of this problem and on 25 October 1990 the leaders of the SK-SDP and the Reformists, Nijaz Duraković and Nenad Kecmanović, signed a secret deal. But when this became known to the Reformists, the most anti-communist

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[3] Prstojević, Miroslav (ed.) 1990. *BiH Izbori '90*. Sarajevo: Oslobođenje public. p. 77-79.
[4] Andjelić, 2003: 160.
[5] *Ibid.* 162.
[6] Demirović, E., 1990. "Reforma – uslov pobede". *Borba*, 6 September, p. 1.
[7] Prstojević, 1990: 85. Andjelić, 2003: 161-2.
[8] Demirović, E., 1990. "Reforma – uslov pobede". *Borba*, 6 September, p. 1. Andjelić, 2003: 162

elements of the party rebelled and the deal was called off. The political differences between the two parties were small, but personal grievances and fear of being drawn into the communist collapse proved decisive.[9] The SK-SDP and the DSS managed to form a pre-election coalition, but the then leader of the DSS, Mirko Pejanović, argues that the Reformists were ordered not to have anything to do with the two other parties.[10] The existence of an additional salient cleavage, an anti-communist cleavage, therefore, further weakened the non-ethnic alternatives. The non-ethnic parties were finally weakened by an electoral system that inflated the majority won by the nationalist parties.

SDS's strength vis-à-vis its non-ethnic rivals

The SDS's victory was, however, not only based on the weakness of the non-ethnic rivals, and one of the factors that strengthened the party was the strong organisation that had been established prior to the elections. The SDS had a wide range of local branches and, by September 1990, the party claimed to have as many as 350,000 members.[11] This building up of the party was significantly assisted by the SDS in Croatia and, more covertly, by the Belgrade Government. The SDS, furthermore, followed the strategy used by its sister-party in Croatia and established a Serb National Council, but *before* the elections: on 13 October 1990 in front of 30,000 people in Banja Luka. The council in Banja Luka was followed by the establishment of Serb councils in Tuzla and Trebinje.[12] In its campaign against the non-ethnic parties, the SDS continuously sought to undermine their credibility and Karadžić warned the Serb voters that it would be dangerous to vote for the SK-SDP since they would not represent Serb interests.[13] Outside of the official campaign the tone was even harsher. In Banja Luka, material was distributed announcing: *"We will not betray you – the League of Communists and the leftists will betray you! The Ustasha knife awaits you again"*.[14]

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[9] Andjelić, 2003: 180-1; Pejanović, 2002: 30.

[10] Pejanović, 2002: 30.

[11] "Veliki skup SDS". *Borba*, 1-2 September 1990, p. 12.

[12] Andjelić, 2003: 178.

[13] Vućelić, Milorag, 1990. "Srbi se najsporije bude". *Borba*, 23 July, p. 5.

[14] Pejanović, 2002: 37.

The failure of the non-ethnic parties owed much to their internal squabbles and the weakness of the League of Communists following the Agrokomerc scandal but the main obstacle for the non-ethnic parties was that the elections were fought on an ethnic cleavage. The non-ethnic parties did not succeed in focusing the campaign on other issues: in the Croatian elections the most salient cleavage had been the future of Yugoslavia but in Bosnia all major parties professed their support for Yugoslavia's preservation and, with the HDZ as the only significant exception, they all advocated a federal structure.[15] The nationalist parties, moreover, consciously sought to ethnify politics and they succeeded in doing so through the combination of co-operation and the use of inflammatory rhetoric. They prevented the issue of Yugoslavia's future from becoming dominant by focusing on the need for *ethnic* representation. The nationalist parties were, furthermore, strongly supported in their endeavour by the progressively tenser atmosphere in the Yugoslav Federation. Politics had consequently become ethnicised prior to the elections but this was reinforced and augmented by the weakening of the non-ethnic parties.

Lack of significant Serb challengers

The main rivals for the SDS in the pre-war period were the non-ethnic parties, but the party was also faced with competition from another Serb party: the Serb Renewal Movement (Srpski pokret obnove, SPO) led in Serbia by Vuk Drašković. This party was, however, never a serious rival to the SDS and apparently did not intend to be since Drašković, before the elections, rejected calls for increasing the activities of the party as this would serve to divide the Serb vote.[16] Unsurprisingly then, the SPO only won one seat in Parliament and never really entered political life in Bosnia.[17] It was, anyway, difficult to notice any difference between the two parties before the elections, [18] although the SPO's programme was more unashamedly Serb nationalist.[19] The differences only became visible when the SPO in Belgrade took a moderate turn and began criticising the war in Croatia and accused the nationalist parties in Bosnia of not trying hard enough to prevent war from also breaking out in

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[15] Electoral programmes from Prstojević, 1990. The position of the Reformists was somewhat vague but their programme could only be realised in a federal context. Andjelić, 2003: 161-2.
[16] Thomas, 1999: 56.
[17] Andjelić, 2003: 167.
[18] Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Professor in political science. Sarajevo, 19 November 2003
[19] Electoral programme in Prstojević, 1990: 118-120. See also Tanjug, 1990. "Srbi prijete pripajenjem". *Vjesnik,* 26 October, p. 3.

Bosnia.[20] Such critique, however, did not find resonance with the SPO deputy in Bosnia, who had all along acted like a member of the SDS and finally chose to join the party.[21] Only immediately before the outbreak of war did the SDS therefore face a more moderate Serb party, but this party was without influence and even lacked control over its own deputy.

The SDS's near monolithic status was strengthened by the almost complete marginalisation of non-ethnic parties following the elections. The nationalist parties made sure to exclude all other parties from influence and the opposition was too weak to have any impact. The Serb representatives from the non-ethnic parties were, furthermore, increasingly pressured by the SDS to join their ranks, and many non-SDS Serb deputies voted with the SDS on the issue of Bosnian sovereignty.[22] In late February 1992, when the constitution of the Serb Republic was proclaimed, a significant number of Serb representatives from non-ethnic parties were present at the session and communication was discontinued with those who refused.[23] The marginalisation of non-ethnic rivals and the absence of other Serb parties meant that challenges to the SDS leadership would have to come from within the party.

A radicalising SDS remains cohesive

Whereas the SDS in Croatia was formed around the charismatic leadership of Jovan Rašković, the SDS in Bosnia lacked a similar personality to attract popular support. The party was initiated by a group of Serb academics from Sarajevo and Radovan Karadžić was an 11th-hour choice as leader after other better-known Serbs had declined. One of the people whom the Serb academics had unsuccessfully tried to persuade was Nenad Kecmanović, who instead became leader of the Reformists.[24] Karadžić's role as leader was only supposed to be temporary: he should set the tempo in the first few months and then cede his place to a more influential and politically experienced leader.[25] Even shortly before the SDS's founding session,

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[20] Milošević, Milan, 1991. "See you in the next war". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 10, 2 December.

[21] Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19 November 2003. See also, Ćurak, Nerzuk, 1992. "Članovi SPO u BiH nemaju ni čakije". *Slobodna Bosna,* 10 January, no. 12, p. 7.

[22] Tomić, Manoljo, 1991. "Istorijsko 'Ne' Bosni". *Slobodna Bosna,* no. 2, 7 November, p. 3.

[23] Pejanović, 2002: 50.

[24] Kecmanović, Nenad, 1992. "Čas anatomija Nenada Kecmanovića". *Dani,* 17 December p. 44-47.

[25] Stefanović, Nenad, 1993. "A Political Portrait of Radovan Karadzic". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 84, 3 May.

Karadžić publicly declared that he was exhausted and would not stand for the party presidency.[26] Karadžić and the rest of the SDS leadership were, at the time, not well-known[27] and Andjelić argues that Karadžić initially lacked control over the party: the actual decision-making body of the SDS was the party's political council, which consisted of Serb academics and some party officials.[28] In the pre-election period the real power, therefore, seems to have been behind the scenes; not with the official party leadership that was still establishing its public profile.

Karadžić was consequently not a strong leader to begin with; he served the party rather than the other way round. But Karadžić's image was gradually built up and the official leadership became more influential in the decision-making process after the elections. The intellectuals behind the party became increasingly divided when positions of power had to be allocated and greater political differences also surfaced as the inter-ethnic conflict intensified.[29] In this development, the structure of the party became increasingly authoritarian and Karadžić began exerting greater control.[30] Of some importance for Karadžić's hold on power was also the fact that he was the president not only of the SDS but also of the Serb National Council; a rivalling leader with an institutional base was, therefore, less likely to emerge. Despite Karadžić's rising star, the situation was very different than in Croatia where the SDS was founded by and around Rašković and functioned more as a political movement led by a charismatic leader. One might have expected Karadžić's weaker leadership to give rise to greater fractionalisation than Rašković's charismatic authority, but actually the opposite was the case: for the first many years the Bosnian SDS remained a fairly cohesive party with only few factional disputes.

At its foundation, the SDS did, however, announce the formation of a more radical youth wing called Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia), led by the writer Vladimir Srebrov.[31] Mlada Bosna was an officially sanctioned faction but its militarism quickly became too much for the SDS leadership, which, at the time, tried to portray

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[26] Pejanović, 2002: 17.

[27] Kecmanović, Nenad, 1992. "Čas anatomija Nenada Kecmanovića". *Dani*, 17 December, p. 44-47.

[28] Andjelić, 2003: 166. Prstojević, 1990: 115. The considerable influence of the SDS's advisory council made up of Serb intellectuals is, however, denied by one of its former members. Interview Predrag Lazarević, Banja Luka, 12 November 2003.

[29] Interview Predrag Lazarević, Banja Luka, 12 November 2003.

[30] Andjelić, 2003: 169.

[31] Lučić, M., 1990. "Nema vodećih i pratećih naroda". *Borba*, 13 July, p. 3.

itself as a moderate party. Thus, Srebrov was expelled shortly after the party's foundation subsequent to inviting the JNA to take power in Bosnia and promising assistance from his militants. Karadžić declared that the "*para-militaristic, almost militant outbursts of M.A. Vladimir Srebrov are incompatible with the spirit of the Serb people*" and he consequently disbanded Mlada Bosna.[32] The leadership had no problems quelling this attempt at radicalising the party at a moment when the party's public position was more moderate.[33] The creation of the faction may in fact have been a purposeful attempt by the SDS leadership to demonstrate its moderate stance, while at the same time use Mlada Bosna's radicalism to stir up ethnic tensions.

After the elections, other divisions emerged in the leadership over which position the party should adopt in the intensifying inter-ethnic conflict but these divisions never developed into actual fractionalisation. In October 1991, after the Bosnian Parliament adopted the *Declaration on Sovereignty* a meeting of the SDS main board brought out these divisions. Some members wanted SDS deputies to remain in the official bodies whereas others advocated a walkout. Radovan Nešković declared: "*Since they will not revoke their decisions, I suggest that a parliamentary crisis be provoked*". But Rajko Đukić, a senior member of the board, urged calm stating: "*We cannot leave the assembly or any other body*".[34] The outcome of the discussion was that the deputies stayed in the Parliament, but this decision was qualified by the formation of the Serb Assembly on 24 October 1991. In the decision to form the assembly, it was declared that the validity of enactments from the Bosnian Parliament would only be recognised if they were not contrary to the interests of the Serb people.[35] Furthermore, it was declared that the Serb nation would stay in what remained of Yugoslavia and that this decision would be sent to a referendum.[36] This cleverly crafted compromise served to avoid further divisions in the party leadership. When the Serb Republic was proclaimed in January 1992, Nikola Koljević, one of the leaders of the SDS, urged the deputies in the Serb Assembly: "*Please vote*

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[32] Anastasijević, Dejan, 1995. "Vladimir Srebrov". *Vreme*, 30 October, p. 17.

[33] Vuković, Željko, 1990. "Dobavljanje nekorisnih mentora". *Borba,* 22-23 September, p. 3.

[34] Minutes from the SDS main board meeting presented at the ICTY. ICTY, 2002b. "Transcripts: Prosecutor vs Radoslav Brdjanin and Stojan Zupljanin (IT-99-36)". Transcripts from Robert Donia's testimony, 29-31 January 2002. p. 1115, 1117.

[35] "Odluka o osnivanju skupštine srpskog naroda u BiH". In Kuzmanović, Rajo, 1994. *Konstitutivni akti Republike Srpske.* Glas Srpski: Banja Luka.

[36] "Odluka o ostajanju srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini u Zajedničkoj Državi Jugoslaviji". Kuzmanović, 1994.

unanimously".[37] The leadership was aware that if the party could present itself as unified, it would be in a stronger position, and the statement also conveyed that Koljević had backed down on his earlier demands. When the establishment of the Serb Republic was first discussed, Koljević and the speaker of the Serb Assembly, Momčilo Krajišnik, were against enforcing the decision immediately in case the appeal for international recognition of Bosnia was withdrawn.[38] However, Karadžić at this point declared: "*There is no going back to the united B&H*".[39] Koljević and Krajišnik, although high-standing in the party, were alone with their position and ultimately had to back down.

The Krajina faction

While the divisions in the leadership of the party were fairly muted, significant regional factions existed and, especially, the strong Bosnian Krajina faction, centred on Banja Luka, posed a potential threat to the leadership. This rivalry reflected a regional cleavage as well as different views of the appropriate strategy in the inter-ethnic conflict. SDS moderates who had won the elections in Banja Luka had been pressured by the leadership to radicalise their position or be replaced[40] but this engineered radicalisation almost backfired. The Krajina faction already in early 1991 criticised what they regarded as Krajišnik's too moderate reaction to the *Declaration on State Sovereignty* presented in Parliament by the SDA and the HDZ.[41] Soon after this demonstration of radicalism, they began demanding a more autonomous role for the region. The Bosnian Krajina region was of great importance for the SDS leadership: Banja Luka was central to the party's strategy and Bosnian Krajina, moreover, bordered on the equally radical Krajina region in Croatia. The central SDS leadership was aware of the dangers of regional centres of power and, at the above-mentioned main board meeting, Milorad Ekmečić, the grey eminence of the SDS, warned: "*The Serbs have created regions which are not connected, and these regions must not be allowed to establish their governments which would not be connected*".[42] But the Autonomous Region of Krajina (Autonomna regija Krajina, ARK) was, nevertheless, able to charge a separate course and, in the autumn of 1991, they began

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[37] Isaković, Zehrudin, 1992. "Another Serbian State". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, 13 January.
[38] Čamo, Mensur, 1992. "Pucanje srpskog monolita". *Slobodna Bosna*, no. 12, 16 January, p. 5.
[39] Isaković, Zehrudin, 1992. "Another Serbian State". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, 13 January.
[40] Gagnon, 2004: 50.
[41] Preradović, R., 1991. "Bez Jugoslavije nema ni BiH". *Oslobođenje*, 11 February, p. 3.
[42] Minutes from SDS main board meeting presented at the ICTY. ICTY, 2002b: 1114.

challenging Karadžić's leadership. Woodward argues that the rebellion followed a finance scandal in which Karadžić was accused of imposing a surcharge on gas sold in the autonomous regions, thereby robbing local leaders of profitable revenue.[43] In addition, strong forces in Bosnian Krajina wanted unification with Kninska Krajina. This was supported by Babić but was rejected by Karadžić and the latter, in October 1991, expressed concern that the Bosnian Krajina leaders were listening more to Babić than to him.[44] The conflict came to a head at the 13th session of the ARK Assembly in late February 1992 when an ultimatum was passed which demanded that Banja Luka become the capital of the Serb Republic and that cantons with the highest degree of autonomy should be established.[45] If these demands were not met in the constitution for the Serb Republic, then *"Krajina should be proclaimed a sovereign republic which will establish relations directly with other parts of BH".*[46] Although this ultimatum was clearly radical and a direct challenge to the Sarajevo leadership, it indicated that the most radical wing in Bosnian Krajina was no longer dominating: this wing had demanded immediate unification of the two Krajinas.[47]

Shortly after this session in Banja Luka, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović rejected the Cutilheiro peace plan, which would have divided Bosnia into ethnic territorial units. In his rejection, he referred to the assembly in Banja Luka and the discussion of a constitution for the Serb Republic. This led Karadžić to attack fiercely the autonomous direction of Banja Luka: *"I promise you, Bosnian Krajina must not become an issue... We cannot allow that five people with personal ambitions destroy our chances." "We are very close to achieving our strategic objectives".*[48] As a response to this situation, the SDS club of deputies decided to blame five or six individuals who were second-tier members of the Krajina assembly and then to adopt the constitution of the Serb Republic with Sarajevo as its capital. The constitution, however, did not specify that the territory was indivisible and it assigned the regions certain functions. To reinforce their position the top brass of the SDS, Karadžić, Krajišnik, Koljević and Ostojić attended the next session of the Krajina assembly

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[43] Woodward, 1995: 511, n45.

[44] "Ako hoće rat – imaće ga," *Slobodna Bosna,* 7 November 1991, p. 5.

[45] Ružić, Elmer; Zorici, Brane, 1992. "Krajiški ultimatum Karadžiću". *Slobodna Bosna,* no. 18, 27 February, p.5.

[46] Minutes from the assembly session presented at the ICTY. ICTY, 2002b: 1145.

[47] Ružić, Elmer; Zorici, Brane, 1992. "Tri varijante za razbijanje Bosne". *Slobodna Bosna,* 23 January, no. 13, p. 10.

[48] Minutes from a session of the Serb Assembly presented at the ICTY. ICTY, 2002b: 1148.

clearly indicating that further maverick behaviour would not be tolerated.[49] While the Krajina leaders were still not satisfied with the leadership or its centralisation, these steps proved sufficient to make them backtrack from their more radical demands.[50] The SDS leadership, thus, decided to act decisively against any attempts at fractionalisation that could undermine their authority and, crucially, the Krajina faction did not penetrate the party leadership, as it did in the Croatian SDS. Another factor that weakened the Bosnian Krajina leaders was their internal divisions: they were not united and the Sarajevo leadership could take advantage of this to regain control. Thus, following the backtracking on demands, Radoslav Brđanin, the deputy speaker of the ARK assembly, blamed the conflict on non-SDS elements in the assembly.[51] Notwithstanding these points of weakness, the Banja Luka faction forced upon the SDS leadership a more radical position than it had intended during the Cutilhiero negotiations. But the reaction of the central party was fairly mild: only second-tier local leaders were removed and the Krajina leaders were even given some concessions. This could indicate that the more radical position was not truly contrary to the interests of the leadership and they, furthermore, needed a stable, cohesive leadership in place in Banja Luka for what was to come.

The relative weakness of the Krajina faction was caused by its lack of foothold in the SDS leadership, by its internal divisions and lack of resources. But what were the general reasons for the relatively few factions found in a party that was led by Karadžić who at least initially lacked the necessary charisma and authority to exert full control over the party? First of all, the SDS in Bosnia was better organised than the SDS in Croatia: it had built a stronger party organisation and Karadžić was backed by influential forces working behind the scenes; it was not just him fighting possible factions. These people were not interested in power for themselves but were interested in a leader who could realise their political objectives and, to this end, they needed an undivided party. Divisions were not accepted but were dealt with immediately, if need be by making concessions as long as unwanted departures from the official policy ceased. Secondly, the SDS in Bosnia was in a stronger position politically: it won a landslide victory in the elections and consequently did not have

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[49] ICTY, 2002b: 1150-3.
[50] Marić, M., 1992. "Nema raskola – ima razlika". *Borba,* 17 March p. 8.
[51] *Ibid.*

to continue fighting non-ethnic parties. The dominant trend of the party was, finally, one of increased radicalisation and this helped pre-empt challengers.

Post-electoral radicalisation

Before the elections, the SDS's position was rather vague: it wanted to stir up tensions but at the same time present itself as a party capable of finding a solution by representing the Serbs in Bosnia. At the party's founding session, Karadžić consequently pledged his support for democracy, national equality and human rights.[52] Pejanović, then leader of the DSS, argues: "*At this stage Karadžić was planning a profile for the SDS that would require its members to be democrats*".[53] Rajko Kasagić, who was prime minister of Republika Srpska in 1995-6, contends that the SDS in 1990 was a very different party from what it later became: "*...a centrally oriented party,...a party of private business, freedom of the press and democracy*".[54] In addition to the professed support for democracy and national equality, the SDS did, however, also make clear that in case the goal of a continued Yugoslav federation could not be achieved, then the party would demand a referendum for the Serbs.[55] Furthermore, moderate rhetoric was not always dominating at SDS rallies. At one such rally in Banja Luka, Karadžić famously encouraged people to "*sell your cow and buy a gun*"[56] and the SDS used the experience of Croatia's Serbs to increase tensions. But at no rally did Karadžić ever call for dividing Bosnia or for war.[57] The party's official policy was the preservation of Yugoslavia and the survival of Yugoslavia, possibly without Croatia and Slovenia, was not impossible at the time. Furthermore, Karadžić continuously stated that the Bosniaks and Croats were not the SDS's opponents and he stressed the need for partnership.[58] This resulted in a vague or ambivalent position, similar to the one used by SDS in Croatia, and one effect of this was to avoid the creation of a more moderate ethnic alternative.

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[52] Lučić, M., 1990. "Nema vodećih i pratećih naroda". *Borba*, 13 July, p. 3. See also the SDS's electoral programme in Prstojević, 1990: 113-115.
[53] Pejanović, 2002: 24.
[54] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.
[55] Prstojević, 1990: 115. Vućelić, Milorag, 1990. " Srbi se najsporije bude". *Borba*, 23 July, p. 5.
[56] Pejanović, 2002: 36.
[57] Gagnon, 2004: 49. Pejanović, 2002: 37, 39.
[58] Banjac, D., 1990. "Stranka koja ukida straha". *Borba*, 16 July, p. 3. Ninčić, Roksanda, 1990. "Udruženi poraz komunista i reformista". *Danas*, 26 November, p. 12-14.

An important difference compared with the SDS in Croatia should, however, be noted: the SDS in Bosnia earlier on adopted an uncompromising position. The Serb National Council (SNV) was already formed before the elections and the SDS made clear that they would not accept any decisions going against their declared goal of preserving the Yugoslav federation. There was no talk of autonomy; no solution short of a federal Yugoslavia was acceptable, but to achieve this goal the SDS initially emphasised the need for partnership. The vagueness was, therefore, primarily related to the means used to achieving this goal, but the goal itself was also ambiguous: was it the preservation of Yugoslavia or a Greater Serbia?

After the elections this rather ambivalent position was replaced by an increasingly radical one. In May 1991, Balaban, a Minister in the Bosnian Government, warned: *"If Bosnia becomes an independent and sovereign state... the associated [Serb] communes will break away and create their own autonomous province, with all the functions of a state. Within 24 hours at least one military unit will be set up in each Serb commune. The Serbs will not allow themselves to be surprised as they were in 1941".*[59] And when the Bosnian Parliament in October 1991 passed the *Declaration of Sovereignty*, the SDS shed any semblance of moderation and Karadžić declared: *"The road you have chosen is the same road that took Croatia into Hell, except that the war in Bosnia will take you into a worse Hell, and the Muslim nation may disappear altogether".*[60] The SDS then continued to realise its fallback option: the joining of large parts of Bosnia to Serbia; and in this they followed a strategy very similar to the one used by the SDS in Croatia. Between September and November 1991, six Serb Autonomous Regions (Srpska autonomna oblast, SAO) were proclaimed. In the SAOs, the SDS monopolised the top posts: the economic, political and, above all, military posts; and the new authorities initiated a policy of discrimination and terror against non-Serbs.[61] In late October 1991, the Serb Assembly was created and on 9-10 November 1991, a referendum among Serb voters, unsurprisingly, showed an overwhelming majority for staying in Yugoslavia. On 21 November, the Serb Assembly proclaimed as part of Yugoslavia all municipalities,

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[59] Quoted in Bougarel, Xavier, 1996. "Bosnia and Hercegovina: State and Communitarianism". In David Dyker & Ivan Vejvoda (eds.) *Yugoslavia and After*. London and New York, NY: Longman. p. 100.
[60] *Ibid.* 100.
[61] *Ibid.* 100.

local communities and populated places in which over 50 per cent of the Serbs had voted for this option. Shortly afterwards the formation of separate Serb institutions moved from being voluntary to being mandatory for SDS local boards; they had to set up so-called Crisis Headquarters (Krizni štab) that would take power in the municipality when given the order by Karadžić.[62] In early January 1992, the Serb Assembly approved a declaration on proclamation of the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Srpska republika Bosna i Hercegovina), which would cover "*all the territories of the autonomous [regions] and all other regions where the Serbian people represent a minority due to the Second World War genocide*".[63] The republic was proclaimed in Pale on 7 April 1992, and on this occasion, the SDS recalled its two representatives from the Bosnian Presidency and appealed to Serb Ministers, civil servants and policemen to break with the Bosnian state.[64]

The avoidance of successful outbidding in the Bosnian SDS owed something to this persistent radicalisation of the party, as well as the stronger party structure and the relative weakness of the Bosnian Krajina faction compared with the Knin faction in the Croatian case. One of the causes of the relative weakness of the challengers was their lack of kin-state support. As in the Croatian case, Belgrade helped strengthen radical forces but its role was not contested and it did not become involved in intra-party strife.

4.2 Kin-state: "We authorise Milošević to act on our behalf"

In pre-war Bosnia, Belgrade's influence was largely covert and Milošević may even initially have been hoping for an ally other than the SDS. Late 1989 and early 1990 saw the League of Communists of Bosnia becoming increasingly divided into pro- and anti-Milošević camps[65] and such divisions could have given Milošević reason to believe that the Bosnian Communists would, in the end, come out in support of his stance. Some commentators argue that this can explain the late establishment of a Serb party in Bosnia: Milošević was waiting for a possible change within the local

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[62] Document from 19 December 1991, presented at the ICTY. ICTY, 2002b: 1127-9. See also Gow, 2003: 129-30.

[63] Isaković, Zehrudin, 1992. "Another Serbian State". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, 13 January. My emphasis.

[64] Bougarel, 1996: 103.

[65] Andjelić, 2003: 117. Gagnon, 2004: 75, 84.

communist ranks.[66] Reliance on the SK-SDP instead of on an explicitly Serb party made sense given the meagre election results achieved by the SDS in Croatia. A problem with this explanation is, however, the already considerable ethnification of politics in Bosnia. Milošević was not just hoping for support from the Serbs in the SK-SDP and support from a united party was increasingly unlikely. The timing of the SDS's establishment in Bosnia can, furthermore, be explained by the increasing success for its sister party in Croatia, which may have spurred faith in the electoral fortunes of an explicitly Serb party. Belgrade's influence in Bosnia did not produce the required support for the Serbian Government's policies and the need therefore materialised for an explicitly Serb party that could represent Belgrade's position in Bosnia. But how great was Belgrade's influence over the SDS in pre-war Bosnia?

Milošević and the SDS

The SDS's public relationship with Milošević varied considerably between the pre-election and the post-election period. Shortly after the formation of the SDS, Karadžić, when asked about his co-operation with political parties in Belgrade, said that he did not want an alliance with Milošević's SPS, which he considered the bastion of the communist movement.[67] The public profile of the SDS was that of an anti-communist, national party, which was willing and able to co-operate across the ethnic divide. Public association with the Serbian President, therefore, was not in the party's interest. Moreover, since the Serbian secret police had a weaker network in Bosnia than in Croatia, more of the organisation of the SDS was left to the locals and Belgrade arguably had less influence over the party.[68] Former members of the SDS, nevertheless, assert that Belgrade was very much present behind the scenes. Thus, Srebrov argues that Milošević was the initiator of his removal from the SDS leadership.[69]

The paramount role of Milošević, at least on a symbolic level, was recognised by Karadžić after the elections when, in February 1991, he made statements such as: "*If Yugoslavia is to be dissolved, we authorise Slobodan Milosevic to act on our behalf*", and "*We are amateurs ... Only Slobodan Milosevic is a real statesman who could*

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[66] Andjelić, 2003: 151.

[67] Pejanović, 2002: 23.

[68] Judah, 2000: 192.

[69] Kulenović, Adil, 1995. "Memorandum šanum". *Vreme*, 30 October, p. 14-17.

lead the country".[70] To further demonstrate his loyalty, Karadžić publicly supported Milošević during the 9 March 1991 demonstrations in Belgrade.[71] Even though Karadžić initially downplayed his links with Belgrade, Milošević's legitimacy to represent the Serbs outside Serbia was, thus, not denied by the SDS leaders. In the main part of the pre-war period, Karadžić, unlike Rašković, did not challenge Milošević in statements or in actions. This display of loyalty was, however, not always reciprocated by Milošević, who sought to camouflage his links with the SDS leaders.[72] By late February 1992, the Serbian President had abandoned his hope for an agreement with Izetbegović and adopted a more radical position: he argued that the Serbs could *"neither be threatened nor separated against their will"* but, nevertheless, maintained that he did not know Karadžić well and that *"Serbia has nothing to do with Bosnia. It's not our problem"*.[73] Following the international recognition of Slovenia and Croatia and mounting US pressure for Bosnia's recognition, Milošević appears to have become more committed to a *"new less extensive Yugoslavia"*.[74] In this altered strategy, the Serbs in the neighbouring republics would be not be incorporated into the state but would obtain *de facto* independent status within Croatia and Bosnia. For this strategy to succeed, Milošević needed the co-operation of the international community[75] as well as less obvious links with the local Serb leaders.

Thus, while the link with Belgrade was initially downplayed by the SDS, soon after the elections, they made clear their view of Milošević as their legitimate leader. However, the Belgrade Government officially distanced itself from the Bosnian Serb leadership following a change in the position of the international community. Factions within the SDS, furthermore, could not look to Belgrade for support since Milošević seemed satisfied with Karadžić's leadership and with the party's course. There was, therefore, no reason to take advantage of possible internal divisions. The most radical wing in Banja Luka was, furthermore, close to Babić and following Milošević's fall-out with the Knin leader in early 1992, he was unlikely to support Bosnian Krajina's challenge to Karadžić. There was, therefore, no support

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[70] Andjelić, 2003: 207. Sell, 2002: 129.
[71] Gordy, 1999: 34.
[72] Sell, 2002: 160.
[73] *Ibid.* 162.
[74] Burg, Shoup, 1999: 103
[75] *Ibid.*

forthcoming for intra-party challengers and the kin-state was, therefore, of less significance for the outcome of intra-Serb competition in Bosnia than it had been in Croatia. This does not, however, mean that Belgrade did not influence the radicalisation of the SDS: Belgrade provided the party with the resources needed to pursue the war-option.[76]

In terms of the general population, there were also significant differences between the two cases. Whereas the Serb voters in Croatia had given their electoral support to the reformed communists and the SDS consequently had to rely on other resources to become dominant, the situation was markedly different in Bosnia where the Serb voters closed ranks behind the SDS.

4.3 General population:
Unclear mandate for popular nationalists

The massive support for the nationalist parties in the Bosnian elections came as a great surprise, since none of the pre-election polls had pointed to such a landslide and had actually indicated victory for the SK-SDP. Thus, even in a poll in early November, only days before the elections, the SDS looked set to win just 14 per cent of the vote and a majority of the Serbs would vote for either the SK-SDP or for the Reformists.[77] It therefore appeared to be a repeat of the Serb voting patterns in the Croatian elections.

There are some problems surrounding the surveys,[78] but one thing they do point to is a rapid development in attitudes and a clear upward trend in the support for the nationalist parties. Less than a year before the elections, the nationalist leaders were not a significant political force and popular support for them was not registered. Thus, in December 1989, a poll on the most popular individuals was conducted in urban areas and nationalist leaders failed to be mentioned by anyone surveyed.[79] The lack of popular support for nationalist parties is even better illustrated in a well-known poll from April-May 1990 in which a great majority supported a ban on ethnic

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[76] Pejanović, 2002: 55.
[77] Overview of polls in Arnautović, Suad, 1996. *Izbori u Bosni i Hercegovini '90: Analiza izbornog procesa.* Sarajevo: Promocult. p. 57-8.
[78] Andjelić, 2003: 181. Arnautović, 1996: 52-3.
[79] Andjelić, 2003: 129.

political parties.[80] This poll was limited to urban areas but the lack of support for nationalist parties is still striking considering that the situation in Yugoslavia had already become tense at this point. As regards the Serb voters, the surveys point to growing support for the SDS: the party increased its share of the vote from 4.5 per cent in late August to 10.2 per cent in early November.[81] For the Serb respondents, what was most important for their view of a political party was its programme: whether it had a Yugoslav orientation or not. Interestingly, the Serb respondents reported having very little knowledge of the SDS's programme. The resulting confusion over the SDS's programme must have been augmented by events pointing to possibly greater radicalism: the creation of the Serb National Council in October 1990 and the expressed militancy of at least parts of the party. This uncertainty is reflected in the large proportion of Serb respondents who, in October 1990, said that they were still undecided as to their electoral choice.[82] Crucially for the electoral results, these many undecided voters chose to cast their vote to Serb nationalism. Since the SDS and the non-ethnic alternatives did not differ on their declared programmatic goal, this suggests that ethnification among the population had indeed taken place before the elections.

One of the reasons for this greater ethnification found in Bosnia than in Croatia is obviously the timing of the elections: the Bosnian elections were held six months later than the Croatian ones and the situation in Yugoslavia was becoming progressively more tense. Ethnification was, moreover, strengthened by the weakness of the non-ethnic parties, by the SDS's own strength and by the co-operation between the nationalist parties. In the media there was, furthermore, a tendency to replace communist patrons with nationalist ones, which resulted in unbalanced coverage of the campaign.[83] Consequently, at the time of the 1990 elections, the reformed communists had lost their popular base: the SK-SDP had been replaced by the nationalist parties as the party of the masses.[84] This was the outcome of *political* competition and was influenced by the distribution of resources

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[80] *Ibid.* 141.

[81] Arnautović, 1996: 57-8. The 10.2 per cent translates into 14.3 per cent if only decided voters are included.

[82] *Ibid.* 54-6.

[83] Andjelić, 2003: 125. This is contested by Kurspahić, who argues that the Bosnian media backed the non-ethnic forces, but that Croatian and Serbian media, which were also part of the Bosnian media market, supported the nationalist forces. Kurspahić, 2003: 94-97.

[84] Andjelić, 2003: 160.

between the SDS and the non-ethnic parties; it was not about the overwhelming power of ethnicity and the SDS resorted to adopting a vague position, since playing the ethnic card would not have been successful. Even though more radical sentiments were sometimes expressed by SDS officials, the profile of the party was moderate, if rather vague.

Post-electoral radicalisation

The ethnification of politics and the popular support for the nationalist parties does not automatically entail that the voters endorsed the subsequent radicalisation and it certainly does not mean that the radicalisation was *driven* by voter attitudes.

In a survey conducted to mark the first anniversary of the new authorities, great reservations were expressed by the respondents: 77 per cent were in favour of new elections and 43 per cent said that the new government's performance was below their expectations, while only 8 per cent thought it exceeded their expectations. These sentiments were also expressed by members and supporters of the nationalist parties.[85] The population was disappointed with the chaotic rule of the nationalist parties and with the declining living standards, and popular protests became more and more widespread.[86] Shortly before the war, protests also emerged over the nationalist policies of the parties: In the cities, peace movements were organised and mass peace rallies took place in early 1992. The mass protests failed to alter the position of the nationalist parties, but along with the above-mentioned survey they do indicate that the radicalisation did not enjoy popular support, or was at least not led by popular demands.

The Serb leaders in Bosnia had, however, taken note of the successful holding of Serb referenda in Croatia. This was an effective way of bolstering their position by demonstrating popular support for their radicalisation, and the result of the referendum was unsurprisingly overwhelming support for staying in Yugoslavia. The preference of the majority of the Serbs for staying in Yugoslavia had already been made clear in surveys and the outcome was, therefore, to be expected. But the

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[85] Survey by Oslobođenje and the Department of Journalism. Krsmanovic, Vlatka, 1992. "Memories of a common past". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 42, 13 July.
[86] Andjelić, 2003: 203.

expressed support for joining *parts* of Bosnia with what remained of Yugoslavia could be argued to signify a radicalisation and the SDS could use this to argue that their position was indeed the majority position in the Serb community.

Nevertheless, there were significant irregularities in the referendum and one cannot conclude from the result that the war-option, which the SDS increasingly championed, also enjoyed majority support in the Serb community. The Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegović, strongly questioned the referendum result when he stated *"Of course, the result was a triumph – the response was over one hundred percent – I can't help thinking it was Bolshevik-style voting"*.[87] The SDS might have been able to take the voters along to a more uncompromising position but they did not have an opportunity to express alternative views. The SDS's ability to control the Serb population, as well as the existence of popular support for the party, was aptly demonstrated by the almost complete boycott of the Bosnian independence referendum in February 1992. The SDS could manipulate the expression of popular attitudes and surveys demonstrate the existence of dissatisfaction with nationalist rule. Even so, Karadžić used the alleged extremism of the Serb population to justify a radicalisation of the SDS's position. Just before the outbreak of war, he stated that the SDS would have to take a tougher stand because the nation wanted extreme leaders and if the SDS did not radicalise they would be outflanked by rivalling parties and leaders.[88] Whether Karadžić actually believed this to be the case or not is an open question, but legitimation of ones position in terms of popular attitudes was clearly widespread. Despite this rhetorical regard for popular opinion there is no evidence that it played a decisive role in the radicalisation of the SDS's position; this change in policies was not led by popular demand.

When the SDS was still competing with non-ethnic parties, and espoused a relatively moderate or vague position, the party did, however, have great success in attracting popular support. One of the important factors influencing this ability was the inter-ethnic interplay, which strengthened the ethnification of politics and thereby helped marginalise the already weakened non-ethnic parties.

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[87] Silber; Little, 1996: 216.
[88] Butorović, N., 1992. "Više nema jedinstvene BiH". *Borba,* 6 March, p. 3.

4.4 Inter-ethnic interplay: Tripartite structure

In terms of the inter-ethnic interplay in Bosnia and Croatia there are two important differences: the Bosnian tripartite structure introduces the importance of shifting alliances and the relative demographic strength of the Serb community is, furthermore, decidedly different in the two cases. Beyond these differences many similarities are, nevertheless, found in the two cases and the interplay was, as in Croatia, decisive for the ethnification of politics.

Ethnification and radicalisation

Realising that none of the ethnic parties would be in a position to rule on their own and, furthermore, aware of the need to undermine the support of the non-ethnic parties, the three main ethnic parties in Bosnia chose to co-operate. Although they frequently used inflammatory rhetoric to increase tensions, they simultaneously emphasised that their opponents were not the other ethnic parties but rather the representatives of the old system.[89] At the founding assembly of the SDS, the leader of the Bosniak SDA, Alija Izetbegović, received standing ovations and he welcomed the new Serb party with the words: "*we have been waiting for you for some time – for this Bosnia needs you*".[90] Karadžić reciprocated this praise, expressed "*great liking*" for Izetbegović and stated: "*Our Muslims are much closer to us... than many Christian people in Europe*".[91] The alliance between the SDS, the SDA and the HDZ was never made formal but the parties openly encouraged their supporters to give lower preference votes to the other ethnic parties.[92]

The co-operation between the ethnic parties aided the ethnification of politics; it strengthened the parties' attempt to define political competition in ethnic terms. This may seem counter-intuitive since the co-operation could be taken to indicate that anti-communism was more important than ethnicity. However, the cleavage between the reformed communists and the anti-communist ethnic parties was merely used to justify their co-operation and the need for *ethnic* representation was stressed. Thus,

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[89] Banjac, B., 1990. "Stranka koja ukida strah". *Borba*, 16 July, p. 3.
[90] Bougarel, 1996: 98.
[91] Stefanović, Nenad, Lj, 1994. "Dr Radovan Karadzic, President of the Serb Republic in BiH". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 142, 13 June. In its election programme, the SDS professed its support for equal treatment of the different nations living in Bosnia. Election programme in Prstojević, 1990: 113-5.
[92] Zulfikarpašić, Adil, 1998. *The Bosniak*. London: Hurst. p. 155.

the SDS warned of the consequences of a non-ethnic vote and the HDZ, in their electoral programme, assured the Croat voters that if their neighbours, friends and colleagues were ready to accept them as Croats, then they would also be ready to accept that they had their own party.[93] Since they did not agree on the issue of the future status of Yugoslavia, with the HDZ supporting a confederation, their co-operation, furthermore, prevented this issue from being the most salient issue in the campaign. As in Croatia, the initially relative moderate position of the ethnic parties, paradoxically, facilitated ethnification: they recognised each other as legitimate representatives and reinforced each other's message of an ethnic definition of politics.

The ethnic definition, at first, did not preclude co-operation and the interplay with the HDZ and the SDA in the pre-election period scarcely gave the SDS reasons or ammunition for radicalisation. The SDS and the SDA, especially, were adamant that they were not opponents and both parties supported the continued existence of the Yugoslav federation. Nevertheless, the SDS did radicalise during the election campaign, most visibly with the establishment of the SNV, which indicated that the SDS would not necessarily respect the Bosnian institutions. The SDS argued, however, that this should not be interpreted as a radicalisation, that it was a defensive measure in case the rights of the Serbs were not protected.[94] Although this radicalisation did not directly mirror the interplay with the HDZ and the SDA, it did reflect an underlying fear among the Serbs that the Bosniaks and Croats would form an alliance and thereby be able to outvote the Serbs. The interplay, therefore, had some influence but it is nevertheless interesting that the SDS in Bosnia radicalised at an earlier stage than the SDS in Croatia, despite the existence of the nationalist partnership.

Problematic co-operation despite restraint

After the landslide victory, Karadžić continuously emphasised the need for partnership[95] and the three parties proceeded to divide the positions of power between them. Although they were to find that co-operation was problematic once substantial questions had to be addressed, it took almost a year before open battles

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[93] Vućelić, Milorag, 1990. "Srbi se najsporije bude". *Borba*, 23 July, p. 5. HDZ BiH programme in Prstojević, 1990: 44-5.

[94] "Tako srpski narod kaže". *Danas*, 13 November 1990, p. 11.

[95] Ninčić, Roksanda, 1990. "Udruženi poras komunista i reformista". *Danas*, 26 November, p. 12-14.

were fought between the parties.[96] Conscious of the increasingly tense situation, especially after war broke out in Croatia, the SDA and the HDZ avoided taking extreme positions on the federation-confederation debate.[97] But also the SDS showed restraint: despite the continued radicalisation of its statements, the SDS leadership still came out supportive when a chance for the preservation of Yugoslavia was on the horizon. Thus, when the partnership with the HDZ and SDA was re-established after a row in early 1991, Karadžić stated that the SDS as a democratic party had long ago abandoned extreme Serb positions: forces for a unitary Yugoslavia or Greater Serbia.[98] Similarly, when Adil Zulfikarpašić from the Muslim Bosniak Organisation (Muslimansko-bošnjačka organizacija, MBO) proposed a plan for Bosnia in Yugoslavia, the SDS was willing to back this so-called 'Belgrade Initiative'.[99] The possibility of changing alliances resulted in a vague position still being of use to the SDS, despite its near monolithic status within the Serb community.

But, ultimately, the SDS chose to adopt a position of staunch intransigence and argued that co-operation was impossible. The blame for this, they argued, was entirely the SDA's and the HDZ's since they refused to accept the SDS's position.[100] The alliance between the Croats and the Bosniaks was something the SDS had warned against from the outset, as Krajišnik stated in early 1991: "*The Serb nation does not want to live in an independent state where they will be afraid of being outvoted*".[101] The SDS could argue that the HDZ and the SDA were violating the national parity principle and they used this to justify choosing the war-option.[102] The hardening of the Serb position was further reinforced by movements on the international scene; especially by the US push for Bosnia's recognition which started in February 1992.[103] While this was the reason used to justify the SDS's radicalisation, the position of the party should *not* be seen as merely reactive: other forces gave the leadership strong incentives to radicalise and the party most often

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[96] Pejanović, 2002: 40-1.
[97] Cohen, 1995: 209.
[98] Habal, E., 1991. "Bosna je suverene u okviru Jugoslavije". *Oslobođenje*, 20 February, p. 3.
[99] The SDA, however, rejected the plan. Zulfikarpašić, 1998: 169-188.
[100] Pejanovic, 2002: 63, 65.
[101] Stanišić, D. 1991. "Ustavno ili neustavno, pitanje je sad". *Oslobođenje*, 4 February, p. 4.
[102] Glenny, 1996: 141. Karadžić argued that the SDA and the HDZ were no longer partners, that they were now "classical opponents". Butorović, N., 1992. "Više nema jedinstvene BiH". *Borba*, 6 March, p. 3.
[103] Burg; Shoup, 1999: 100

took the lead in radicalisation. However, the tripartite constellation was of importance: for the initial co-operation, but also for the radicalisation of the SDS's position. In terms of the latter aspect, the SDS had markedly different relations with the HDZ and the SDA and this was to influence subsequent developments.

Scepticism of Croats and wooing of Bosniaks

The SDS was, from the beginning, much more sceptical of the Croat HDZ than the Bosniak SDA. This was partly based on the HDZ's preference for a confederal solution but should also be seen in the light of the mounting tensions in Croatia. However, there were Croat forces in Bosnia that the SDS could possibly ally itself with. The HDZ was itself divided: between factions supporting an independent Bosnia and factions dreaming of a Greater Croatia. Greater Croatia was anathema for the Serbs in Croatia but it opened up for potential alliances with the Serbs in Bosnia: it could be possible to reach an agreement on dividing Bosnia. At the time of the elections the pro-Bosnia faction was still in the stronger position, under the leadership of Stjepan Kljuić, but with support from Zagreb, the Herzegovin lobby gradually took over. [104] This change made new alliances possible, especially following the Karadjordjevo talks between Tuđman and Milošević.

However, in the pre-war period the SDS primarily put its faith in the Bosniaks and it was this interplay that had the greatest impact on the SDS's position. Izetbegović and Karadžić had, from the founding of their parties, publicly emphasised the necessity and value of their co-operation. The Serbs in Bosnia and Belgrade actively tried to woo the Bosniaks, hoping that they could thereby prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The SDS could seek co-operation with not only one but two Bosniak parties: with the SDA and with the MBO. The latter party had been formed as a more moderate alternative after a pre-election split in the SDA leadership[105] and it proved more open to supporting the SDS's position.

The first sign of a definitive break between the SDA and the SDS came in February 1991 when the SDA adopted a new position and began advocating a confederal

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[104] Judah, 2000: 165.

[105] Demirović, E., 1990. "Razvjenčanje na čednom mjestu". *Borba,* 20 September, p. 5. Lučić, M., 1990. "Ozbiljno skretanje udesno". *Borba,* 20 September, p. 5.

solution.[106] But although this clearly contradicted the SDS's goal and raised the prospect of a Croat-Bosniak alliance, the partnership did not collapse. A final attempt at reviving the co-operation was initiated by the MBO with the so-called Belgrade Initiative in the summer of 1991; an agreement which would guarantee Yugoslavia's continuation.[107] At this point, the Serb leaders felt increasingly isolated and the MBO's leader, Zulfikarpašić, argues that they were pleasantly surprised by the proposal.[108] The agreement, however, failed when Izetbegović refused to sign. The Serbs attempted to secure agreement for a while longer but after this last attempt it was not long before the HDZ and the SDA declared a sovereign Bosnia and the SDS left Parliament and began preparing for the war-option.[109] Already at the time of the negotiations over the Belgrade Initiative it was clear that relations between the SDA and the SDS were frosty at best. Thus, Koljević, in Izetbegović's presence, allegedly exclaimed: "*He is lying to us!*"[110]

Part of the explanation for this lack of trust is to be found in the internal divisions in the SDA, which radicalised Izetbegović's position and contributed to Serb mistrust. Hardline forces within the SDA effected a gradual radicalisation of the party and, in negotiations with the Serbs, Izetbegović found himself constrained and he retracted from statements on possible settlements following negative reactions within his own ranks.[111] When Zulfikarpašić defended the Belgrade Initiative on Bosnian television, a fax was received from the SDA executive committee stating: "*We are against the very idea of negotiating with the Serbs*". Izetbegović said he had no idea who sent it,[112] which attests to the factional disputes in the party or at least to Izetbegović's ambivalent position.

The divisions in the Bosniak community permitted the SDS to maintain their hope for Bosniak support but it also contributed to Izetbegović's increasingly uncompromising position and the SDS leadership's lack of trust in him. Both the

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[106] Andjelić, 2003: 207.

[107] A Yugoslav Federation dominated by Serbia was by no means an ideal solution for the Bosniaks but it was a last ditch attempt to avoid war.

[108] Zulfikarpašić, 1998: 152.

[109] *Ibid* 178, 180, 181.

[110] *Ibid* 172.

[111] *Ibid* 172.

[112] *Ibid* 183.

SDS and the HDZ had tried to win the Bosniaks over and the failure of the SDS to secure their support resulted in a great sense of betrayal.[113]

The tripartite coalition in some ways dampened radicalisation since it was not clear from the outset who would end up in the minority position. It encouraged moderation as a means to ensuring co-operation. However, radicalisation eventually ensued and it is an interesting point that increased radicalisation co-existed with continued partnership and attempts at reaching agreements. This radicalisation was significantly influenced by the context of increasing tensions and the outbreak of violence in Slovenia and Croatia. While the interplay and overall context, therefore, affected the position of the Serb leadership, it would be mistaken to regard the radicalisation of the SDS as merely mirroring this interplay: the radicalisation was strongly pushed by intra-party divisions and by the kin-state, and the SDS often took the first step in radicalising its position.

4.5 Dynamics of competition and division

At the time of elections, the ethnification of politics in Bosnia was considerable and with this issue being dominant, the non-ethnic parties found it very hard to compete with the SDS. The inter-ethnic co-operation was a conscious strategy to define politics in ethnic terms and the initially relative moderate position of the nationalist parties, paradoxically, aided ethnification and, hence, ultimately the radicalisation of politics. The ability of the SDS to attract Serb voters was, furthermore, augmented by the weakness of the non-ethnic parties and their internal squabbles. Moreover, the SDS managed in the short time from its foundation to the elections to establish a well-functioning party structure. The only nationalist party that competed with the SDS was the SPO but it never became a serious challenge. When the SPO became significantly more moderate and hence very distinguishable from the SDS, the party's only deputy chose to abandon the SPO and join the SDS. The existence of non-ethnic rivals meant that a vague position was instrumental for the SDS in its attempt to capture the middle ground. Playing the extreme ethnic card was not

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[113] Stefanović, Nenad, 1994. "Dr. Radovan Karadzic, president of the Serb Republic in BH". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 142, 13 June. Serb politicians from that time frequently argue that the position of the Serbs was reactive and that it was in particular a reaction to the SDA's and the HDZ's co-operation. E.g. Interview Dragutin Ilić, Banja Luka, 23 October 2003. Interview Predrag Lazarević, Banja Luka, 12 November 2003. Interview Vladimir Lukić, Banja Luka, 2 December 2003.

successful, but due to the earlier ethnification of politics a vague position soon lost its use: the SDS was almost monolithic within the Serb community, non-ethnic alternatives were marginalised and a significant, more moderate Serb party seemed unlikely to emerge. Rivals to the SDS and its leadership, therefore, had to come from within.

Radovan Karadžić was initially not a strong charismatic leader around whom the party was created: the SDS built him up, not the other way round. Power was, at least before the elections, exerted from behind the scenes rather than in the official party leadership. Despite having such relatively weak leadership from the outset, the party was fairly cohesive and not plagued by fractionalisation. The only serious problem of intra-party challenges in the pre-war period was caused by the increasingly autonomous Krajina leadership. Like other threatening intra-party divisions this was, however, solved resolutely through a compromise involving concessions to the hardline elements. It therefore followed the trend of continuous radicalisation of the party. This radicalisation, as well as Karadžić's strong backing from behind the scenes, seems to have preserved an undivided party. Finally, Belgrade's support for the leadership and lack of involvement in intra-party struggles helped Karadžić fend off challengers; they did not posses the resources needed to win in the intra-Serb competition.

Despite popular endorsement of the SDS at the time of elections, the party could not necessarily count on popular support for its continued radicalisation. Dissatisfaction with the nationalist parties was mounting but the party made clever use of a referendum to point to the support enjoyed by its more radical position. While the party in its radicalised form was certainly not without popular backing, there is no evidence that supports a voter-led radicalisation: the Serb voters had no chance to support any alternatives to the SDS and with its control of resources in Serb-dominated areas, the party had the power to heavily influence popular opinion and its expression.

Finally, the inter-ethnic interplay proved to be of great significance in the ethnification of politics and the resulting marginalisation of non-ethnic parties. The tripartite structure, moreover, influenced the SDS's strategies and for a while

dampened the drive towards radicalisation. But radicalisation was fuelled by the context of increasing tensions and ensued following the marginalisation of alternatives, pressure from Belgrade and in an attempt to appease intra-party challengers.

4.6 Pre-war intra-ethnic competition

The analysis of intra-Serb competition in pre-war Croatia and Bosnia highlighted some interesting dynamics. In particular, popular attitudes were found to be of limited significance in the process of radicalisation and the ethnification of politics was part of the political struggle; it was not based on the overwhelming power of ethnicity. [114] The analysis found that the intra-Serb competition was primarily dominated by non-democratic resources, which were, to a large extent, supplied by Belgrade, and the dominance of hardliners was consequently based on their control of resources outside democratic competition. What was important for the rivalling elites was to have a geographical basis of support, a core area where an alternative power base could be built. Furthermore, the use of distinctly non-democratic tactics to get rid of more moderate rivals greatly aided the victory of the radical faction. The availability and effectiveness of coercive resources strengthened the hardliners and made possible the dominance of centrifugal dynamics. Contrary to what is argued in theories of outbidding, popular attitudes were not the driving force in the intra-party struggles; they were not based on popular demands for a harder line. One decisive factor in the victory of the hardliners in the Croatian case was Belgrade's involvement: the Serbian regime provided the resources needed in the competition. The importance of Belgrade's involvement consequently increased with the increasing importance of non-democratic resources.

Competition with non-ethnic parties and the process of ethnification progressed differently in the two cases, and this illustrates some of the interplay between ethnification and political competition. In the competition with non-ethnic parties the SDS in Bosnia proved much stronger than the SDS in Croatia: the authority of the League of Communists was eroded to a greater extent, the non-ethnic parties weakened each other by competing internally, the SDS in Bosnia was stronger and

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[114] As Gagnon puts it: "*It is the very inability of elites 'to play the ethnic card' as a means of mobilising the population that leads them to use other options*". Gagnon, 2004: xvi.

better organised than the SDS in Croatia, and the ethnic issue finally had greater political salience in Bosnia than in Croatia, where the main electoral issue was the future status of Yugoslavia. Ethnification of politics was part of the political struggle and should be analysed as political competition: in terms of the dynamics of competition, distribution of resources *and* the inter-ethnic interplay, which lends it a quality different from more conventional political competition. The ethnification of politics was not an automatic process once an ethnic party was created: the competition between the ethnic parties and the non-ethnic parties was influenced by the process of ethnification but the competition also had an impact on this process. The ethnification of politics and the marginalisation of non-ethnic rivals was in both cases complete in late 1990, i.e. *before* the outbreak of widespread violence and was consequently not merely a consequence of violence, as it is sometimes argued.[115] But the support for the nationalist parties and their subsequent radicalisation was not based on elites successfully playing the ethnic card and mobilising people from a radical position.

When ethnification was still incomplete and non-ethnic rivals still posed a treat to the ethnic party, a vague position was, therefore, instrumental: a position from which the party could simultaneously promote tensions and compete with non-ethnic forces. The vague position, furthermore, meant that ethnic alternatives to the SDS were unlikely to emerge. The parties presented themselves as 'catch-all' Serb parties, which dissuaded more moderate rivals, and when the non-ethnic rivals were marginalised, the SDS was consequently near-monolithic in the Serb community. Once ethnification was complete and alternatives were marginalised, the incentive for a vague position disappeared and a more radical position became strategic, especially since radical factions were found within the party. This tendency was augmented by the lack of possibility for moderate SDS factions to forge alliances with non-ethnic forces. In this sense, ethnification fostered radicalisation whereas incomplete ethnification was more compatible with moderate dynamics. However, a drawn-out process of ethnification can result in a weak ethnic leadership, due to the need for a vague position. Therefore, gradual ethnification, which may be caused by relatively moderate divisions, can actually increase the risk of radicalisation. The

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[115] See e.g. Gagnon, 2004. Mueller, John, 2000. "The Banality of 'Ethnic' War". *International Security* 25 (1): 42-70.

effect of ethnification on political competition is, consequently, less than straightforward.

In both pre-war Croatia and Bosnia, the dominant dynamic of Serb elite competition was centrifugal: despite different degrees of divisions, radicalisation was the outcome. The SDS in Croatia provided a clear example of intra-party outflanking when more radical factions continuously pressured Rašković to take a more extreme position and ultimately replaced him as party leader. In Bosnia, the SDS leadership was in greater control of the party but this greater cohesion and ability to deal with divisions and factions was accompanied by a constant radicalisation of the party. The rivalry was fuelled by differing views of solutions to the inter-ethnic conflict, by ideological and regional cleavages and by personal power ambitions. These issues came together in the SDS's strong regional factions in Knin and Banja Luka. However, the Knin faction reached into the leadership of the SDS, whereas the Banja Luka faction was in conflict with the leadership of the SDS. The primary issue of contention differed: Banja Luka wanted greater autonomy while Knin wanted the party to take a more radical course, i.e. in Croatia, the internal competition was primarily over the national or ethnic issue, whereas in Bosnia the divisions were also based on other issue. Furthermore, the Banja Luka faction was internally divided and, therefore, weakened vis-à-vis the central leadership. The Banja Luka faction was, consequently, much easier to manage than the Knin faction and the leadership only had to make minor concessions. In terms of the resulting dynamics of competition, these differences, therefore, point to the importance of the structure of the party, the nature of divisions and the cohesiveness of the oppositional factions. Both leaderships may deliberately have created or encouraged radical factions in order to be able to stir up tensions while at the same presenting themselves as the more moderate forces who needed concessions in order to fend off the hawks. This is, however, a dangerous strategy and for Rašković, if such a strategy was ever deliberate, it backfired.

As regards the leaders of the two parties, one might have expected that Karadžić would have faced more factions than Rašković, who had his popular support and charisma to lean on. But Karadžić had strong people behind him who were not harbouring leadership ambitions. Rašković's charismatic authority was of limited

value in securing cohesion in the party: it was far from sufficient when factions were, at the same time, allowed to flourish and when Rašković failed to build a cohesive leadership. Personal leadership was, therefore, not as important as one would have expected in a transitional situation, which is generally characterised by weak parties. The organisation of the party matters and the weak structures, which were especially characteristic of the Croatian SDS, caused the central party structures to be of limited importance for the internal struggles. Instead, regional and local party structures as well as other resources became decisive especially when the conflict intensified, military considerations began to play a role and a general situation of lawlessness spread.

The inter-ethnic interplay proved very important for the ethnification of politics but had a less significant impact on the process of radicalisation: radicalisation of the 'other side' provided ammunition for hardliners, but it was not *the* decisive factor in the outcome of intra-ethnic competition and changes in intra-ethnic elite competition need not be a response to changed rhetoric or actions of opposing ethnic leaders. The inter-ethnic interplay primarily matters when popular attitudes are of great significance and its importance was consequently reduced by the decreasing significance of this audience. However, the number of ethnic groups did impact on the strategies adopted by the two SDSs. Finally, the extent of unity or disunity among the Serbs appears to have been influenced by the inter-ethnic interplay. During the process of ethnification, when the marginalisation of non-ethnic parties was still an open question, divisions were limited to intra-party competition and were then of a fairly muted nature. Only once the rivals were removed did intra-party strives really come to the fore. This would suggest that the nature of the conflict and the success of the ethnic parties influence the degree of unity. The inter-ethnic interplay seems to have had a more direct impact in Bosnia where the Bosniak-Croat alliance, to some extent, can be seen as a turning point that temporarily led to greater Serb unity. This was further strengthened by the outbreak of war. However, while the inter-ethnic interplay had some impact on this closing of ranks, one should not overlook the significance of enforced unity: non-ethnic deputies were subject to very significant pressures to join the SDS's ranks and moderates were often removed from their posts. This had more to do with the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition than

with inter-ethnic relations. Intra-ethnic competition should consequently not be regarded as just an epiphenomenon of inter-ethnic relations; it is not merely reactive.

Despite the different dynamics of competition, the outcome was, nevertheless, the same in Croatia and Bosnia: increasing radicalisation of the dominant Serb position. But the different paths to this radicalisation meant that the two SDS leaders, Babić and Karadžić, entered the war with significantly different degrees of political support, fractionalisation and threats to their leadership.

Chapter 5
Intra-Serb Competition in Wartime Croatia:
Disunity did not save the Serbs

With the outbreak of war, we find ourselves in a very different context for political competition: not only has the transition to democracy failed and complete ethnification has become a reality but it is also a situation of war in which other resources, especially military resources, are available and effective in the intra-Serb rivalry. Given the importance of coercive resources, links with military and paramilitary forces becomes of crucial significance for the outcome of the intra-Serb competition; they consequently have an important influence on the dominant Serb position that can be exercised either through support for competing political leaders or through direct challenges to these leaders. These are the background conditions for the intra-ethnic competition, which is, consequently, far removed from political competition in a peaceful, consolidated democracy. However, the wartime period also brings with it the emergence of competition between ethnic parties, often also focused on issues other than the conflict itself. Divisions are still fuelled by disagreements over the inter-ethnic conflict, by ideological cleavages and by personal power ambitions, but it now also becomes focused on criticism of war profiteering and differing views of relations with Belgrade. This runs contrary to theoretical expectations that unity will increase in a time of crisis and that the outbreak of violence will prevent other issues from becoming salient. Intra-party competition, therefore, ceases to be the only form of intra-Serb competition and other issues of contention and competition surfaces. But while party competition increases in importance, the party structures themselves are even weaker than in the pre-war period: other resources are important and the need for democratic legitimacy has been reduced by the outbreak of war.

In the period immediately before the outbreak of war, the dynamics of intra-Serb competition had differed significantly in the two cases, although continuous radicalisation was a common feature. But after war broke out, in the summer of 1991 in Croatia and in April 1992 in Bosnia, the dynamics of intra-Serb competition gradually changed and in some ways became more alike. The intensity of the competition increased in Bosnia and, in both cases, competition from other parties

now also became of importance. However, the Serb elites in Croatia remained far more divided than in Bosnia and this affected the positions taken by the leaders and the ultimate defeat of the radicals when Croatian forces retook Krajina in August 1995. Initially, however, the Serb leaders in both cases had great success in achieving their military objectives: by late 1991 Serb forces controlled one third of Croatian territory and by September 1992 Serb forces in Bosnia controlled as much as 70 per cent of the country.

Milošević's pre-eminent role had, in the pre-war period, been nearly uncontested among the victorious local leaders but this changed significantly during the war: the radical leaders that had been successful in the 'local' intra-ethnic competition almost invariably fell out with their protector in Belgrade. Rivalry therefore began over who was the true interpreter of Serb interests and goals, and in this competition disgruntled leaders in the two Serb statelets sought alternative alliance partners in Serbia while Milošević found other players more willing to follow his tune. The Serbian President thereby sought to utilise the existence of divisions among the local Serbs and, therefore, continued to have a significant impact on the dynamics of intra-Serb competition. However, the local Serb leaders were able to garner alternative support in Serbia: from the democratic opposition, intellectuals, the Serbian Orthodox Church and, in particular, the Serb Radicals. The existence of resources emanating from within the statelets as well as the support from these alternative audiences in the kin-state resulted in a greater level of autonomy from Milošević, who consequently was not always able to dictate developments in the two statelets.

The importance of popular attitudes decreased considerably with the outbreak of war and it was not a significant constraint on the rivalling leaders, even though elections and referenda were held. In David Owen's words, these leaders "*displayed a callousness of mind in which the people's view never seemed to come anywhere near the conference table*".[1] Similarly, the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders did not significantly impact on the direction of competition; on changes in a more radical or more moderate direction. The form of inter-ethnic interplay that really mattered was the military balance but even when this became detrimental to the Serb leaders, it

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[1] Owen, David, 1995. *Balkan Odyssey*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. p. 3.

took changes in the intra-Serb competition and kin-state pressure to force a significant change in the dominant elite position.

Radicalisation continued to be the dominant response to intra-party challengers but it was *not* the chosen response to competition from other parties or independent leaders. Such challengers would most often be sought repressed and, hence, caused no change in the dominant position, but it also at times led to a relative moderation of the dominant position. Radicalisation is, therefore, not the only possible outcome of intra-ethnic competition, not even in a violent, highly polarised situation. This contradicts existing theorising in the field.

5.1 Infighting in the Serb statelet

Following the outbreak of war in Croatia, there was initially a closing of ranks behind Milan Babić, who had emerged victorious from the pre-war intra-Serb competition. Formally, however, Babić was only president of the SAO Krajina as well as president of the Serb National Council. In the two other SAOs in Croatia; SAO Western Slavonia and SAO Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem, Veljko Džakula and Goran Hadžić were in the leadership. The initiative was, nevertheless, with Babić and on 19 December 1991, the parliament of SAO Krajina proclaimed the Republic of Serb Krajina (Republika Srpska Krajina, RSK), with Babić as its president. The RSK was, in early 1992, joined by the two other autonomous regions. Once the RSK was established, however, infighting quickly re-emerged and the intra-Serb competition was characterised by an array of political parties, factions and independent candidates. The rivalling elites were divided over their different positions on the war, over relations with Belgrade and over criticism of war profiteering. The competition was, furthermore, fuelled by regional cleavages and by personal power ambitions. While the RSK was caught in perpetual infighting, which eventually proved to be its downfall, the leaders of the Serbs outside of the RSK were in a very different position. Of the two main leaders, Milorad Pupovac and Milan Đukić, the former in some ways acted as a link between Zagreb and Knin, while the latter largely functioned as the Croatian Government's 'loyal Serb'.

SDS factions, independents and multipartism

The onset of war had brought with it the reunification of the SDS under its radical leadership but without this ensuring more than temporary unity. As a consequence of continued fractionalisation and leadership disputes, Babić lost power in early 1992 and subsequently chose to re-activate his SDS of Krajina and constitute it as an actual party. Competition *between* parties was thereby introduced in the RSK. Due to limited institutionalisation, the divisions between parties were at times unclear but the main challenges to the leaders now came from outside their own party or movement: from other parties or from independent candidates. Intra-party divisions persisted but they primarily concerned the ability to take hardliners along to new political positions rather than explicit challenges. The event that set these changing dynamics in motion was a leadership struggle over the Vance Plan in early 1992.

Babić faces defeat and party competition emerges

The Vance Plan set up four United Nations Protected Areas that coincided roughly with the Serb-held areas that had had a Serb majority or substantial minority before the war. In return for the deployment of UN forces, the JNA would withdraw from Croatia and the paramilitaries would be disarmed. Babić was, however, vehemently opposed to the plan: he refused to accept the disarmament and the withdrawal of the JNA fearing that the mandate of the UN forces would not be extended after six months.[2]

In his opposition, Babić had counted on the support of his loyal followers in Knin but with the joining of the two other autonomous regions to the RSK, the balance of power had changed and support from SAO Krajina was no longer sufficient for Babić to remain in power. The RSK political system was in essence a parliamentary system and the president could consequently be removed by parliament. It was, therefore, crucial that the speaker of the RSK parliament, Mile Paspalj, agreed to endorse the plan and called a parliamentary session in Glina, away from Babić's stronghold in Knin. Members of parliament from outside the Knin area proved more willing to play Belgrade's game: they endorsed the plan, dismissed Babić as president and requested the resignation of the government. Goran Hadžić, who was

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[2] ICTY, 2002a: 13625.

president of SAO Slavonia, argues that this was merely the result of the joining of the two other SAOs: Babić was only president of the 'small Krajina' and a new parliament had to be constituted and a new president elected.[3] It was, however, not a clear divide between Krajina and the rest of the RSK: the conflict between Babić and Belgrade also brought out divisions between Knin and the regions of Lika, Kordun and Banija, and many deputies from the latter regions chose to go against the RSK president. Divisions were, thus, fuelled by different views of the war, by regional cleavages as well as by personal ambitions. Babić had, however, not given up his fight and convened his loyalists to a parliament session in Knin. They decided to call a referendum on the Vance Plan and voted against the dismissal of Babić, whereby double rule was effectively established in the RSK. On 26 February 1992, Hadžić was elected new president of the RSK and after a period of competing centres of power the authority of his government was established.[4]

Although Babić was formally ousted by the parliament, coercive resources and support from military forces were decisive for this outcome. Babić lacked support in the 'enlarged' RSK and he crucially lacked the support of the military. He did not trust the JNA[5] but had counted on support from the local paramilitaries. This was, however, conditional on support from Milan Martić, who controlled the paramilitary police. Babić and Martić had previously clashed due to Babić's desire to control the armed forces, and an additional reason for Babić's rejection of the Vance Plan may have been that the entailed demilitarisation would have left Martić's police as the only military force in the RSK.[6] Martić, perhaps realising this opportunity for increased power, chose not to forgive and forget and sided with Hadžić. As a response to this situation and in protest over the Vance Plan, Babić in April 1992 formed the paramilitary 'Petar Mrkonjić' brigade.[7] He, furthermore, decided to re-activate his SDS of Krajina and constitute it as a separate party with himself as

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[3] Interview Goran Hadžić, Belgrade 30 October 2003.

[4] Dakić 1994: 59. Čuruvija, Mirko, 1992. "Kordun i Banija napuštaju Babiću". *Vjesnik*, 12 February, p. 1.

[5] Cerović, Stojan, 1992. "Troubles with a bit player". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, 13 January.

[6] Milošević, Milan, 1992. "Babic Caput". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 16, 13 January. Cerović, Stojan, 1991. "Balvan čuva Jugoslaviju". *Vreme*, 17 June, p. 16-17. Rajić, Vlado, 1992. "Knin – drugi put". *Vjesnik*, 7 January p. 5.

[7] Dakić, Mile, 2001. *Krajina kroz Vijekove.* Belgrade: Vedes. Hronika p. 15.

president.[8] Babić's SDS and his paramilitaries were later to become of importance but for now he lacked support for his position and in late March he allegedly narrowly escaped an assassination attempt.[9] Eventually, therefore, he returned to parliament, waiting for time to be ripe for his comeback.

The conflict over the Vance Plan gave Rašković a chance to make a comeback. He was reinstated as leader of the SDS and announced that the party was "*back in Croatian politics*" and that the Serb representatives would return to the Croatian Parliament.[10] Despite this formal position of power, Rašković never regained influence and he was in a marginal position until his death in the summer of 1992. The moderation entailed by the Vance Plan was, therefore, of a very limited nature but it did, for a while, put an end to centrifugal dynamics.

Even though the new RSK government appeared to be more moderate, it soon became clear that the Vance Plan was only intended to freeze the situation and the other provisions of the plan were never implemented. Frustrated with the lack of progress, two members of the RSK government, Veljko Džakula and Dušan Ećimović, initiated negotiations with the Croatian authorities over the return of refugees to Western Slavonia and, together with other SDS leaders from Western Slavonia, they signed the so-called Daruvar Agreement in February 1993. The Government in Zagreb quickly distanced itself from the agreement[11] but in Knin the reaction was more severe since it was thought to create an unwanted precedent: if in Western Slavonia why not in Knin? Džakula and Ećimović were relieved of their posts and in September 1993 they were arrested alongside one of the other negotiators, Mladen Kulić, and charged with high treason.[12] The RSK leadership controlled the resources necessary to suppress such challengers and the charges sent a clear signal to others who might be contemplating moderation. By arresting these popular figures, the RSK leadership also made sure that they would not be able to

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[8] Kovačević, 2003: 68-9. Interview Dragan Kovačević, RSK information minister, 1995. Belgrade, 17 September 2004.

[9] "Pokusan atentat na Babića". *Borba,* 25 March 1992, p. 4.

[10] "Vraćemo se politici s gandijevskim elementima". Hina, Belgrade, *Vjesnik,* 5 February 1992, p. 12.

[11] Komlenović, Uros, 1995. "Mavericks on the Road". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 183, 3 April.

[12] Interview Veljko Džakula, Zagreb, 12 August 2003. Komlenović, Uros, 1995. "All Dzakula's arrests". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 189, 15 May. Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Darkness at Noon". *AIM Press,* 20 February.

run in the 1993 elections in the Serb-held territories.[13] The Western Slavonian leaders had taken a step too far and misjudged when moderation was tolerated and when it would bring them in danger: acceptance of the Vance Plan was necessary in order to obtain power, implementation of the plan was not.[14] Divisions based on different views of the war, thus, remained significant and continued to have a decisive impact on Serb politics.

Outbidding and conflict between civilian and military leader

The new president of the RSK had considerable problems with more radical forces and, with the added help of hindsight, Hadžić now argues that he could not have supported the Daruvar Agreement since he would have risked being killed.[15] The central force behind the rejection of the agreement and the arrest of the negotiators was Hadžić's main rival, Milan Martić, the minister of the interior and the strongman in Knin.[16] Outflanking had again become dominant and military forces played a significant role in the intra-Serb rivalry.

As part of his strategy for returning to power, Babić also pursued a strategy of outbidding. Thus, following talks at the UN, the SDS of Krajina's executive committee issued a declaration in which it accused the RSK delegation of leaving for New York without the parliament's permission and of "too easily getting into talks... about giving up part of the Serbian territory – handing it over to our enemies".[17] Due to Martić's control of significant coercive resources, his persistent challenges were, however, of greater immediate concern to Hadžić. Even though he was president of the whole of the RSK, Hadžić never managed to establish control in the Knin region: in this area, Martić with his paramilitary police ruled supreme. Martić had been considerably strengthened after the withdrawal of the JNA, which left his police as the only 'official' force in the RSK, and Hadžić eventually had to withdraw to

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[13] Interview Dušan Ećimović, Belgrade, 29 August 2003.

[14] In February 1994, Džakula was kidnapped in broad daylight in Belgrade following a television interview in which he criticised the RSK leaders. The RSK ministry of the interior took responsibility for the kidnapping stating that Džakula was taken into custody by the municipal court in Glina, where proceedings for "territorial threat to the RSK and espionage" had been initiated against him. Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Darkness at Noon". *AIM Press*, 16 February 1994.

[15] Interview Goran Hadžić, Belgrade, 30 October 2003.

[16] Jureško, Goranka, 1993. "Srpski pregovarači imaju jedno lice za javnost, druge za pregovore". *Vjesnik,* 19 December, p. 8-9.

[17] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Patriots and Godfathers". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 75. 1 March.

Slavonia and could only come to Knin under strong escort.[18] In Eastern Slavonia, other paramilitary formations had considerable influence, especially the Serbian Volunteer Guard, or the 'Tigers', led by Željko Ražnjatović, better known as 'Arkan'. The Tigers were effectively the paramilitary wing of the so-called Generals' Party, the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia (Savez komunista – Pokret za Jugoslaviju, SK-PZJ).[19] The SK-PZJ was founded by retired JNA Generals but it was linked to Milošević's wife, Mira Marković, and was clearly loyal to the Belgrade regime. The presence of the Tigers in the RSK undermined Martić's monolithic control of the armed forces, but their influence was largely contained to Slavonia and Hadžić's power was similarly constrained.

Hadžić's problems in ruling the RSK were, furthermore, augmented by an economic collapse: there was a shortage of food, electricity and fuel, which spurred the undeniable need for economic negotiations with the Croatian authorities.[20] At the same time, fear of Croatian military attacks became widespread after Croatian forces successfully retook control of the important Maslenica bridge in early January 1993. Finding themselves in an increasingly untenable position, the RSK government actually began negotiating with Zagreb.[21] Thus, despite continued politics of outbidding, the RSK leaders, lacking any other alternatives, chose a more moderate position. The prime minister of the RSK, Đorđe Bjegović, even stated: "*a loose confederation with Croatia could be envisioned*".[22] Hadžić's government was not strong enough to repress its opponents and this was, therefore, not a viable strategy in the competition. The challenges that they were facing were, moreover, not limited to outbidding on the issue of the war: they were also accused of war profiteering and incompetence. Further radicalisation of their position on the war would, therefore, not make the challenge disappear and it was, furthermore, difficult to imagine a position more radical than the one espoused by Babić and Martić.

In order to gain time, the government had postponed elections scheduled for March 1993, but the situation in the RSK was becoming increasingly chaotic: Hadžić was

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[18] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Orders from Belgrade". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 180, 13 March.
[19] Gow, 2003: 83
[20] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Patriots and Godfathers". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 75. 1 March. Vasić, Miloš, 1992. "Neither Unity nor Law". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 45, 3 August.
[21] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Patriots and Godfathers". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 75. 1 March.
[22] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "A Fragile Pontoon Link". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 96. 26 July.

not in control and the conflict between him and Martić eventually reached breaking-point. In October 1993, Hadžić decided that Martić's paramilitary police should be subjected to the RSK army; an army which had been created following the Maslenica offensive and which was formally under the president's authority. To achieve this, Hadžić ousted Martić in a parliamentary session, but Martić fought back by accusing Hadžić of controlling the oil resources in the RSK[23] and, furthermore, criticising Hadžić's absence from the RSK: Hadžić mostly stayed in Novi Sad where he was enrolled in the Faculty of Economics and he spent his holidays in glamorous Sveti Stefan in Montenegro. Martić argued that the parliament had not been quorate when it dismissed him and he called another parliament session in Plitviće in Krajina. When this session revoked the decision to dismiss Martić, elections were inevitable.[24] As in the case of the Babić-Hadžić conflict, parliamentary sessions called in different parts of the RSK could, due to limited mobility, be used to support contested positions. The SDS was divided and its influence as a party organisation was limited. Furthermore, non-party actors such as Martić had considerable influence. Issues of war and peace were still significant in the elite rivalry, but other issues had also become salient and this influenced the dynamics of competition; in particular the strategies available to Hadžić. Moreover, the importance of coercive resources was clearly reflected in the competition; the control of military forces was crucial.

The holding of elections did, however, not only promise to solve the strife between Hadžić and Martić, it also gave Babić a chance to make a comeback. The elections cemented Hadžić's weakness and his SDS of Serb Lands lost decisively to Babić's SDS of Krajina.[25] In the presidential elections the main competitors were Babić and Martić. Martić ran on a populist platform promising the voters a fight against war profiteers, aid to war invalids and families of killed soldiers, as well as economic revival.[26] Babić's platform was similar and none of the campaigns envisaged a change in course from the intransigent one followed so far.[27] This campaign reflects

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[23] "Chronology 1993, October through December". *Croatian International Relations Review* 2000, 6(18/19) p. 54.
[24] Mataija, Ž., 1993. "Plušte uzajamne optužbe". *Vjesnik* 13 October, p. 4. Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Political clashes in the Krajina". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 118, 13 March. Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Patriots and Godfathers". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 75, 1 March.
[25] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Milosevic loses Krajina". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 117, 20 December.
[26] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Milan Martic's Flying Circus". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 116, 13 December.
[27] Marijačić, Ivica, 1993. "Balvanska konstanta". *Vjesnik,* 16 December, p. 4. Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 123, 31 January.

a change in the form of competition: the primary source of division was no longer the inter-ethnic conflict. Babić seems to have already won in the first round, but the election commission called a second round,[28] which Martić narrowly won after having received substantial support from Belgrade and its media.[29] Before this final round, Martić had indirectly threatened to use his military might to take over power and he, furthermore, argued that Belgrade would be likely to abandon the RSK should Babić return to power.[30] By winning, Martić demonstrated that control of the paramilitary/police in Krajina and links with Belgrade were more important than the SDS name and organisation when it came to securing the RSK leadership.

Post-electoral dynamics: Multipartism and deadlock

The result of the elections was a president, Milan Martić, who had no political party to back him up and who was faced with a parliamentary majority consisting of Babić's SDS and the Serb Radical Party (Srpska radikalna stranka, SRS). Like its mother-party in Serbia, the Serb Radicals in the RSK espoused extreme Serb nationalism and served as an even more radical rival or alliance partner to the SDS. The SRS was founded in the RSK in July 1992[31] and began co-operating with Babić once it became clear that his political death had been prematurely declared.[32] Under the leadership of Rade Leskovac, the SRS became a highly organised party and it made significant inroads into Hadžić's support. Together with the SDS of Krajina's 30 deputies and one of eight independent deputies, the Radicals' 16 deputies held a majority in parliament and could, therefore, topple any prime minister proposed by Martić.

In addition to the Serb Radicals and the competing versions of the SDS, the elections had given political representation to two more parties.[33] The first of these was the Serb Party of Socialists (Srpska partija socijalista, SPS), which was created shortly

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[28] Interview Mile Dakić, Belgrade, 29 August 2003.

[29] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "No roads for reality in Krajina". *AIM Press*, 20 March.

[30] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest* no. 123, 31 January.

[31] Interview Rade Leskovac, president of the Radicals in the RSK 1992-5. Vukovar, 26 September 2003.

[32] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Love that'll never die". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 113, 22 November. Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Who is Who?". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 109, 25 October.

[33] Dakić, 1994: 60. In addition to Babić's SDS of Krajina and Hadžić's SDS of Serb Lands there was also a party named just SDS which espoused a royalist position and only won four mandates in the elections. Interview Dragan Kovačević, Belgrade 17 September 2004.

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before the elections under the leadership of RSK prime minister Đorđe Bjegović and was designed as Belgrade's voice in the Serb statelet. However, its success was limited: the SPS won six out of 84 mandates in the parliamentary elections and in the presidential race it implicitly supported Martić and did not put forward its own candidate.[34] Likewise, the Social Democratic Party of Krajina proved to have marginal electoral success and secured only four mandates. It should, however, be noted that this was the only party contesting the elections that did not have 'Serb' in its title, although this was no guarantee for a more moderate stance.[35] Nevertheless, its more ambiguous position made the Social Democratic Party a prime target for attacks and its then leader, Ranko Bakić, even speaks of murders of some of the party's members.[36] Finally, the 'Generals' party', the SK-PZJ, played some political role, although it did not run in the elections. It represented Belgrade's voice and through its paramilitary wing, Arkan's Tigers, it had significant influence in Eastern Slavonia.[37] This was the party of Martić's prime minister candidate, Borislav Mikelić. The competition between these parties was primarily based on regional and ideological differences and on differing links with Belgrade, and only secondarily on the issue of the war or on valence issues, such as war profiteering.

No one leader was in clear control following the elections, and intense competition and deadlock ensued. While Martić could rely on his presidential powers, control of the police and support from Belgrade, Babić was also in a strong position: he had the backing of parliament and, since his ousting in 1992, had managed to build up his own paramilitary structure, which, through selected assassinations, had helped him retrieve power.[38] Babić, therefore, could not be ignored by Martić and this caused great difficulty in forming a government. At first, Babić with the backing of the Serb Radicals insisted that he should be the new prime minister and when Martić rejected this, the SDS and the SRS deputies started vetoing presidential decrees and passed a vote of no-confidence in the sitting government.[39] Babić and the Radicals opposed Martić's choice Borislav Mikelić, who was very much regarded as Milošević's

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[34] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Campaign and uniforms". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 115, 6 December.
[35] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Springtime Change". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 179, 6 March.
[36] Interview Ranko Bakić, Banja Luka, 23 October 2003.
[37] Gow, 2003: 83-4
[38] Interview Filip Švarm, Belgrade, 13 September 2004. Woodward, 1995: 221
[39] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The start of the trade-off". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 131, 28 March.

man.[40] But the constitution permitted Martić to start an initiative for a change of government in case parliament dismissed his choice for prime minister and by citing a state of war he could, furthermore, dissolve parliament.[41] Babić finally conceded: he accepted Mikelić and his own appointment as foreign minister, even though it cost him the support of the Radicals.

Despite the existence of a more radical opposition and the intense competition, negotiations with the Croatian Government continued and an agreement on economic co-operation was even reached in December 1994. Outflanking was not decisive and in October 1994, the Radical speaker of parliament, Branko Vojnica, was removed in a parliamentary vote, due to his resistance to continued negotiations.[42] However, it would not be long before intransigence again became dominant.

Clashes over the Z-4 Plan

In early 1995, the so-called Z-4 Plan was drawn up by the 'Mini-Contact Group': the US, Russia, EU and UN representatives from the Peace Conference on the former Yugoslavia. The plan promised far-reaching autonomy in Serb-majority areas, including separate currency, parliament, police force, fiscal policy and links with Serbia. The agreement thereby came close to creating a state within the state and hence to accommodating Serb demands for self-determination. This was the most generous offer so far and in the above-mentioned spirit of greater willingness to negotiate one could have expected some readiness on part of the RSK leadership to at least consider it. However, Martić chose to reject the plan outright. He did so for a number of reasons: the official reason was lack of trust in the Croatian authorities, but to this must be added growing desire to assert his independence from Belgrade as well as lack of support from the paramilitary. Babić was also faced with resistance from the hardliners, the police and the army and, therefore, was not able to support the agreement,[43] whether he wanted to or not. Through the SDS of Krajina, Babić consequently demanded a *"freeze on talks with Croatia until it changes its attitude*

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[40] Mikelić was a member of the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia (SK-PZJ), which was very close to Milošević's wife, Mira Marković.

[41] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 123, 31 January.

[42] Interview Rajko Ležajić, speaker of the RSK parliament 1994-5. Belgrade, 17 September 2004. Dakić, 2001: Hronika, p. 27.

[43] Interview Rajko Ležajić, Belgrade, 17 September 2004.

towards the RSK".[44] The two leaders were, despite their strength, not monolithic and they were concerned that they would not be able to bring their 'hawks' along. Their own ranks remained internally divided over the issue of war and peace. Furthermore, Martić may have calculated that by distancing himself from Belgrade and by winning the support of the Serb Radicals, he could bolster his position against the ever-stronger Babić. In this atmosphere, only the RSK prime minister, Borislav Mikelić, came out openly in support of the agreement and with that move he lost the support of Martić who decided to get rid of the prime minister. For a long time Babić chose to sit on the fence and largely kept quiet, but when Martić, on 1 March 1995, asked the RSK parliament to dismiss Mikelić, he failed to get the support of Babić's deputies and Mikelić remained in his post.

While Krajina was caught in infighting, the situation in the region was changing and their position was weakening. In May 1995, the miscalculation became obvious: in Operation Flash, Croatian forces retook Western Slavonia. The fall of Western Slavonia was accompanied by accusations of complicity by Belgrade and Martić argued that the loss of Western Slavonia vindicated his uncompromising position, that it would *"open the eyes of those Serbs who thought we could do a deal with the Croats. Now it's clear that our only option is to have our own state"*.[45] Blame, however, had to be apportioned and turmoil in the Krajina leadership ensued: Mikelić blamed Martić and the military leadership but Martić managed to retain his post with the help of Babić,[46] who had once again changed sides and now turned against Mikelić. Mikelić argued that Babić even though he was politically at odds with Martić, feared his hawks and therefore chose to make a deal.[47]

Further geographical divisions in the leadership

One of the issues that divided Mikelić from the remaining RSK leadership was a proposed union with Republika Srpska in Bosnia. The unification of the two statelets had been declared many times over the years but never realised. In the spring of 1995, Martić and Babić, however, set their mind to realising the union. But one important person in addition to Mikelić was against such a union: Goran Hadžić, who had

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[44] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Checkmate on Z-4". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 175, 6 February.

[45] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "The Dawn of Power Holders". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 190, 22 May.

[46] Owen, 1995: 344.

[47] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Wrong Choice". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 192, 5 June.

returned from political obscurity in mid-1994 and begun charging a more autonomous course for Eastern Slavonia.[48] As part of this strategy, Hadžić formed the co-ordinating committee for Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem, which was akin to an autonomous region.[49] And when the RSK parliament, in June 1995, unanimously adopted the decision on unification with Republika Srpska, the committee issued a letter stating: *"Representatives of Eastern Slavonia will not participate in any way in further implementing this decision...Dismissal procedures are underway for all deputies who are participating or acting counter to those interests"*.[50] The regional divisions had, therefore, once again come to the fore. When Mikelić finally resigned in late July 1995, he warned the Slavonian deputies that Babić would form a new government that only represented Knin.[51] This claim found resonance with the Eastern Slavonian authorities, who consequently prevented Knin deputies from taking part in a parliamentary session which was to appoint a new government.[52] Similar techniques were, however, used by the Knin leaders and in Krajina, on 27 July 1995, a new government was appointed with Babić as the prime minister. Only in the 11th hour did the RSK leadership become willing to negotiate and by then it was too late. On 2 August 1995, Babić accepted the Z-4 plan as a basis for negotiations, stating that *"a modified version of the Z-4 plan which would treat the eastern and the western part of Krajina equally would provide a good basis for political negotiations"*.[53] The Croatian representatives, however, demanded that the Serbs accepted Croatian rule immediately, well knowing that their offensive 'Operation Storm' would be launched the following day. The RSK army quickly collapsed and no assistance was forthcoming from either Pale or Belgrade.

In 1995, infighting once again furthered the intransigence of the Knin leadership and moderation was impossible to sustain. The wartime intra-Serb competition in Croatia saw the increased importance of regional cleavages and valence issues, but strategies and goals in the war also remained a salient issue. The resources used in this competition were primarily coercive, and links with military forces were therefore crucial. The more moderate voices that did exist within the RSK were marginalised

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[48] Woodward, 1995: 345.
[49] Janjić, Dragan, 1995. "Union never brought to a close". *AIM Press*, 6 June.
[50] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Hadzic Re-activated". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 192, 5 June.
[51] Peruničić, Vesna Fabris, 1995. "Babić – najveća nepoznanica". *Vjesnik*, 27 July, p. 7.
[52] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "A Stop for Westerners". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 198, 17 July.
[53] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "The View from the Fort". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 201, 7 August.

with sometimes brutal means: they were harassed, threatened and even killed.[54] The centripetal forces that emerged due to the increasingly desperate position of the Hadžić government persisted for a while under the new government and were even strengthened when an agreement on economic co-operation was reached with Zagreb. Competition from other parties or independents was not met with a radicalisation of the dominant position, but centrifugal dynamics once again became dominant when the status of the RSK came on the table and the leaders feared not being able to bring their own hawks along. Competition from within the party or movement, therefore, again resulted in radicalisation or reinforced existing intransigence.

The only area remaining under Serb control after August 1995 was Eastern Slavonia, and the leadership here needed less encouragement to negotiate. They concluded that unless an agreement was reached, they would face the same destiny as the Serbs in Krajina.[55]

Zagreb Serbs; go-betweens or puppets

The divisions among the Serbs become even more striking if one also looks at the representatives of the so-called 'urban Serbs', i.e. the Serb leaders outside the RSK, who were not only in conflict with the RSK leaders but also competed with each other, primarily over the appropriate political position to adopt.[56]

The Croatian Constitution provided for Serb parliamentary representation in proportion to their share of the population, which translated into 13 seats. The problem was, however, that no Serbs were directly elected in the 1992 elections and mechanisms for ensuring proportionality were not provided by the electoral law. The electoral commission decided that the 13 seats should be distributed among parties that had gained parliamentary representation and had fielded Serb candidates. This would give eight mandates to the SDP[57] and two mandates to the Croatian People's

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[54] Gagnon, 2004: 5.

[55] Interview Vojislav Stanimirović, the president of Eastern Slavonia's executive council. Vukovar, 25 September 2003.

[56] Away from both Zagreb and the RSK in the remote area of Gorski Kotar still other dynamics were found. Here a moderate faction of the SDS managed to stay in power and reached an agreement with Zagreb whereby peace was upheld in this region. See e.g. Tatalović, Siniša, 1996. "Peaceful solution of conflicts in Croatia: Case study of Gorski Kotar". *Peace and the Sciences* XXVII (June): 38-46.

[57] In November 1990, the party had changed its name from SKH-SDP to just SDP.

Party (HNS) as the only parliamentary parties that had Serb candidates on their lists. The SDP had had a catastrophic election, winning only three seats in Parliament, but the party was, nevertheless, far from happy with this unexpected gift which would in effect turn it into a Serb party.[58] The SDP leadership therefore demanded that its Serb deputies either turned down the seats or left the party.[59] Following internal discussions in the party, the outcome was that three of the SDP's Serb deputies stayed in the party and agreed to being *SDP* representatives and not *Serb* representatives, while the remaining five deputies left the party.[60] The crisis involving the election of the Serb deputies made the legitimacy of all Serb deputies questionable.[61] Furthermore, the SDP had made clear that it would not perform the function as the representative of the Serbs, as Ivica Račan, the party's leader put it: *"the SDP has not in the past nor now had any pretensions to represent all Serbs in Croatia, nor their majority. The SDP is not a Serb party and has no mandate from the Serbs".*[62]

This function, therefore, would have to be filled by another party. The Constitutional Court had, in a controversial decision, decided to award the remaining three Serb seats to the Serb National Party (Srpska narodna stranka, SNS), which had failed to pass the electoral threshold. The SNS was led by Milan Đukić, who was elected Deputy Speaker of the Croatian Parliament in September 1992. Đukić and his party were the creation of the Croatian Government: the SNS was formed after contacts were broken off with Knin and the more moderate forces gave up and withdrew.[63] The party was intended to perform the function as the 'loyal Serbs', to demonstrate to the world that the RSK leaders did not represent the majority of Croatia's Serbs. Needless to say that Đukić's influence with the RSK leadership was as good a non-existent.[64] Đukić's resonance in the Serb community was limited and another figure emerged as the leader of the urban Serbs: Milorad Pupovac, then president of the Serb Democratic Forum. Pupovac was not accepted by the radical elements of the RSK but he had contacts with more moderate forces in the statelet, some of whom

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[58] Interview Dušan Plećaš, SDP. Zagreb 26 March 2004.
[59] SDP, 1992a. "Stavovi predsjedništva SDPH o srpskim zastupnicima u Saboru Republike Hrvatske". Author's copy.
[60] Interview Dušan Plećaš, Zagreb 26 March 2004.
[61] Kasapović, 1997: 50-79.
[62] SDP, 1992b. "Izjava Ivice Račane na konferenciji za novinare 4.9.1992. godine." Author's copy.
[63] Culić, Marinko, 1995. "Gentle Hatred". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 175, 6 February.
[64] Interview Milan Đukić, Zagreb, 30 July 2003.

also acted as negotiators with the Croatian Government.[65] Among the people Pupovac established contacts with was Radovan Jović, who was one of the RSK representatives in negotiations in 1993. This link, however, proved costly for Jović who was dismissed as a judge in Glina, had his house was blown up, had several clashes with Martić and was mobilised by the RSK army in 1995. When he refused, he was sent to prison.[66] Taking a more moderate stance and having contacts with the 'urban Serbs' was a very dangerous strategy in the RSK, which the murder of Dmitar Obradović, mayor of Vrginmost, in 1992 attests to. This murder was presumably ordered by Martić due to Obradović's defiance of the radical course.[67] The danger involved in contacts with the 'urban Serb' leaders significantly reduced the influence they could have on dynamics in the RSK. Pupovac had some success with the contacts that, for example, led to the signing of the Daruvar Agreement, but it did not permanently change the position of the dominant forces in the RSK.

Between Pupovac and Đukić not many warm words were exchanged: Đukić accused Pupovac of being an exponent of Knin and Belgrade, while Pupovac criticised Đukić for keeping quiet about events such as the Gospić massacre and for in general being a mouthpiece for the Croatian Government.[68] In January 1995, Pupovac founded another Serb party, the Independent Serb Party (Samostalna srpska stranka, SSS), which was to compete with Đukić's SNS. Even among the urban Serbs, great divisions were therefore found: both supported compromise, but Pupovac also strongly criticised the Croatian Government and had to maintain credibility with his contacts in the RSK. To some extent there was a process of outbidding between Pupovac and Đukić and, over the course of the war, Đukić moved closer to Pupovac's position. Their competition then became largely focused on valance issue, especially on who was the legitimate representative of the Serbs.[69]

Wartime intra-ethnic rivalry was in the RSK marked by increasing competition and by the dominance of coercive resources. It was fuelled by divisions over issues of

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[65] Interview Milorad Pupovac, Zagreb, 11 August 2003.

[66] Vasić, Miloš; Švarm, Filip; Tagirov, Tatjana; Rašeta, Boris, 1995. "Arrest in Tucepi". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 213. 30 October 1995.

[67] Interview Milorad Pupovac, Zagreb, 11 August 2003.

[68] "Pupovac dobio zadaću". *Vjesnik* 10 December 1993, p. 3. Interview Milan Đukić, Zagreb, 30 July 2003. Interview Milorad Pupovac, Zagreb, 11 August 2003.

[69] Rašeta, Boris, 1994. "Srbi su spremni na pregovore". *Pečat,* 11 October, p. 14.

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war and peace, charges of war profiteering, regional and ideological cleavages, differing view of relations with Belgrade and finally by personal ambitions. Due to the importance of coercive resources in the competition, links with military and paramilitary forces were crucial. These links constrained the civilian leaders, even though the distinction between civilian and military leaders was often blurred due to the fragmentation of the military forces. But even in this violent and polarised environment, radicalisation was not the only possible outcome of intra-ethnic competition and temporary, relative moderation even ensued. The position that eventually won out was, however, one of persistent radicalisation, which ultimately led to the fall of Krajina in August 1995. This happened despite pressure from Belgrade for a change in course. The Krajina leaders displayed a growing appetite for independence, but Milošević was by no means deprived of influence: he if anyone knew how to take advantage of changing alliances and could still supply resources needed in the local elite competition. But Belgrade's support was no longer the *sine qua non* of political power in the RSK: alternative resources were available and it was possible to redefine the borders of legitimate political influence.

5.2 Kin-state: Serbia is defended in Knin – for a while

Military failures, international pressure and German push for Croatia's recognition gradually led to a change in Belgrade's strategy and goal. The Serbian Government now appeared willing to accept the notion of 'special status' for the Croatian Serbs, even if it also insisted on the Serb right to self-determination. The message to the Krajina Serbs contained in this policy was: *"You are on your own"*[70] and it was to significantly influence relations with the kin-state. Possible difference of opinion was already indicated during the negotiations over the Carrington Plan in the autumn of 1991. Both Belgrade and Knin eventually rejected the plan, but Milošević had been willing to accept earlier versions, whereas the Krajina leadership refused it all along.[71] These were, however, minor skirmishes compared with the rift created by the Vance Plan a few months later.

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[70] Burg; Shoup, 1999: 89
[71] Silber, Laura, 1991. "Divisions emerge among Serb leaders over EC proposals". *Financial Times,* 1 November. ICTY 2002a: 14074.

Babić's rejection of the Vance Plan brought out the wrath of the Serbian President who, in an unusual move, issued a public letter to the RSK president in which he rejected his right to make decisions that would harm the Serb people: "*You have turned a deaf ear to the explicit attitudes … of the Serbian leadership more than once, giving yourself the right to make decisions the price of which, unfortunately, has to be paid in blood by the entire Serbian nation*".[72] The main board of the SDS did not, however, take this lying down; they issued a response letter in which they described Milošević's move as "*a call for overthrowing the legally elected president*" and "*a dangerous attempt at causing the division among the Serbian people*".[73] The SDS thereby reaffirmed Babić's legitimacy and, furthermore, used the need for unity as a way of further discrediting Milošević's move. Since Babić was clearly not poised to abandon his intransigent position, Belgrade instead chose to make use of the divisions in the RSK and installed a new loyal leadership and for a while Belgrade's control in the statelet seemed unproblematic.

The puppeteer gradually loses control over his puppets

But the RSK elections in late 1993 were a shock to Milošević. Belgrade had decided to place its bet on Martić but what Belgrade had not planned for was that Babić's SDS of Krajina would make a decisive comeback, followed in the second place by the local Serb Radicals. This was after Milošević's break with Šešelj and the results indicated that the Serbian President was losing control in the RSK. This impression was reinforced by the first round of the presidential elections in which Babić was declared to have won just below 50 per cent of the votes. In the crucial second round, no effort was spared to secure Martić's victory and the continuation of Belgrade's influence. Martić made his loyalty to Milošević painstakingly clear when he stated that he would like to be president of Krajina for five days only, after which he would step down in favour of "*all-Serb President Milosevic*".[74] When Martić won the second round, Belgrade thereby secured the continuation of a loyal leadership and, furthermore, demonstrated its crucial role in the RSK elite competition. But Martić, like other leaders before him, eventually also fell out with the Serbian President.

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[72] Milošević, Milan, 1992. "Babic caput". *Vreme News Digest*, no 16, 13 January.

[73] Milošević, Milan, 1992. "Babic caput". *Vreme News Digest*, no 16, 13 January. My emphasis.

[74] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest*, no 123, 31 January.

The first step in the cooling of relations between Milošević and Martić was taken by Belgrade when the Yugoslav Government in January 1994 signed a joint statement on normalisation of Croatian-Yugoslav relations.[75] However, relations became even frostier after Milošević chose to punish the leaders in the RS following their rejection of the Contact Group Plan. The introduction of sanctions also hurt the RSK, which now found itself geographically isolated and fearing abandonment.[76] Martić avoided taking Milošević's side and he even went to the RS to vote, in the name of the RSK, against the Contact Group Plan. Moreover, in the spring of 1995 Martić sought to free himself of Belgrade's influence by ousting Milošević's man, Borislav Mikelić. It is significant that Mikelić's more moderate position did not win *despite* Belgrade's support. Milošević may actually not have been too unhappy about this, since it made it easier to abandon the RSK leadership and Martić argues that he actually followed orders from Belgrade when he rejected the Z4-plan.[77] But Mikelić's demise does attest to Belgrade's markedly reduced influence in Knin and Martić had many other reasons to reject the Z4-plan, including lack of cohesion within his own ranks.

After Martić's public defiance of Milošević the Serbian President had no great qualms abandoning his former protégés and leaving them to their fate. When Western Slavonia was retaken in Operation Flash, Serbian television and *Politika* limited their coverage to the protests lodged by FRY's Foreign Minister and to the flood of refugees.[78] Milošević did not react publicly and it is indeed remarkable that the only official reaction came from the Foreign Ministry and not from the 'President of all Serbs'. Similarly, when the Croatian Army launched Operation Storm and Knin fell within 24 hours, Milošević's reaction was reportedly to exclaim: "*Imagine, those fools withdrew*". The SPS attributed the defeat to the failures of Martić and Karadžić and the Serbian media was ordered to follow this line in their reporting.[79] It was as if Milošević had never supported the unruly leaders in Knin.

In Eastern Slavonia, which was the only area remaining under Serb control after August 1995, the situation was, however, different. Relations with Serbia overlapped

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[75] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The start of the trade-off". *Vreme News Digest,* no 131, 28 March.
[76] Komlenović, Uros, 1994. "The Fate of the Krajina". *Vreme News Digest,* no 160, 17 October.
Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Knin: sam na svijetu". *Pečat,* 11 October, p. 15.
[77] Kovačević, 2003: 81-4.
[78] Gordy, 1999: 73.
[79] Sell, 2002: 250.

with regional divisions in the RSK and the then President of SAO Slavonia, Goran Hadžić, had, throughout the war, been closely in tune with Belgrade. One of the reasons for this closeness, in addition to the geographical proximity, was the greater presence in Eastern Slavonia of paramilitaries from Serbia, in particular Arkan's Tigers. This reduced the autonomy of the local leaders, but they were able to use the paramilitaries as a resource in their competition with Knin. Thus, in July 1995, Knin only had support in one municipality in Eastern Slavonia, the rest were with Hadžić and Milošević. After the fall of Knin and in the face of an impending military attack by the Croatian Army, Belgrade had little difficulty exerting its influence on the eastern part of the RSK. Even though negotiations were taking place between the local leaders and the Croatian Government, the Erdut Agreement was actually the result of negotiations in Dayton between Milošević and Tuđman. Richard Holbrooke argues that although the agreement was a Dayton product, Milošević insisted that it be signed by a local Serb leader since he *"did not want his fingerprints visible in the region"*.[80]

During the war, all the leaders of the RSK either fell out with Belgrade when they sought greater autonomy or, as in the case of Hadžić, were abandoned when their failure to retain control in the statelet became obvious. Hadžić argues that Milošević was deliberately looking to support leaders who were likely to defect and that he lost Belgrade's support because he continued being unquestionably loyal.[81] This being the case or not, the cooling of relations and the stubborn intransigence of the Knin leaders certainly made it easier for Milošević to abandon them to their own fate without this resulting in a backlash in Serbia. However, Belgrade did not only seek to increase the distance between itself and the maverick RSK leaders, the Serbian authorities also actively sought to influence the internal competition in the RSK in order to secure influence in the statelet.

Disunity as a means of influence

Belgrade quickly realised that taking advantage of the rampant elite competition could be an effective strategy against the growing self-assertiveness among the leaders of the RSK. Milošević could utilise cleavages found in the statelet and play

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[80] Holbrooke, Richard, 1999. *To End a War*. New York, NY: Modern Library. p. 267.
[81] Interview Goran Hadžić, Belgrade, 30 October 2003.

on the personal power ambitions of some leaders, and through the supply of resources Belgrade was an important audience to the internal competition. This strategy was successfully utilised when Milošević fell out with Babić over the Vance Plan. The local leaders, however, also actively sought to garner Belgrade's support as an important resource in their internal competition. Over time, however, the importance of Belgrade as an audience decreased; this was in particular due to the availability of alternative resources.

When the competing RSK elites felt that Belgrade's support might make the difference between ascent to the top and political oblivion, letters professing loyalty to the Serbian President was one favoured form of action. In the conflict between Milošević and Babić, Hadžić and Paspalj, who now saw their chance to seize power, sent a letter to Milošević in which they described Babić as an autocrat, adventurer and Bolshevik who was spearheading the Serbs to ruin. When the 1993 elections in the RSK were approaching, the competing leaders were once again vying for Belgrade's support, which would provide much needed resources for their campaign. Thus, several RSK leaders, including Hadžić and Martić, sent a letter to Milošević in which they slated Šešelj, whom Milošević had recently fallen out with. Šešelj was derided as a man who *"has discarded all interests of the Serbian people"* and his behaviour was described as *"dishonourable"* and resembling *"that of a bandit"*.[82] Martić had not long before been closely aligned with Šešelj's Radicals in his attack on Hadžić and, therefore, he needed to make his continued allegiance to Milošević clear.

As expected by the RSK leaders, Belgrade did indeed take a very active role in the 1993 elections. From the outset of campaigning it was clear that Martić was Milošević's new man in Knin and, according to some reports, Martić received as much as 200,000 Deutschmarks from the SPS for financing his campaign. While valuable to Belgrade, Martić was an independent candidate and Belgrade also needed to ensure the loyalty of a large number of deputies and hence needed a loyal political party. Consequently, the SPS had helped found the Serb Party of Socialists, which

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[82] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Love that'll never die". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 113, 22 November.

shared both acronym and policies with Milošević's party and which was intended to be Belgrade's new parliamentary mouthpiece.[83]

But Babić's strong showing in both the parliamentary and the presidential elections did not correspond to Belgrade's wishes. The presidential election was the easier for Belgrade to rectify since a second round would be called if no candidate secured 50 per cent of the votes in the first round. The electoral commission, which was under Belgrade's strong influence, quickly declared that there had been irregularities in the election and subsequently annulled the results in several of Babić's strongholds. This did the trick and it was finally announced that Babić had received 49.89 per cent of the votes in the presidential race.[84] A second round was thereby secured, but Belgrade needed time to devise a new strategy that would guarantee Martić's victory. Election day was consequently postponed for ten days and no expenses were spared in Martić's campaign.[85] This time the strategy worked and Martić won the second round. Nevertheless, the elections had shaken Belgrade and its ability to affect the outcome of internal conflicts was now increasingly open to questioning.

Commentators speculated that Babić had been able to build a parallel military infrastructure and since power in Krajina depended on control of military resources, he was, therefore, able to successfully confront Belgrade's candidate.[86] This may have aided Babić in the first round but Belgrade in the second round created a clear perception that it would abandon the RSK if it were not satisfied with the elected candidate.[87] Belgrade's promised support rather than actual involvement seemed crucial but Belgrade's influence thereby came to depend on the credibility of its continued involvement. Even though he emerged as the winner, Martić may, moreover, have concluded that Belgrade's influence was reduced and that the need for co-operation with Babić had increased accordingly. Into Martić's place as Belgrade's trusted man in the RSK stepped the prime minister Borislav Mikelić. Martić had given up on Belgrade's support and was now instead relying on the

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[83] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Milan Martic's Flying Circus". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 116, 13 December.
[84] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Touching the Untouchables". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 118, 27 December.
[85] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 123, 31 January.
[86] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Touching the Untouchables". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 118, 27 December.
[87] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 123, 31 January.

military and the police, on Karadžic's SDS, on the Radicals and on his growing popularity resulting from increasing popular anger with Milošević.[88]

Belgrade's willingness to support the RSK was increasingly questioned and Milošević's popularity was decreasing. Combined with the apparent existence of power resources in the RSK that were outside Belgrade's control, Milošević's ability to influence internal politics was reduced. This became clear when Mikelić was ousted by Martić and Babić, despite being Belgrade's preferred man on the post.

Countering Belgrade's moves

Even though Belgrade's influence in the RSK waned, the local leaders knew that greater independence would come at a price and that it would be dangerous to distance themselves too far from the kin-state. One aspect of this dependence was the economy: the RSK economy was a shambles and the only thing keeping it from complete collapse was the help coming from Serbia.[89] The RSK elites were aware of their dependence on such support and, therefore, were limited in their ability to react against unwanted changes in Belgrade's policy. In their attempt to counter Belgrade's moves they, in addition to using resources found within the RSK, relied on making new alliances or strengthening existing ones: with Pale and with the Serbian opposition.

Co-operation between the RSK and the RS

The possibility of creating a common front with the RS was continuously used as an implicit bargaining strategy by the RSK leaders and hence as a way of increasing their autonomy from Belgrade. In 1993, a referendum was held in the RSK on unification with the RS. This referendum was a show of force on part of the RSK leaders who knew that the referendum, which resulted in a clear endorsement of unification, was powerful political capital which could be utilised at a strategic point. Babić optimistically stated: *"The referendum is probably making Milosevic's hair stand on end... In the end they'll swallow what we cook up here".*[90]

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[88] Komlenović, Uros, 1994. "The Fate of the Krajina". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 160, 17 October.
[89] Milošević, Milan, 1992. "Babic caput". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 16, 13 January.
[90] Stefanović, Nenad Lj., 1993. "A Referendum by Candlelight". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 92, 28 June.

Unification was kept in store as a possibility in case relations deteriorated rapidly and as a blackmailing devise in the meantime. At some point Martić, however, became afraid that too close co-operation with Pale would risk enraging Belgrade to such an extent that sanctions would also be imposed on the RSK. Consequently, in the summer of 1994, he called off the planned unification of the two statelets.[91] However, a year later relations had become so frosty that unification was once again on the table and the RSK parliament unanimously adopted the decision on unification, in clear defiance of Belgrade.

The leaders in Pale were, however, reluctant alliance partners. The RS was in a much stronger position than the RSK and less dependent on Belgrade's support. Any co-operation, therefore, would be on terms decided by the leaders in Pale. As a replacement for co-operation with Pale, or as a supplement, the RSK leaders sought to ally themselves with the Serbian opposition.

The RSK and the Serbian opposition

The Serbian opposition party that was most clearly present in the RSK was the Serb Radicals: the SRS had created a strong branch party that had close political and institutional links with the SRS in Serbia.[92] When the local leader of the SRS tried to assert his independence and broke with Šešelj, he was promptly ousted from the leadership and the Serbian SRS thereby retained its influence in the statelet.[93] For the remaining opposition parties, alliances with parties and leaders in the RSK was the only way of influencing RSK politics since they had not managed to gain a foothold in the Serb statelet. Notwithstanding the ideological affinity between the SDS and some of the Serbian opposition parties, the effect of these links, however, appears to have been negligible.

In the first conflict between Milošević and the RSK leaders, Babić had unsuccessfully tried to muster the support of the Serbian opposition, but he largely failed in his endeavour, even though he did win the support of the Serbian Orthodox

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[91] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Knin Between Two Kingdoms". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 151, 15 August.
[92] The leader of the local party was also vice-president of the party in Serbia. Interview Nikola Poplašen, founder of the SRS in Bosnia. Banja Luka, 3 December 2003.
[93] Interview Rade Leskovac, Vukovar, 26 September 2003.

Church.[94] No support was forthcoming from the SPO, whereas the DS was more wavering on the issue. In Parliament, Zoran Đinđić spoke of the need to "*determine the western borders of Serbdom*" and stated: "*We do not intend to turn our backs on the Serbs outside Serbia*".[95] Nevertheless, the party accepted the Vance Plan and little support materialised.[96] Support from ultra-nationalist circles would have been more likely but Šešelj was still in tow with Milošević and the Radicals, therefore, remained quiet.

After Šešelj fell out with Milošević, he tried to make use of his strength in the RSK to improve his position in Serbia proper. He, therefore, embarked to topple Milošević's man Hadžić, pressed for elections and presented himself to the RSK leaders as the only politician who would not shun total war. He, furthermore, told the local leaders that he was their only chance of remaining in power.[97] Thereby, Šešelj's support became important for the local leaders in their conflict with Milošević: it became another resource in the ongoing competition between pro- and anti-Milošević forces. Belgrade launched a counter-attack by instructing Hadžić to settle accounts with "*paramilitary groups and Chetniks*", a shorthand for Šešelj's Radicals in the RSK. Local Radicals, as well as people thought to be close to Šešelj, were arrested and, although they were quickly released, it was a clear signal from Belgrade that co-operation with Šešelj would come at a price. This round of rivalling was, however, lost by Belgrade, since the Radicals along with Babić launched an even fiercer attack on Hadžić and elections were ultimately called.[98]

Shortly after the presidential election in the RSK, Šešelj further stepped on Milošević's toes by forming a coalition with Babić.[99] But Šešelj and Babić did not remain friends and the Radical leader instead turned to Martić after he had also fallen out with the Serbian President. In May 1995, Šešelj visited Krajina in order to demonstrate the SRS's influence in RSK politics and to help and encourage Martić in his intransigent position. Moreover, Šešelj aimed to solidify the offensive by the Serbian nationalist opposition and the RS leaders against Milošević, but Babić was

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[94] Milošević, Milan, 1992. "Serbia in a broken mirror". *Vreme News Digest* no. 18, 27 January.
[95] Thomas, 1999: 110.
[96] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Kidnappers and hostages". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 142, 13 June.
[97] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Love that'll never die". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 113, 22 November.
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Of love and hate". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 182, 27 March.

wavering and without his participation the front was weakened.[100] The co-operation between the RSK leaders and the SRS, therefore, never decisively weakened Milošević but the existence of another Serbian leader whom the local leaders hoped could substitute for Milošević undoubtedly strengthened their intransigence and radicalism. The Radicals, therefore, directly affected the internal competition in the RSK, including through its local branch party that proved an alliance partner for whoever leader was willing to adopt a staunchly uncompromising position.

The rest of the Serbian opposition had a more limited impact, even after they also decided to seek to utilise internal divisions in an attempt to weaken Milošević. Thus, in the elections in 1993, the opposition leaders sent premature expressions of congratulations to Babić whom they had shunned nearly two years earlier.[101] This support for any leader in the RSK who expressed resistance to Milošević continued, but with little impact: the democratic opposition in Serbia was too weak to be of great significance.

Serbia and RSK internal competition during the war

There is little doubt that the Belgrade Government had an important influence on competition in the RSK but its influence decreased during the four years of war; from being mere puppets of the Belgrade regime, the Krajina leadership came out in defiance of Milošević and his change to a more accommodative position. As relations between Belgrade and Knin became increasingly frosty, a common rhetorical ploy by both sides was to deny the other's legitimacy. Thus, even though the need for unity persisted as a readily available dictum, the borders of the intra-Serb competition changed. The fractionalisation of the RSK elite, nevertheless, made considerable Belgrade influence possible even when parts of the top echelons distanced themselves from Milošević. Support from Belgrade was a valuable resource in the fierce competition and Milošević generally had no problems finding new loyalists. However, Belgrade's resources gradually became of less importance: two of the main contenders for the top of the hierarchy, Martić and Babić, had, to varying degrees, access to their own paramilitary resources and in the 1993 elections,

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[100] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Seselj goes to Krajina". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 182, 27 March.
[101] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Return of the District Strongman". *Vreme News Digest,* no 123, 31 January.

the importance of Belgrade's support was dependent on the credibility of its continued involvement in the RSK. Hence, when fear of abandonment grew, Belgrade's influence on the internal rivalry was reduced. This change fostered centrifugal dynamics anew. The counter-moves available to the RSK leaders remained limited but the existence of other potentially relevant audiences, especially the Radicals, encouraged intransigence. Autonomy from Belgrade was, moreover, a potential basis for popular support and it was the only significant issue separating the candidates in the RSK elections: Babić argued that his more autonomous course had been vindicated, while Martić emphasised his unquestionable loyalty to Belgrade.[102]

5.3 General population:
Referendum and elections but doubtful voter influence

Despite the possible benefits of popular support, the attitudes of the general population became even less significant for the intra-Serb rivalry than it had been in the pre-war period. When the RSK was constituted, only few of the deputies making up the new parliament actually had popular mandates from the 1990 elections. The remaining deputies were appointed by the SDS and they were often people with connections to the Serbian secret police.[103] In a wartime situation, one would expect the ability of ordinary people to make their opinions heard to be very limited, but the extreme divisions within the leadership actually provided opportunity for voter influence when the holding of elections became the only way out of the political stalemate.

Elections 1993/94

The holding of elections in 1993/94 added a new dimension to elite competition in the RSK. However, the fact that winning the elections was necessary for the leaders to obtain or retain power does not necessarily mean that popular attitudes were decisive for the competition and hence the position of the leaders. A number of factors prevented a direct link between the elites and the mass population from materialising.

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[102] Interview Filip Švarm, Belgrade, 13 September 2004.
[103] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Campaign and Uniforms". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 115, 6 December. Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Orders from Belgrade". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 180, 13 March.

The first problem was the lack of clear political differences. The electoral competition between the parties and candidates was primarily about allegations of corruption and war profiteering and not very much about the war itself; on this issue the parties were united in their radicalism. The only war-related issue that separated the parties was their views on links with Belgrade. Thus, on this issue the voters had a chance to make their opinions heard. Another problem was, however, the existence of factions and frequent splits which made the effect of a party vote highly unpredictable. The value of a party vote was, moreover, reduced by the limited role of parties and their low level of cohesion which left deputies largely unconstrained. To these problems, which are not uncommon in transitional elections, should be added the dubious democratic credentials of the elections. Before the elections the arrest of popular leaders from Western Slavonia ensured that the RSK leadership would not be faced with these more moderate voices.[104] This of course limited the choice available to the voters. The elections themselves were, moreover, far from free and fair: physical attacks on political rivals were reported, the parties did not have equal access to the media and, most importantly, the election commission was under heavy influence from Belgrade and annulled the results in selected electoral districts.[105]

Despite these limitations, the election results did indicate support for Babić's uncompromising stand and his autonomous course: he managed to make a comeback notwithstanding Belgrade's supply of resources to his rivals. This was one possible reason for asserting independence from Belgrade: it could win popular backing. However, following the election results, Filip Švarm commented in *Vreme* that as long as Babić's victory was based exclusively on the will of the voters, then this need not worry Belgrade too much. What should worry the Serbian regime was the possibility that the election victory was based on control of paramilitary resources.[106] This argument brings out the limited value of popular support in the RSK: other resources could be used to undermine rivals and an unwelcome result was unlikely to be respected by a candidate in control of more important resources, such as the military. Only if these resources are more evenly spread or have decreased in

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[104] Interview Dušan Ećimović, Belgrade, 29 August 2003.

[105] Marijačić, Ivica, 1993. "Balvanska konstanta". *Vjesnik,* 16 December p. 4.

[106] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Touching the Untouchables". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 188, 27 December. Interview Filip Švarm, Belgrade, 13 September 2004.

importance does electoral support become more decisive for the elite competition. At the time of the elections, this was not the case. Even so, 'the will of the people' was persistently used to legitimise political positions, especially positions in conflict with Belgrade. When Martić fell out with Belgrade, he was hoping to win the support of other audiences and alliance partners, in particular Babić, Karadžić, the SRS and his own hardliners. But he publicly pointed to the general population and stated: *"The people will decide the fate of the Krajina and I certainly won't accept a solution against the will of the people"*.[107] The supposed 'will of the people' was thereby invoked as an alternative resource in the elite competition, but this was also done more formally through referenda.

Use of referenda

Calling a referendum had, before the war, been one of the SDS's preferred strategies when needing to bolster its position. Following the fall-out over the Vance Plan, Babić again sought to emulate his strategy by calling a referendum on the plan. This demand was, however, in vain; a referendum was never held and this illustrates the difficulty of playing the 'referendum-card' from a weak position. It is a powerful instrument for the already powerful and thereby does not change the dynamics of competition significantly. The only referendum that was held during the war was on the unification with Republika Srpska. The official result was 99 per cent in favour with a 97 per cent turnout.[108] At this point, Babić had recovered from his defeat over the Vance Plan and the referendum was seen as important political capital in dealings with Belgrade.[109] However, the unification was never realised; it was only a useful threat when the leaders needed greater space for manoeuvre and the actual impact of the expressed voter attitudes was consequently limited.

In the case of the 'urban Serbs' popular attitudes are also difficult to gauge but their effect likewise appears to have been negligible even though the urban Serbs were outside the areas directly affected by war.

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[107] Komlenović, Uros, 1994. "The Fate of the Krajina". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 160, 17 October.
[108] "Chronology 1993: April through June". *Croatian International Relations Review*, 1999 V(15/16). p. 131.
[109] Stefanović, Nenad Lj., 1993. "A Referendum by Candlelight". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 92, 28 June.

Urban Serbs: handpicked representatives

Following the departure of the SDS from the political scene and the loss of faith in the SDP, the Serb vote appears to have been scattered among a number of parties. Milan Đukić was recognised as the official representatives of the 'urban Serbs' but his party, the SNS, had actually failed to pass the threshold in the 1992 elections and had even had difficulty collecting the signatures necessary to run for the elections in the first place.[110] The SNS was only given three of the reserved Serb seats when it became clear that the elected parties did not have enough Serbs on their slates. The SNS's popular mandate was, therefore, limited at best. The other main representative of the urban Serbs, Milorad Pupovac, seems to have enjoyed greater support in the Serb community but he lacked a popular mandate.

Survey data for the 'urban Serbs' during the war is very limited, and possibly not very reliable, but it does indicate fairly moderate attitudes. Thus in 1992, 49 per cent supported cultural autonomy for the Serbs and 28 per cent were satisfied with individual human and political rights, while only 20 per cent supported territorial-political autonomy in Serb majority areas.[111] If these figures are to be trusted, then at least one of the Serb representatives, Milorad Pupovac, made demands that were more far-reaching than what the urban Serbs desired. Pupovac's strategy was, however, not merely to mirror the attitudes of the urban Serbs; he also attempted to find a solution that could prove acceptable to the RSK leaders. But the two rivals would both have to consider their chances in coming elections, and Đukić during the war moved closer to Pupovac's position and began demanding more extensive autonomy for the Serbs.[112] This emerging consensus led Pupovac to remark that it seemed no longer to be a question of what the Serbs wanted, but who would be the legitimate representative of their national interests.[113] This became the central issue of contention: who represented the urban Serbs?

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[110] Promitzer, 1992: 44.

[111] Pre-election survey: "Anketa: Izbori 1992". Fakultet političkih znanosti, Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. There were only 113 Serb respondents in this survey but the results are nevertheless statistically significant.

[112] Latinović, Andrea, 1993. "Traže razmjernu zastupljenost Srb". *Vjesnik,* 22 December, p. 2.

[113] Rašeta, Boris, 1994. "Srbi su spremni na pregovore". *Pečat,* 11 October, p. 14.

Thus, despite the holding of elections and a referendum in the RSK and the fact that a sizeable proportion of Croatia's Serb lived outside the war-affected areas, the impact of popular attitudes on the position of the Serb leaders was very limited. Changes in the dominant position were not driven by popular demands, although popular support was not completely without importance as an additional resource.

5.4 Inter-ethnic interplay: Winner takes it all

Following the outbreak of war, direct contacts between Knin and Zagreb ceased and given that the RSK leaders' determination for 'their' territory to remain separate from the Croatian state, the interplay that mattered was primarily of a military nature: what was the relative strength of the two sides? The lack of willingness to negotiate was reinforced by a false sense of security among the Serb leaders provided by the presence of UN forces as well as lack of interest in negotiations on part of the Croatian Government following its international recognition.[114] However, Belgrade and Zagreb were still negotiating and this led to fears among the RSK leadership that they would be sold in an agreement between the two states. Such fears were heightened by the so-called Graz agreement concluded in May 1992 between Karadžić and Mate Boban, HDZ BiH's leader, in which they agreed to divide Bosnia between them. The interplay between the Serb leaders and Zagreb was, therefore, affected by the changing relations with the kin-state.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of war did not bring lasting unity in Tudman's ranks. Just before the outbreak of war, Tudman was forced to form a Government of National Unity to avoid the rebellion of HDZ hardliners. With this move unity was temporarily established: the usual disputes between political parties ceased and hardliners were isolated.[115] But the Government of National Unity was a Croat Government, it did not seek to include Serb representatives,[116] and although the marginalisation of hardliners indicated moderation, it did not change the interplay with the Serb leaders. Despite the establishment of political unity, the war and the loss of Croatian territory led to a marked drop in Tudman's ratings, the HDZ was

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[114] Burg; Shoup, 1999: 92
[115] Goldstein, 1999: 228. Silber; Little, 1996: 170.
[116] Interview Nenad Zakošek, Professor in political science. Zagreb, 18 and 19 March 2004.

facing collapse and Tuđman, furthermore, found himself challenged by the extreme Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska stranka prava, HSP).[117] The Croatian President was desperate for the fighting to stop so that the army could be strengthened and the acceptance of the Vance Plan in early 1992 was consequently an easy choice. Prior to the signing of the Vance Plan, the Croatian Parliament had conceded to international demands for recognition and had passed the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms.[118] Following recommendations from the Badinter Commission, this law was amended in May 1992 and autonomous status was granted to the regions of Knin and Glina.[119] This was more than the Croatian Government had previously been willing to offer the Serbs but the RSK leaders were bent on their intransigent position and it did not make them more willing to consider a future inside a Croatian state. Despite this apparent stalemate and unwillingness to compromise, negotiations between Zagreb and Knin gradually began in 1993. However, both sides were adamant not to make significant concessions and divisions within the HDZ both affected the Croatian position as well as Serb perceptions of their 'opponent'. While the Serb leaders did not express any special alarm over the challenge from the HSP,[120] the hardliners within the HDZ were a greater cause for concern.

Negotiations despite Croatian offensives

Paradoxically, the resumption of negotiations happened after an intensification of the conflict: after the Croatian army launched an offensive against the RSK in January 1993 and retook the strategic Maslenica bridge. The president of the RSK, Goran Hadžić, was in a weak position and in order to save his political life, he needed a success; he needed to change the rules of the game. The RSK leader was constrained and insisted on a withdrawal to the January frontline,[121] but in a climate of Croatian offences and continued violations of ceasefires it is still significant that there was willingness to negotiate. The conflict situation mattered insofar as Hadžić would be significantly weakened if the Croatian forces made additional gains; internal

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[117] Lovrić, Jelena, 1991. "Opposition in Croatia". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 9, 25 November.

[118] Grdešić, Ivan, 1997. "Building the State: Actors and Agendas". In Ivan Šiber (ed.) *The 1990 and 1992/3 Sabor Elections in Croatia*. Berlin: Sigma. p. 120.

[119] Vukas, Budislav, 1999. "The Legal Status of Minorities in Croatia". In Snežana Trifunovska (ed.) *Minorities in Europe: Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia*. The Hague: TMC Asser Press. p. 44.
Trifunovska, Snežana, 1999a. "Political and Security Aspects of Minorities in Croatia". In her (ed.) *Minorities in Europe: Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia*. The Hague: TMC Asser Press. p. 28.

[120] Hislope, 1997: 487.

[121] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "Clashes, elections, negotiations". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 74, 22 February.

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competition and increased isolation from Belgrade provided further incentives for negotiations. The changing relations with Belgrade could be said to have changed the structure of the interplay: an alliance between Belgrade and Zagreb became a possibility and, therefore, it dampened the effect of the bipartisan structure. The fear of being marginalised gave the RSK leadership incentives for moderation.

The renewed Croatian offences indirectly affected the outcome of the RSK elections since they reinforced Babić's argument that agreeing to the Vance Plan had been a fatal mistake.[122] While this argument was primarily targeted against Belgrade, it meant that the radical posturing of the Croatian side did influence the outcome of the intra-Serb competition, even if it did not affect the position of the leadership; after the change in the RSK leadership, more substantial results were actually reached in the negotiations even though the new leadership appeared more hardline. The Croatian Government maintained that it would not go beyond what had already been offered in the Constitution and the Constitutional Law,[123] but agreements on other areas were nevertheless reached. The RSK leaders still rejected ever becoming part of a Croatian state and, therefore, one could argue that the position of the Croatian Government mattered little for the positions they adopted. But the military position of the Serbs was weakening and while the RSK leadership proved very capable of ignoring this fact, a conciliatory position from the Croatian Government might have made it easier for them to realise the need for compromise.

Following the thaw in Zagreb-Knin relations that culminated with the reopening of the Zagreb-Belgrade highway, intransigent positions again came to the fore. In January 1995, Tuđman, partly due to pressure from HDZ hardliners, announced that the mandate of the UN forces in Croatia would not be extended.[124] This was a clear provocation and resulted in predictable hardline reactions in Knin where Martić stated that he was unwilling to negotiate as long as the Croatian Government intended to terminate the mandate. Negotiations nevertheless continued and were

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[122] Interview Filip Švarm, Belgrade, 13 September 2004.

[123] Marković, Brana. 2002. "Yugoslav Crisis and the World, 1994". *Balkan Repository Project.*
>http://www.balkan-archive.org.yu/politics/chronology/chron94.html<

[124] Švarm, Filip; Hedl, Drago, 1995. "Bye, bye boys in blue". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 173, 23 January.

apparently going well,[125] but when the Z4-plan was tabled, Martić refused to even look at it. Lack of trust in the intentions of the Croatian Government may, therefore, have been a factor adding to the failure of the plan. The Croatian Government must have been aware that this move would weaken the more moderate elements of the RSK leadership and the Croatian envoy, Hrvoje Šarinić, was even told so directly by Milošević.[126] One of the chief Croatian negotiators, Slavko Degoricija, had, during previous negotiations, argued that more moderate forces did exist in the RSK but that they needed to be given guarantees before they could accept re-integration with Croatia. [127] However, in early 1995, the Croatian Government sensed that a negotiated solution was no longer necessary and the strengthening of extremists was, therefore, not unhelpful. The extent to which the Croatian Government's move added to the strength of the extremists should, however, not be exaggerated: Martić was already far stronger than Mikelić and had access to military resources which Mikelić lacked.

When a new arrangement for UN forces, UNCRO, was accepted in April 1995, the Z4-plan was already dead and the RSK leaders perceived that the intention of the new arrangement was to treat Krajina as part of Croatia.[128] Timing is crucial and, by April 1995, the positions on the Serb side were hardened. Whether the Croatian Government was actually willing to compromise is, furthermore, questionable and the RSK leaders certainly did not believe it. There was, therefore, an added risk associated with negotiations, in addition to internal backlash: the risk of being cheated. When the RSK leaders in the 11th hour finally agreed to compromise, the Croatian Government was clearly not interested and demanded what amounted to an unconditional surrender.[129] Due to the intransigent positions on both sides, Owen describes it as a *"winner takes all stand-off"*, which Tuđman won.[130] It was a stand-off in the sense that no side was willing or able to veer significantly from their intransigent positions and a compromise was, therefore, unfeasible. However, in late 1994 this did not seem as impossible: dynamics within the RSK were gradually

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[125] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "We are not backing out". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 175, 6 February.
[126] "Chronology 1994/5: November 1994 through April 1995". *Croatian International Relations Review* VIII: 26/27, 2002. p. 80.
[127] "Poželjue Mimare". *Feral Tribune*, 14 December 1993, p. 8.
[128] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "UNCRO". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 184, 10 April.
[129] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "The view from the fort". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 201, 7 August.
[130] Owen, 1995: 327.

changing, agreements were actually reached and trust was increasing among the negotiators. In this sense, the decision to cancel the UN mandate was crucial; the moderates in the RSK were not powerful enough to force a compromise through but Martić and Babić might have been able to persuade their followers and especially military forces of the need for compromise. Therefore, while intra-ethnic competition, kin-state relations and international pressure was crucial for willingness to negotiate, simultaneous moderation was necessary for an agreement. Such a situation did not, however, materialise and part of the reason is to be found in the internal divisions in the HDZ and the Croatian Government, which fuelled Croatian intransigence and Serb mistrust.

Effect of divisions on the Croatian side

Throughout the war, Tuđman found himself pressured by the right-wing of the ruling party, which urged him to take a much more radical course and specifically to refrain from any compromises with the Serbs. Internal politics played a crucial part in the President's decision and Woodward argues that military adventures were used as a means for winning support: in January 1993 the military offensive took place three days before local elections and elections to the Upper House of Parliament. Similarly, in September of the same year, the Croatian Army invaded the Medak area immediately prior to the HDZ congress.[131] In these instances, Tuđman was inclined to the right wing of his party.[132] After the signing of the Croat-Bosniak Washington Agreement for Bosnia, there was a greater level of optimism surrounding talks between Zagreb and Knin. Although both sides were still making uncompromising statements, it was felt that this was mostly meant for internal audiences.[133] Shortly afterwards, however, a serious rift emerged in the HDZ over the party's policy in Bosnia and several high-profile members chose to leave the party. Following this split, the hardline faction of the HDZ became dominant and the disarray led to a postponement of negotiations on an economic agreement with the RSK and ultimately reactivated hostilities between Zagreb and Knin.[134]

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[131] Woodward, 1995: 354.

[132] Švarm, Filip, 1993. "A fragile pontoon link". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 96, 26 July.

[133] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The start of the trade-off". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 131, 28 March.

[134] Gagnon, 2004: 159. Pupovac, Milorad, 1994. "Moving Towards Peace in Krajina?". *War Report*, May 1994, p. 8-9. Woodward, 1995: 356.

Although the radicalisation of Zagreb's position in 1993 paradoxically led to renewed negotiations and later offences only caused temporary halts in talks, the rifts within the HDZ did cause scepticism among the RSK leaders as to the implementation of the reached agreements.[135] The lack of cohesion of the Croatian side, therefore, increased the already rampant mistrust. Moreover, rightist pressure was one of the reasons for the cancellation of the UN Mandate in early 1995 and this added to a new round of intransigence in the RSK.

'Loyal Serbs' become less loyal

The positions of the 'urban Serb' leaders were, in many ways, more significantly affected by the interplay with the Croatian authorities: these representatives supported co-existence in a Croatian state and a very extreme stand on part of the Croatian authorities would made their position untenable. Initially, Đukić's SNS performed the role as the 'loyal Serbs' and reiterated the Government's position. But the party gradually began demanding more extensive autonomy and thereby came closer to Pupovac's position. This move followed increasing attacks on the party: first from the right-wing HSP, which demanded a ban on all the SNS's activities, but later also from within the ruling party and the Government.[136] This dynamic thereby followed the pattern of radicalisation of one side being reciprocated by the other side, although the position of Pupovac remained unaffected. The 'urban Serb' leaders simultaneously had to concern themselves with the policies of Zagreb, Belgrade and Knin, and Pupovac described them as being "*wedged between the anti-Serb policies of Zagreb and the anti-Croat policies of Belgrade*".[137] The SNS's change in position, furthermore, also reflected the on-going competition with Pupovac.

In general, however, the intra-Serb competition was, during the war, less directly influenced by the actions and rhetoric of the Croatian leaders. The RSK's temporary willingness to negotiate was primarily caused by internal competition and pressure from Belgrade rather than a reaction to the Croatian negotiating position. What mattered in terms of inter-ethnic interplay was rather the relative military strength of the RSK, as well as the changing structure of relations; from bipartite to tripartite.

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[135] Jelovac, Milan, 1993. "Brutal history". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 102, 6 September.
[136] Culić, Marinko, 1995. "Gentle hatred". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 175, 6 February.
[137] Tanner, Marcus, 1997. *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. p. 282.

While willingness to negotiate did not, therefore, merely mirror the inter-ethnic interplay, reaching a settlement requires simultaneous moderation and timing is essential as both sides are affected by internal competition. Another important factor in reaching agreement is trust, which was in short supply in RSK-Croatian relations and was further undermined when the Croatian Government cancelled UNPROFOR's mandate. This move consolidated the zero-sum nature of the conflict.

5.5 Fractionalisation and infighting in wartime Croatia

The imperative of unity following the outbreak of war did not ensure cohesion for long and divisions soon re-emerged. However, the emerging competition from other parties and independents was accompanied by different dynamics than the intra-party competition that had characterised the pre-war period. Importantly, radicalisation was not the preferred strategy in the face of outside competition, although the changing alliances provided by multipartism offered support to the more radical versions of the SDS and thereby fuelled radicalisation. Outflanking was attempted by rivalling parties and independents but incumbent leaders did not respond with radicalisation of their position: firstly, they frequently had other resources at their disposal to marginalise the opposition and secondly, since the opposition also criticised them on other issues, political positioning on the issue of the war was not necessarily a winning strategy. The issue of the war was still salient, but competition was also based on regional and ideological cleavages and fuelled by charges of war profiteering and incompetence.

Thus, when Hadžić's government found itself in an increasingly untenable position, losing control and pressured from all sides, they chose to negotiate in an attempt to change the situation. Hadžić lost the battle, but the more moderate course, i.e. the willingness to negotiate, persisted under the new leadership that had previously criticised Hadžić for this same 'offence' and was itself faced with hardline challengers. However, the importance of coercive resources did constrain the leaders and they refrained from accepting compromises on the future status of the RSK since they feared that this would cost them the support from hardliners: people in control of various military and paramilitary forces. The leadership relied on these forces for their continued hold on power and could not simply suppress them: links with

(para)military forces were of crucial importance. Furthermore, since these forces most often challenged the leadership due to its position on the war issue, adopting an extreme position could make the problem disappear. Competition from within the party or movement thereby resulted in radicalisation of the dominant position and the internal divisions, therefore, ultimately fuelled the intransigence of the Krajina leaders.

Parties as such were of limited importance, other sources of support were more important, as the ascent of Martić demonstrated. More important were links with the paramilitary, economic and military support from Belgrade and the possibility of establishing alliances with other parties or actors. The RSK parliament was, however, of some significance since support from parliament was used as a way of strengthening contested positions, and one of the strategies used by the leaders was to call sessions in their geographical strongholds. Negotiators always insisted on the need for acceptance by parliament, fearing that they would otherwise risk outbidding when returning to the RSK.[138] The existence of more moderate Serb voices outside of the RSK served to undermine the claim to homogeneity made by the radical RSK leaders but aside from occasionally assisting short-lived centripetal dynamics, their impact on dominant forces in the RSK was limited.

The wartime period saw an important change in relations with the kin-state and towards the end of the war the Serbs in the RSK were all but ignored by the Serbian regime. A clear distinction was then made between the Serbs in Serbia and the Serbs outside Serbia and, hence, between local and kin-state leaders. Such a distinction was made by Belgrade as well as by local leaders asserting their independence. At this point, Belgrade's support was no longer decisive for whether a local leader could maintain his position of power, whereas it had earlier been the *sine qua non* of political success in the RSK. The local elites had other resources at their disposal, could appeal to other audiences and Belgrade had lost its credibility. This changed the dynamics and the borders of intra-ethnic competition and reinforced radicalism.

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[138] Interview Slavko Degoricija, Zagreb, 10 December 2003.

Political competition in this context of failed transition, ethnification and war took on a distinct character. Non-political resources, especially military resources, were of great importance; new politically salient issues, primarily valence issues, emerged; party competition increased but party structures as such were not important. Compared with the pre-war period, the importance of popular attitudes and the position of the 'other side' was also reduced. The Serb leaders nevertheless continued to argue that they were acting according to the will of the people and it is interesting to note that Babić, in defence of his radicalism, now says that he thought he was representing the views held by the majority of Serbs: *"I think that I was not an extremist but was simply performing my public duties, which implied reflecting public opinion and expressing that public opinion on which my political office depended".*[139] However, most of the leaders actually lacked a popular mandate until the holding of elections in late 1993. In these elections, the constraint posed by popular attitudes was also limited since the control of other resources could be used to manipulate their expression and the choice for the voters was, furthermore, highly restricted. The only issue on which the candidates really differed was the issue of relations with Belgrade. This could, therefore, provide a possible basis for power, but even on this issue, the general population was not the most important audience: the rivalling elites were primarily vying for the support of paramilitary forces, political alliance partners in the RSK, the Serb Radicals and the leaders in Pale. Similarly, while referenda were used as a reserve resource in the elite competition, it was only available to the ones who were already in a powerful position.

Finally, the importance of the inter-ethnic interplay was reduced compared to the pre-war period. Radicalisation was generally not reciprocated; other factors were more important for the direction of competition. The military balance of power was the most important aspect of the interplay and the conflict situation rather than the position of the Croatian leadership, therefore, proved a decisive influence.

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[139] ICTY, 2002a: 13628.

Chapter 6
Intra-Serb Competition in Wartime Bosnia:
Divided we stand

In the previous chapter we saw how wartime intra-Serb competition in the RSK was characterised by greater independence from Belgrade, by the emergence of competition from other ethnic parties and by the dominance of coercive resources and the consequent great impact of (para)military forces. Intra-Serb competition had in pre-war Bosnia been less intense than in Croatia but this gradually changed during the war, although the SDS retained its dominance throughout the period and the leadership remained intact.

When war broke out in Bosnia, the SDS leadership had already established the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (later renamed Republika Srpska, RS). The establishment of the statelet, therefore, did not provide for leadership challenges, as it had in Croatia, and the leadership had a much more unified party behind it than the Serbs on the other side of the border. There had been murmurings of regional divisions but not to the extent that it threatened the leadership of the SDS. One could expect that this stronger, more unified party would be better able than its Croatian counterpart to avoid debilitating fractionalisation during the war. But even at their strongest, the SDS and the RS leadership were not monolithic. Like in Croatia, Serb representatives were also found outside the RS. These had greater influence than the 'urban Serb' leaders in Croatia, due to the persistence of a non-ethnic option, but in the RS their influence was limited at best.

Internal divisions in the SDS were on the increase throughout the period and they gradually became important for the position of the RS leaders. Even more significant were, however, the increasingly strenuous relations between the civilian and the military leaders; the RS leaders were heavily dependent on the military, both to pursue their war aims and to hold on to power. As a further challenge to the power of the previously near-monolithic leaders, opposition parties also began to emerge. Finally, kin-state relations became progressively less cordial and following the RS rejection of the Contact Group Plan, they descended into open conflict. Belgrade had played a less direct role in pre-war Bosnia than in pre-war Croatia, at least

rhetorically, but this did not make it easier for Milošević to abandon the Serbs in Bosnia. The Serbian President instead chose to pressure the leadership and tried to sow divisions, and Belgrade thereby became a very significant audience to the intra-Serb competition. These oppositional forces were not unrelated and the political dynamics in the RS underwent a change when they began to coalesce. They overlapped on a number of cleavages and issues which facilitated their co-operation: they shared similar positions on the issue of war, they overlapped on a regional and ideological cleavage, and all criticised the rampant war profiteering associated with the leadership. Their co-operation was, moreover, given further impetus by personal power ambitions, especially those of the RS army commander, Ratko Mladić. This challenge occurred at a time when the military balance was also changing which provided a further incentive for the leadership to adopt a different position.

As in the Croatian case, this chapter will show that radicalisation is not the only possible outcome of intra-ethnic competition – even in a situation of war and polarisation – and also that the competition was not decided by elites successfully playing the 'ethnic card'.

6.1 Increasing fractionalisation and rift with the army

Shortly after the war broke out, the RS government issued a decree which froze the work of political parties *"in times of imminent threat of war and in a state of war"*.[1] This decree meant that while the top of the party was still in function, other parts of the party ceased to have influence[2] and it was, in effect, imposing a more authoritarian structure. It, moreover, served to dissuade competition from other political parties. The official reason for the decree was the need for unity in time of war[3] but it also increased the control of the party top and one of the reasons for the decision was presumably a fear that the army would otherwise have too great an influence.[4] The civilian leadership crucially depended on the army and its supply of

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[1] See e.g. ICTY, 2003a. "Judgement: Prosecutor vs. Blagoje Simić, Miroslav Tadić, Simo Zarić (IT-95-9-T)". 17 October 2003. para 467.
[2] Interview Đorđe Mikić, member of the SDS's political council in 1990. Banja Luka, 7 November 2003.
[3] Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19 November 2003.
[4] Interview Đorđe Mikić, Banja Luka, 7 November 2003.

coercive resources, but it did not trust the army completely and therefore sought to limit its influence.

However, in the spring of 1993 the SDS leadership reversed its position and decided to reactivate the work of the party. According to Vladimir Lukić, who was RS prime minister at the time, this was decided following pressure from SDS officials who felt their influence slipping.[5] But although the reactivation of the party certainly satisfied some party officials, it also resulted in increasing divisions within the party and it opened up for the organisation of competing parties. Initially, the internal divisions were, however, not significant in the RS political top, which was under the firm control of Radovan Karadžić. The RS constitution gave the president significant powers and the government had little independent authority on issues of importance; crucially, all military issues were solely under the president's authority.[6] The SDS as such did not play a significant role in the RS government: not all government ministers were SDS members and the control of the government was in the hands of Karadžić rather than the party.[7] Rajko Kasagić, who became prime minister in 1995, argues that "*the prime minister de facto was Karadžić*".[8] He therefore contends that, before him, none of the governments had functioned according to the semi-presidential RS constitution.[9] During the war there were frequent prime ministerial changes: five prime ministers in a period of less than four years. These changes were formally decided by parliament but it served as a way for Karadžić to avoid criticism; the prime ministers proved to be useful scapegoats.[10]

Compared with the government, the parliament was less under Karadžić's control. Karadžić was elected by parliament and dependent on its continued support. The RS parliament was, however, very much dominated by the SDS: apart from seven independent deputies, all members of parliament were also SDS members and a parliamentary opposition, therefore, did not exist. This did, however, not mean that parliament was completely devoid of importance. As in the RSK, the RS parliament

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[5] Interview Vladimir Lukić, Banja Luka, 2 December 2003.
[6] RS constitution, art. 80ff. in Kuzmanović, 1994.
[7] Interview Vladimir Lukić, Banja Luka, 2 December 2003.
[8] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.
[9] "Cooperation – My Deadly Sin!" *Evropski Novosti*, Belgrade 18 May 1996.
>http://www.cdsp.neu.edu/info/students/marko/evnovosti/evnovosti5.html<
[10] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.

was used to strengthen contested positions, especially if there was considerable pressure from Belgrade and/or international forces. Peace plans were, therefore, subject to parliamentary approval. The insistence on parliamentary approval proved particularly important in the rejection of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in May 1993. Karadžić had, after intense pressure from Milošević and international mediators, finally agreed to the plan, under the provision that the RS parliament approved it. However, this acceptance did not have the support of the rest of the RS leadership and especially Momčilo Krajišnik, the speaker of parliament and second in command of the SDS, was against. Karadžić publicly stated that he hoped the deputies would accept the plan[11] but given the divisions within the leadership it is unsurprising that his support for the plan was half-hearted at best. The parliamentary rejection of the plan was, therefore, predictable, although Karadžić and Krajišnik both argued that the parliament did not technically reject the plan and that there was no reason for Karadžić to resign.[12] Owen argues that following this rejection, Krajišnik became very influential and Karadžić and Krajišnik would thereafter have to be considered as one.[13]

When it came to the party leadership, the government and the parliament, Karadžić was, therefore, faced with few direct challenges to his leadership, but he was aware of the existing divisions and the dangers to his position if he alienated the rest of the SDS leadership. These divisions were primarily based on the issue of the war and therefore constrained the positions that Karadžić was able to adopt, the compromises that he was able to accept. Owen contends that Karadžić *"never allowed any difference to emerge between himself and Krajisnik, and often asked for solutions to be imposed on him, frequently claiming that he would be killed by his own people if he agreed to some difficult compromise".*[14] Despite the lack of outright challenges to Karadžić, he was still facing constraints and this caused a radicalisation of his position or at least reinforced his intransigence. Outside of the leadership, divisions also existed but they were fairly muted. Kasagić recalls: *"it was possible to see that*

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[11] "Karadžić: Većina će glasati za moj potpis". *Politika,* 4 May 1993, p. 1.
[12] Owen, 1995: 164. When Karadžić agreed to the Geneva Principles, upon which the VOPP was based, he said that he was ready to resign if parliament did not agree with him. Cerović, Stojan, 1993. "Geneva Ghosts". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 69, 18 January.
[13] ICTY, 2003b. "Transcripts: Prosecutor vs. Slobodan Milošević (IT-02-54)". Transcripts from David Owen's testimony, 3-4 November 2003. p. 2856.
[14] Owen, 1995: 53.

there was a lot of mistrust or dissatisfaction". And Lukić likewise asserts: "...the *SDS was not a monolithic party during the war*".[15] Ensuring cohesion of the SDS, especially the leadership, was a priority for Karadžić and he was in large parts successful. The lack of cohesion in the SDS, therefore, only becomes striking when one looks at the regional factions of the party. When these factions began to converge with the army, with opposition parties and with Belgrade, they became a very serious threat to the RS leadership.

Regional factions grow in importance

The most important of the regional factions, the Bosnian Krajina faction, had already shown its desire for autonomy before the war, but during the war it became stronger and it also began asserting its influence over the RS leadership. In addition to this faction, there was an East-Herzegovin lobby led by Bozidar Vučurevic, and the RS leaders during the war lacked control of the town of Bijeljina, where Ljubisa 'Mauzer' Savić and his elite unit of the RS army, the Panthers, were in command.[16] Mauzer was generally on good terms with the political leadership of the RS, although his main loyalties were in Belgrade.[17] The regional conflicts that were underlying the divisions were exacerbated by a breakdown in communications and by the resulting differences in the situation in the local regimes. Divisions were, furthermore, augmented by the different impact of the war on various parts of the RS.[18]

Banja Luka vs the 'village with a TV-station'

During the war, Serbs from Banja Luka became increasingly dissatisfied with their fate being decided by a "*village with a TV-station*", as they called Pale.[19] Banja Luka's looming dissatisfaction first came to a head in September 1993 when members of the 16th Banja Luka Brigade and some members of the 1st Krajina Corps rebelled. The rebellion was accompanied by demonstrations of discontent in a number of other units of the army and among the civilian population directed against

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[15] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003. Interview Vladimir Lukić, Banja Luka, 2 December 2003.

[16] Bougarel, 1996: 105. Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Knin Between Two Kingdoms". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 151, 15 August.

[17] Vasković, Slobodan; Djogić, Goran, 2000. "Violent end of controversy". *Reporter*, 14 June. >http://free.freespeech.org/ex-Yupress/reporter/reporter41.html< Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Knin Between Two Kingdoms". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 151, 15 August.

[18] Bougarel, 1996: 105, 107.

[19] Anastasijević, Dejan, 1994. "The Left Bank". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 153, 29 August.

'war profiteers' and the leaders of the SDS.[20] Many of the rebels' demands centred on the conditions for the army but significant political demands were also uttered: the government's resignation, holding of elections, forming of a new government with all regions proportionally represented and solving of the question of where the government's seat would be. [21] The conflict was eventually solved through negotiations and the rebels gave up their political demands. However, the rebellion caused a rift in the SDS leadership since Biljana Plavšić, RS vice-president, openly supported the rebels,[22] and Predrag Radić, the wartime mayor of Banja Luka, argues that the rebellion marked the *"beginning of the end of SDS"*.[23] It was at least the beginning of the end of monolithic SDS-rule. The SDS in Banja Luka had been among the targets of the rebellion and it was, therefore, not a symptom of an internal SDS conflict, but it demonstrated the existence of a pool of dissatisfaction that the Krajina faction could feed into as well as the possibility of forging an alliance with the military.

Krajina proved a challenge to the RS leaders because, due to its geographical position, it could create a state of its own by joining the RSK in Croatia. When the Contact Group Plan was discussed in the summer of 1994, some political circles in Banja Luka began protesting and insisted on knowing the verdict of the RS parliament, since the plan would cede large parts of Bosnian Krajina.[24] Karadžić consequently decided to enrage Belgrade with yet another rejection rather than face potential rivals from within the RS.[25] In late 1994 some SDS deputies from Banja Luka, however, took a decisive step in a more moderate direction when they met Milošević along with several RS opposition forces. The Krajina leaders had not previously constituted more moderate rivals to the Pale leadership and Krajina deputies had been among the most vociferous opponents of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan.[26] However, towards the end of the war, military losses posed an increasing

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[20] Bougarel, 1996: 107.

[21] Komlenović, Uros, 1993. "Every Day is Tuesday". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 104, 20 September.

[22] Anastasijević, Dejan, 1994. "Biljana Plavsic, Vice-President Bosnian Serb Republic". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 151, 15 August.

[23] Gagula, Biljana, 1999. "Ask Novic About Red Van". *Nezavisne Novine*, 15 September. >http://www.cpj.org/awards00/kopanja_articles.html<

[24] "Three Sets of Threats". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 148, 25 July 1994. Milošević, Milan et al, 1994. "Total Recall". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 150, 8 August.

[25] "Three sets of threats". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 148, 25 July 1994.

[26] "Do rešenja mirom, a ne ratom". *Politika*, 6 May 1991, p. 1.

threat for Krajina. In addition to divisions over a settlement, there was criticism in Banja Luka of the sums of money spent by the negotiations teams and scandals over financial abuse, embezzlement, war profiteering and corruption further augmented the divisions.[27]

Karadžić reacted to the challenge by imposing strict censorship and for a while, the conflict was fairly muted.[28] But the conflict was left brewing and fear and mistrust became widespread following the fall of Croatian Krajina and the loss of Western Bosnia; the Bosnian Krajina leaders feared that large parts of the Banja Luka region would be sacrificed by Pale. They argued that the insistence on Sarajevo had resulted in loss of territory in Bosnian Krajina and they demanded a reversal of this strategy.[29] Consequently, in October 1995, various political parties and individuals, including high-ranking SDS members, formed the Krajina Patriotic Front (Krajina otadžbinski front). The Patriotic Front, which was supported by the RS army, finally challenged Pale directly and demanded Karadžić's resignation. Unable to counter this challenge, Karadžić withdrew to the Sarajevo region where he managed to regain control of the army, but with Krajina slipping away from him and Eastern Herzegovina also proclaiming its autonomy.[30] In the RS parliament, 20 SDS deputies from Krajina signed an initiative to overthrow the government and form a government of national salvation under the leadership of Anđelko Grahovac from Banja Luka, who had been expelled from the SDS for "*pro-Serbia deviations*".[31] Following a meeting in the SDS deputies' club, however, they agreed to abandon this demand and Karadžić conceded by sacrificing four generals and one lieutenant colonel, as well as the prime minister, arguing that they were responsible for the territorial loses suffered. The demand for a Krajina prime minister was accommodated by appointing Rajko Kasagić who was president of SAO Krajina.[32] This was a compromise since Kasagić was, at the time, known as a 'hawk', close to Karadžić, although Kasagić himself argues that Karadžić "*knew that I wouldn't obey him*".[33]

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[27] Komlenović, Uros, 1995. "All Karadzic's Opponents". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 184, 10 April.
[28] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Karadzic vs. Everyone Else". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 193, 13 June.
[29] Vučinić, Perica, 1995. "Capital's Watchtower". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 209, 2 October.
[30] Bougarel, 1996: 112.
[31] Vučinić, Perica et al, 1995. "The Final Round". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 212, 23 October. Vučinić, Perica, 1995. "Milosevic's New Karadzic". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 221, 25 December.
[32] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.
[33] *Ibid.*

When the Krajina leaders became afraid that their region would be sacrificed, they finally decided to challenge Karadžić's leadership; they realised that without the leadership's willingness to cede territory outside Krajina, Banja Luka could be sacrificed. Earlier in the war, disagreements with Pale were mostly over the lack of autonomy for the region, criticism of some of the more blatant cases of war profiteering as well as Banja Luka's insistence on an intransigent position. But as the military fortunes of the RS began to change, disagreements were increasingly over the consequences for Krajina of settlement rejections and also the region's position in possible settlements. Underlying these divisions were, however, also the different traditions of the regions: Banja Luka had a strong Partisan tradition and hence felt closer to the army than the strongly anti-communist Pale. Thereby, the conflict between Banja Luka and Pale overlapped with the growing conflict between the political and military leaders.

Military vs civilian leaders

The political leadership in the highly militarised statelet increasingly feared the influence of the army and the civilian-military conflict came to be the most significant challenge to the RS leadership. The army was a double-edged sword for the civilian leaders: they needed its support, since their power depended on their control of coercive resources, but they also feared the army's potential influence and what they regarded as its communist tendencies. The RS army was the product of the communist system and it expected in wartime to enjoy significant autonomy from civilian authorities.[34] The SDS leaders, therefore, encouraged a belief that the army could not be trusted.[35] The second cause of the conflict was the corruption, theft and war profiteering associated with the RS political leadership, which the high officers of the army found damaging to the conduct of war.[36] Finally, the personal rivalry between Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić over absolute power in the statelet also helped fuel the conflict.

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[34] Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19 November 2003. Vasić, Miloš, 1995. "The President and His Generals". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 202, 14 August.
[35] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.
[36] *Ibid.* Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19 November 2003.

The ambitions of Mladić to provide more than military leadership first became clear during the debates over the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in the spring of 1993. Mladić's vehement opposition and 35-minute-long impassioned speech against acceptance was one of the decisive factors in the parliament's rejection of the plan and, hence, the radicalisation of the dominant position.[37] Owen argues that, after this session, Mladić began to have a political constituency.[38] Divisions persisted despite the rejection of the plan and in his usual hyperbolic fashion, Mladić threatened to "*bombard London*" in case of a military intervention in Bosnia. Karadžić responded that this was an "*idiotic and irresponsible blunder*" and that such statements could furthermore only be made by civilian authorities, i.e. by Karadžić himself.[39]

The looming conflict was next manifested in September the same year in the above-mentioned army rebellion in Banja Luka. The brigades orchestrating the rebellion issued a communiqué in which they argued: "*while we were fighting... skilful manipulators, with the blessing of the existing authorities, increased their private empires and carried out their depraved political dreams in the safeness of the rear*". And they proceeded to arrest people they alleged to be war profiteers.[40] During the conflict between Pale and Belgrade over the Contact Group Plan, Mladić long resisted openly saying if he would side with Pale and this only served to heighten doubts about the army's loyalty.[41] Some army officers, moreover, insisted that the RS leaders should decide what territories it intended to cede so "*people don't have to die for nothing*".[42] The conflict further intensified following military defeats when Karadžić insisted on his role as supreme commander and began wearing a uniform and, moreover, chose to strengthen the police corps and reorganise it as a military organisation;[43] Karadžić needed military forces that he could fully control. In April 1995 Mladić once again addressed the RS parliament but this time with bleak news. He criticised the civilian authorities for interfering in the line of command, demanded control of all economic facilities and told parliament: "*if a political solution isn't found through negotiations, the war will be long and exhausting for the*

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[37] Stefanović, Nenad Lj., 1993. "The Pugnacious Commander". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 87, 24 May.
[38] ICTY, 2003b: 28562.
[39] Vasić, Miloš; Švarm, Filip, 1993. "All Serbian Threats". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 87, 24 May.
[40] Vasić, Miloš, 1993. "A State Without Bread". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 104, 20 September.
[41] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "The Silence of the General". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 152, 22 August.
[42] "Three Sets of Threats". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 148, 25 July 1994.
[43] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Civilian-Military Games". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 186, 24 April.

RS," and that the proclamation of a state of war would, therefore, be required. But the deputies did not accept his warning. On the contrary, Mladić's report was rejected as a political pamphlet and there were calls for his resignation.[44]

Owen argues that Karadžić during the war became ever more extreme in his championing of Serb nationalism, while Mladić was slowly beginning to reassess the costs of war.[45] International mediators tried to take advantage of the growing conflict between Mladić and Karadžić and Carl Bildt recalls how they used Mladić to undermine Karadžić and chose to negotiate directly with the military commander behind Karadžić's back.[46] Finally, in August 1995, Mladić's autonomous role became too much for Karadžić and, behind closed doors, the RS parliament decided to remove him from his post under emergency war conditions declared a week earlier. *Politika* speculated that Karadžić wanted to remove Mladić to prevent a military coup by the generals.[47] If such an initiative had been under way it was averted, but Karadžić had not yet won the battle, since the next day Mladić's entire command signed a letter to the RS parliament rejecting Karadžić's announcement and declaring Mladić commander of the RS army.[48] Karadžić finally backed down and on 11 August 1995, he declared that the decision to remove Mladić had been annulled. Shortly thereafter he also backed down on the issue of negotiations and agreed to give Milošević the deciding vote in a joint Serb delegation. At this point, Karadžić controlled Pale and the majority of eastern RS and enjoyed the support of the RS special police, extreme nationalists in the RS and in Serbia, as well as SDS officials who feared Mladić's attack on war profiteers. But, by August 1995, this did not match Mladić's support and resources: the RS commander enjoyed the support of all generals in the RS army, the Krajina faction of the SDS, the more moderate opposition parties and, finally, the Serbian regime which provided him with political, military and logistical support.[49]

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[44] Filip Švarm, "Civilian-Military Games". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 186, 24 April 1995. Bougarel, 1996: 111-2.
[45] Owen, 1995: 324.
[46] Bildt, Carl, 1998. *Peace Journey: the struggle for peace in Bosnia*. London: Weidenfeld. p. 64.
[47] "Chronology 1995: August 1 through August 31". Croatian International Relations Review, 2002, XI (30/31). p. 54.
[48] "Generalni ne prihvataju Karadžića za vrhovnog komandanta". *Politika*, 7 August 1995, p. 1.
[49] Vasić, Miloš, 1995. "Predsednik ili general". *Vreme*, 14 August 1995, p. 14-15.

The convergence between Mladić and the Krajina faction of the SDS was not only based on the issue of a settlement but also reflected a regional division of the RS and an accompanying ideological divide: both the RS army and the Krajina faction were closer to the Partisan tradition than to the Pale leadership's more Četnik-inspired ideology. Finally, they were both attacking the rampant war profiteering and corruption associated with the SDS leadership.[50] When the army and the Krajina faction began coalescing, they could effect a change away from the centrifugal dynamics: Karadžić feared being removed by forces urging negotiations *not* by more radical forces.

Non-parliamentary multipartism

The most severe competition to the RS political leaders, therefore, came from within the party and from the army. Competition from other parties was, on the other hand, scarce but it was not non-existent, and the RS leadership even proudly described the statelet as a "*multi-party democracy*".[51] In the beginning of the war, competition to the SDS was, however, even more limited than in the pre-war period since Serb representatives closed ranks behind the party. Almost all Serb representatives from non-ethnic parties joined the SDS after the outbreak of war: there were only seven exceptions in the RS parliament. Thus, deputies who had been elected for the SDP, the Reformists or the DSS on a non-ethnic platform, now chose to join the explicitly Serb party. The non-ethnic parties ceased to operate in the territory under RS control and the only alternative to joining the SDS in this part of Bosnia, therefore, was to become an independent. One of the prime examples of this conversion was Dragan Kalinić, a former Communist leader elected for the Reformists, who became powerful in the SDS. And if anyone in the party doubted Kalinić's nationalist credentials, his speech in the RS Parliament in May 1992 proved them wrong: "*Among all the issues this assembly should decide on, the most important one is this: Have we chosen the option of war or the option of negotiations?... I do not hesitate in selecting the first option, the option of war*".[52]

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[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Kuzmanović, 1994: 60.
[52] ICTY, 2002b: 1171.

Despite this homogenisation of Serb political representation, divisions soon began to emerge and alternative political initiatives came under way, especially after the ban on political parties was lifted in March 1993. The first party to be formed after the war began was the Liberal Party (Liberalna stranka, LS), which was founded in April 1992 before the work of parties was frozen. This party consisted of Banja Luka intellectuals, it was not a nationalist party and it supported negotiations and an end to the war.[53] The party illustrated the continued existence of non-ethnic, moderate voices in the RS but its influence was marginal. A party of much greater concern to the SDS was the Serb Radical Party (Srpska radikalna stranka, SRS), which, just before the war and during the war, increased its popularity significantly and provided an even more extreme opposition to the SDS. Apparently, some members of the SDS were simultaneously members of the SRS, thereby giving the leadership reasons to fear splits in the party: in 1992, Radoslav Brđanin, who was then president of the SAO Krajina crisis headquarters,[54] reportedly said on a radio show that he had an SRS membership card signed by Šešelj personally.[55]

The SRS started working in 1992 and was formally founded in Bosnia in March 1993 by university professor Nikola Poplašen. Poplašen lists two reasons for founding the party: firstly, in order to pursue the goal of uniting all Serbs in one state since the SRS felt that this goal was not sufficiently pursued by the SDS, and they argued that the party lacked autonomy in relation to Milošević who was seen as an obstacle; secondly, to break the SDS monopoly and fight against the crime and authoritarianism associated with the party.[56] Finally, there was the Socialist Party of Republika Srpska (Socijalistička partija Republike Srpske, SPRS), which was founded in Banja Luka in June 1993 by Dragutin Ilić. Contrary to the SRS, the Socialist Party charged a more moderate course than the SDS and supported the different peace plans rejected by the RS leaders. It was consequently derided as a party of traitors in the RS media. The party established municipal organisations in most of the territory of the RS[57] but its most important organisational link was with

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[53] Interview Miodrag Živanović, Banja Luka, 22 October 2003.
[54] In effect, president of the regional government.
[55] ICTY, 1996. "Transcripts: Prosecutor vs Duško Tadić (IT-94-I-T)". Transcript from testimony of anonymous witness, 30 May - 4 June 1996. p. 1807-8.
[56] Interview Nikola Poplašen, Banja Luka, 3 December 2003.
[57] Interview Dragutin Ilić, Banja Luka, 23 October 2003.

Belgrade and by the other opposition parties it was seen as little more than Milošević's mouthpiece.[58]

Consequently, by the second year of war, the SDS was faced with competition from both more extreme and more moderate parties, and it was also challenged on issues other than the issue of war: in particular, the issue of war profiteering and the regional divide were of importance. The challenge to the SDS's power was, nevertheless, of a limited nature since none of the parties were represented in parliament. The political channels open to the opposition were limited and opposition activities, therefore, mostly consisted of public announcements while the parties were institutionalised.[59] But the RS leaders still feared the possible impact of increased competition and, therefore, chose to harshly repress the opposition. Ognjen Tadić, from the SRS, argues that the treatment of the opposition included "*arrests, political liquidations, physical liquidations*".[60] The opposition of the Liberal Party was similarly reduced by sending most of its members to the first line of the front.[61] The leader of the party, Miodrag Živanović, recalls that it had to function semi-legally: "*I was on the front, and I came to Banja Luka to make press conferences, and then I went back to the front, to save my life. Because it was safer there*".[62]

In parliament the only opposition to the SDS was made up by seven independent deputies. Following the rejection of the Contact Group Plan and the resulting clash between Belgrade and Pale, they constituted themselves as a group, the 'Club of Independent Deputies' under the leadership of Milorad Dodik, and began to act as an opposition to the SDS and Karadžić.[63] They issued a demand for a parliamentary session to achieve final peace and they blamed Karadžić and Krajišnik for the casualties in the period following the rejection of the Contact Group Plan and added that parliament had to define new stands for the talks and priorities in regard to the

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[58] Interview Miodrag Živanović, Banja Luka, 22 October 2003. Interview Ognjen Tadić, Banja Luka, 7 November 2003.

[59] Interview Nikola Poplašen, Banja Luka, 3 December 2003. Interview Ognjen Tadić, Banja Luka, 7 November 2003.

[60] Interview Ognjen Tadić, Banja Luka, 7 November 2003.

[61] Interview Miodrag Živanović, Banja Luka, 22 October 2003.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Interview Igor Radojičić, SNSD spokesman. Banja Luka, 1 December 2003. Milorad Dodik had been elected for the Reformists in 1990.

territorial division.[64] Dodik coalesced with other opposition forces from Krajina and argued that the RS leadership's insistence on its right to Sarajevo *"has resulted in the loss of a large part of Bosnian Krajina"*.[65] The Club was taken very seriously by the SDS leadership and Krajišnik stated: *"someone wants to break up the RS Parliament"*,[66] and announced greater discipline in the SDS.[67] Dodik argued that certain SDS deputies also supported them but that *"rigid party and every other discipline"* discouraged them.[68] The Club of Independents had no party apparatus behind them, nor formal structure, but they nevertheless began co-ordinating their stands and, for instance, voted against the dismissal of Mladić in August 1995, which the parliament, at least according to the SDS leaders, otherwise supported unanimously.[69]

Given the SDS's strong hold on power, the opposition from other parties did not significantly shake the leadership. But the fear of outflanking by the Serb Radicals was one of the reasons for the reactivation of the work of the SDS in 1993[70] and it thereby indirectly affected the increasing lack of cohesion in the party. Moreover, the break of the SDS's monolithic status seems to have fostered or inspired divisions within the SDS itself, especially towards the end of the war when the Banja Luka faction co-operated with opposition parties in a bid to defeat the Pale leadership. The opposition had deputies in the Banja Luka city council and could use this as a platform for influencing the SDS in this region. The opposition, if not a significant threat on its own, affected the internal dynamics in the SDS as well as the relations with the army and thereby eventually gave rise to more centripetal dynamics. The SDS leadership was aware of the potential dangers posed by competing parties, but the presence of rivalling parties did not lead the SDS to take a more extreme position. Obviously, the SDS had already adopted an extreme position but it is also of importance that the opposition did not just challenge the SDS on the issue of the war,

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[64] Vučinić, Perica; Rovac, Pajo, 1995. "Playing on the Reformists Ticket". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 175, 6 February.

[65] Vučinić, Perica, 1995. "Capital's Watchtower". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 209, 2 October.

[66] Vučinić, Perica; Rovac, Pajo, 1995. "Playing on the Reformists Ticket". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 175, 6 February.

[67] Švarm, Filip; Dimović, Dragan, 1995. "Our Man in Pale". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 172, 16 January.

[68] Peranić, Dražena, 1995. "Sejfudin Tokic and Milorad Dodik". *AIM Press*, 5 June.

[69] "Chronology 1995: August 1 through August 31". *Croatian International Relations Review*, 2002, XI (30/31). p. 49. The vote was behind closed doors.

[70] Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19 November 2003.

and a more extreme position on this issue was, therefore, not necessarily the answer. Furthermore, the distribution of resources meant that the SDS could prevent the opposition from becoming a serious threat; the opposition was repressed with harsh means and it was, therefore, not able to effectively appeal to the audiences of importance for the SDS's hold on power. The leadership, consequently, did not have to compete through political positioning. However, when the opposition parties fostered an alliance with other oppositional forces, the RS leadership was eventually forced to change its position or face defeat; the direction of competition had changed.

Serbs outside of the RS

Despite the strategy of national homogenisation undertaken by the SDS, Serb representatives were still found outside the RS. These were more moderate forces who were not in direct competition with the RS leaders but still challenged their claim to represent all Serbs in Bosnia.

In order to maintain the multi-ethnic nature of the Bosnian Presidency, replacements had to be found for Plavšić and Koljević after the SDS deputies left the Bosnian institutions in April 1992. And following from the constitution and the electoral law, the posts were offered to the two runner-ups from the 1990 presidency election: Mirko Pejanović and Nenad Kecmanović, who were, respectively, leaders of the DSS and the Reformists. Their acceptance caused fury in Pale where Karadžić exclaimed that Pejanović and Kecmanović were *"the private Serbs of Alija Izetbegovic"*.[71] Kecmanović quickly bowed under the pressure exerted on him by the RS and Belgrade and left Sarajevo in June 1992. He was replaced by Tatjana Ljuić-Mijatović from the SDP and Mirko Lazović, also from the SDP, was appointed Speaker of Parliament.[72] The Serb members of the Bosnian Presidency took a radically different approach than the RS leaders: they stayed in Sarajevo and they spoke out against war and separation. In that way they can be seen as playing a similar role to Milan Đukić in Croatia: they were the 'loyal Serbs'. But there are also differences: Pejanović, Ljuić-Mijatović and Lazović represented non-ethnic parties; they held their positions as ethnic Serbs but not as representatives of an ethnic party. A non-ethnic option still existed and the Serb representatives also today insist that

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[71] Ninčić, Roksanda, 1992. "A New Breed of Serbs". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 37, 8 June.
[72] Pejanović, 2002: 103, 109.

they had actual influence on some important issues, while acknowledging that their most important role was perhaps to help keep alive this non-ethnic conception of Bosnia.[73]

The non-ethnic option was, however, weakened during the war and the non-Bosniak presence in the governing bodies was reduced. When the Washington Agreement on the Bosniak-Croat Federation was negotiated, Lazović was present but, despite his insistence, Serbs were not included in the Federation Constitution, which established it as an entity with two constituent peoples: Bosniaks and Croats. The Serb proposals were rejected with the explanation that the Serbs could not be a constituent people in both the Federation and the RS. This indicated that the Pale leaders were given the authority to also decide for the Serbs outside the RS.[74] Ethnification was further strengthened when the Serb Civic Council (Srpsko građansko vijeće, SGV) was established with the support of the Bosnian authorities. The name itself illustrates the schism: the SGV was to represent the Serbs who rejected the policies of the RS but the term 'civic' sits uneasily with ethnic representation. However, the SGV provided a basis for contesting the representativeness of the RS; a basis for challenging the conflation of Serb politics and RS politics.[75] Within the SGV there were forces that urged the creation of an actual Serb party, which would be a counterpart to Karadžić and would undermine his claim to represent all Serbs.[76] This was, however, never realised: most of the members of the SGV were from non-ethnic parties and those who supported the creation of an ethnic party were a small minority.[77]

The influence of the 'Sarajevo Serbs' in the RS was, nevertheless, very limited. They had some links with more moderate opposition parties[78] but remained marginal. The Liberal Party also attempted to develop contacts with non-ethnic parties in Sarajevo: with the SDP, the Union of Social Democrats and with some smaller Croat parties.[79] Dodik's Club of Independents similarly had secret contacts with the Bosnian

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[73] Interview Miro Lazović, Sarajevo, 29 June 2004. Interview Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, Sarajevo, 2 July 2004. Interview Mirko Pejanović, Sarajevo, 6 July 2004.

[74] Udojović, Radenko, 1994. "The Serbs on 'this' side". *AIM Press,* 26 November.

[75] Bougarel, 1996: 111.

[76] Udojović, Radenko, 1994. "The Serbs on 'this' side". *AIM Press,* 26 November.

[77] Interview Mirko Pejanović, Sarajevo, 6 July 2004.

[78] Milošević, Milan et al, 1994. "Total Recall". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 150, 8 August. Interview Mirko Pejanović, Sarajevo, 6 July 2004.

[79] Interview Miodrag Živanović, Banja Luka, 22 October 2003.

opposition and, in May 1995, these contacts were made public when Dodik in the Italian city of Perugia met Sejfudin Tokić, leader of the Union of Social Democrats, and they declared their support for the Contact Group Plan.[80] In September the same year, opposition parties from all of Bosnia again met in Perugia, formed the Democratic Alternative Forum and issued a declaration in which they demanded an immediate stop to the war.[81] These meetings are significant: firstly, because engaging in co-operation across the ethnic divide was sure to give the RS opposition deputies the label 'traitors'; it was a very significant signal of moderation and attested to the emergence of new dynamics. Secondly, the presence of Serb opposition representatives from the RS as well as from Sarajevo strengthened the attempt to break the SDS's monopoly on representation of the Serbs in Bosnia. Even so, the contribution of the 'Sarajevo Serbs' to the changing dynamics in the RS was limited at best.

One decisive change in the wartime period was, as already mentioned, the relations with the kin-state. But what influenced Belgrade's altered role in the RS and what effect did this change have?

6.2 Kin-state involvement:
Increasingly divided RS argues over Belgrade's influence

Even though Milošević was initially uncontested in the RS, the Pale leaders soon followed the pattern established on the Croatian side of the border: relations became increasingly strenuous as Milošević distanced himself from the war and his former protégés began to assert their independence. Again mirroring events in the RSK, Belgrade utilised internal divisions to try to maintain control while the local leaders sought co-operation with the Serbian opposition and with the RSK in an attempt to bolster their autonomy. The specific dynamics, however, differed from those in the RSK: Belgrade initially had greater difficulty influencing the internal competition and the fall-out with the local leaders was much more severe.

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[80] Švarm, Filip, 1995. "Karadzic Vs. Everyone Else". *Vreme News Digest*, no 193, 13 June.
[81] Peranić, Dražena, 1995. "Gathering of Democratic Alternative Forum from the whole of B&H". *AIM Press*, 2 October.

Increasing divisions between Pale and Belgrade

Shortly after Milošević fell out with Babić in the RSK, there were speculations that he might also be looking for a replacement for Karadžić: for a leader more inclined to compromise and less inclined to power ambitions.[82] Such speculations were fed by actions of both the Serbian and the RS president. Thus, in April 1992 during the peace talks in Lisbon, Milošević had talks with Kecmanović which fostered rumours that the leader of the Reformists was more willing than Karadžić to follow Milošević's lead in the negotiations.[83] Karadžić did not seek to counter such rumours and he had, for a while, been increasingly asserting his independence and making statements to the effect that he, and not Milošević, was the leader of the Serbs in Bosnia.[84] Milošević, therefore, had reason to fear that Karadžić might follow Babić's course and an attempt to engineer a leadership change became progressively more likely. This, however, never materialised and once it became clear that the ousting in Knin would not be followed by a similar one in Pale, Karadžić felt safe in his leadership position. Commentators argued that the war in Bosnia played an important part in Milošević's election victory in late 1992 and the Serbian President could not, therefore, afford to suddenly reverse his position.[85]

This seeming co-existence and co-dependence was, however, shattered when the Vance-Owen Peace Plan was tabled in the spring of 1993. Although relations between Belgrade and the RS leaders had been fairly unproblematic during the first year of war, Milošević was not completely trusted in Pale. In the RS parliament there was widespread belief that Karadžić had been forced to sign the agreement and this caused great resistance among the deputies.[86] Milošević was, furthermore, not aided by the vehement opposition of some SDS leaders to the plan, Mladić's impassioned speech against it and Karadžić's half-hearted support. Thus, even though Milošević appealed to Serb unity, he only managed to win two votes.[87] The humiliation greatly angered Milošević who made no effort to hide his resentment. He described the behaviour of the RS leaders as that of *"drunk poker players"* and forbade Biljana

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[82] Čamo, Mensur, 1992. "Pucanje srpskog monolita". *Slobodna Bosna*, no. 12, 16 January, p. 5.
[83] Isaković, Zehrudin, 1992. "Is a replacement being sought for Karadzic". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 30, 20 April.
[84] Čamo, Mensur, 1992. "Pucanje srpskog monolita". *Slobodna Bosna*, no. 12, 16 January, p. 5.
[85] Cerović, Stojan, 1993. "Geneva Ghosts". *Vreme News Digest* no. 69, 18 January.
[86] Interview Vladimir Lukić, Banja Luka, 2 December 2003.
[87] Cerović, Stojan, 1993. "Political Debauchery". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 85, 10 May.

Plavšić to cross the Drina, saying that her place was in a lunatic asylum.[88] On a more formal level, Milošević, along with the Yugoslav and the Montenegrin Presidents, issued a public letter to the RS parliament in which they stated: "*You have no right to endanger 10 million citizens of Yugoslavia*". But the parliament rejected the implied assertion that Milošević enjoyed a special position by responding: "*We allow ourselves the same right that you have to make decisions that are of importance to the Serbian people*".[89] Belgrade also resorted to more tangible measures than mere insults in an effort to discipline the 'drunk poker players'. The Serbian Government imposed a temporary blockade on the Drina, cutting off all supplies except food and medical supplies, and flavoured it with an attack on the "*luxurious lifestyle*" the Pale leaders were enjoying in Belgrade "*while the people suffer*".[90]

After a temporary backtrack, Belgrade finally broke with the RS leadership in August 1994 following their rejection of the Contact Group Plan. Before the vote in the RS parliament, the Serbian President issued a letter in which he reminded the deputies: "*the Serbian people have only one president, chosen directly by the people and with a fully legitimate mandate*".[91] Once again the special position of Milošević was used to try to pressure the local Serb leaders. Some of the deputies acknowledged Milošević's special position but still insisted that the parliament had other considerations as well. Thus, Milanović stated: "*We (..) have never either with words or acts showed that we dismissed the fact that there is only one elected head of state of the Serbian people (..) We have wanted him to be our president as well. [But] We are answerable to this people [the people of the RS]*". However, some deputies spoke out in clear defiance of Belgrade. Radoslav Brđanin, from the powerful Krajina faction, stated: "*Those playing the roles of puppets at crucial moments must be immediately recognised and removed, or the darkness will engulf us*".[92] Ultimately, Belgrade's persuasion and threats were to no avail and when the parliament decided to hold a referendum on the plan, thereby in effect rejecting it, Belgrade announced that they were breaking off all economic and political relations with the Pale leadership and banning all transport to the RS except food, clothes and

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[88] Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Kidnappers and hostages". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 142, 13 June.
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] Vasić, Miloš, 1993. "Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 85, 10 May.
[91] Švarm Filip, 1994. "The President's Three Letters". *Vreme News Digest*, no 151, 15 August.
[92] "A Message from Pale". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 150, 8 August 1994.

medicine. Milošević reiterated that the RS leadership did not have the right to reject the plan and he accused them of wishing to achieve their brutal political ambitions with the lives of other people's sons.[93]

Despite this break in relations, the RS leaders remained calm, convinced that Milošević would again be forced to change his position.[94] What they had not considered, however, was that divisions in the RS leadership were growing and this would increase Belgrade's influence in the RS. Furthermore, the Banja Luka faction of the SDS and the opposition parties based in the same city were growing in strength.

Belgrade and RS elite competition

Prior to the definitive break between Pale and Belgrade, the Serbian Government did not make much use of internal divisions in the RS: the leadership was cohesive and the opposition was weak. Consequently, Belgrade did not try to remove Karadžić when the Vance-Owen Peace Plan was rejected. With the formation of the Radicals in Bosnia in early 1993, relations with Belgrade, however, became a factor in the RS elite competition[95] and the challenge from the SRS seems to have contributed to the SDS's distancing from Milošević: the Pale leaders were vulnerable to rivals who accused them of being too close to Milošević and thereby of being too moderate. This kind of criticism also came from within the SDS's own ranks.

The distancing from Belgrade, therefore, ensured cohesion on the RS radical wing but the introduction of the economic embargo after the rejection of the Contact Group Plan destroyed the overall cohesion. In the RS parliament, Milorad Dodik formed his Club of Independent Deputies, while the opposition parties stepped up their campaigns.[96] The clash between Belgrade and Pale started a process of rot among the Bosnian Serbs and that was precisely Milošević's goal. In order to further the surfacing of divisions in the RS, Milošević publicly blamed Karadžić for the military defeats suffered in western Bosnia.[97] Aside from the public slandering of the

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[93] Milošević, Milan et al, 1994. "Total Recall". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 150, 8 August.
[94] *Ibid.*
[95] Interview Nikola Poplašen, Banja Luka, 3 December 2003.
[96] Bougarel, 1996: 111.
[97] Vasić, Miloš; Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Storm over Bosnia". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 163, 7 November.

Pale leaders, Milošević also actively sought to increase his support in the RS parliament through contacts with disgruntled deputies and in late 1994 SDS deputies from Banja Luka met the Serbian President in Belgrade. Following this meeting Karadžić for the first time admitted that divisions in parliament were growing, saying that 15 out of 82 MPs were members of the 'Left' and close to the 'Left in Serbia'.[98] According to rumours at the time, Milošević was, however, more sure of his support in the RS parliament and said that he already had 25 out of the 42 deputies necessary for a majority.[99] In addition to fostering divisions in the RS parliament, Belgrade also coalesced with the opposition parties. Milošević had a special relation with the SPRS, which was formed shortly after the rejection of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. The founder of the party, Dragutin Ilić, acknowledges that he received three kinds of assistance from the Serbian Government: access to the media, material aid and physical protection. After the rejection of the Contact Group Plan, Milošević reportedly asked Ilić to bring 70 RS businessmen to Belgrade to explain to them the huge costs of war and urge for negotiations.[100]

In addition to fostering political divisions, the Serbian authorities also sought to augment the already-existing conflict between the political and the military leadership in the RS. Milošević recognised the importance of the military for the civilian leadership and saw a deepening conflict as the best way to effect a change in their position. For this purpose, Milošević could utilise the close relationship between Mladić and the military leadership in Belgrade;[101] even when the embargo against the RS was imposed, Belgrade continued having RS army officers on its payroll. Milošević did not want to engineer an RS military defeat; what he wanted was a change in the political position. The close link between Mladić and Belgrade persisted throughout the war and although the RS commander, after some initial hesitation, rejected the Contact Group Plan, he continued having secret contacts with Milošević.[102] But Mladić and Milošević almost fell into disagreement when Belgrade in September 1995, sent Arkan and his paramilitary Tigers to the RS. Mladić flew into a rage, whereas the political leadership supported the presence of the Tigers,

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[98] Stefanović, Nenad Lj., 1994. "Buying Time." *Vreme News Digest*, no. 168, 12 December.
[99] Vasić, Miloš; Švarm, Filip, 1994. "Storm over Bosnia". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 163, 7 November.
[100] Interview, Dragutin Ilić, Banja Luka, 23 October 2003.
[101] Gow, 2003: 180
[102] Thomas, 1999: 204.

thereby once again underlining the fluidity of alliances.[103] Generally, however, Belgrade's strategy proved successful and Mladić chose to follow Milošević's lead, even though he reportedly rejected launching a coup against the political leadership.[104]

Belgrade's strategy was highly effective in augmenting divisions in the RS and thereby served to weaken Karadžić. However, Karadžić's initial reaction to Belgrade's attempts to undermine him was to seek to strengthen his power base within the RS, consequently adopting an even more intransigent position. While the strategy was eventually successful, it therefore took a long time for it to have the desired effect. Only in August 1995 were the RS leaders so weak that they gave in: they agreed to a joint Serb delegation in Dayton in which Milošević would have the deciding vote. During the Dayton negotiations, Milošević dismissed any objections from the RS delegates and boasted: *"I'll make sure they accept the final agreement"*.[105] And so they did, after Milošević had reportedly threatened that Karadžić and the rest of the leadership would otherwise be arrested.[106]

Attempting to counter Belgrade

As was the case in the RSK, the Pale leadership did not just stand idly by when Milošević tried to undermine their power base. Instead, they sought alternative alliance partners, mainly in the Serbian opposition. Many of the Serbian opposition leaders, such as Šešelj, Drašković and Đinđić, had roots in Bosnia and they, moreover, estimated that support for the Serbs in Bosnia could provide fertile ground for weakening Milošević. Thus, after the break with Belgrade over the Contact Group Plan, several Serbian opposition politicians paid visits to Pale.[107]

The RS leaders found one of their strongest supporters in the leader of the Serb Radicals. Šešelj was strongly opposed to the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and, following the RS rejection, he offered his support and attempted to create havoc in Belgrade. When Milošević introduced sanctions against the RS following the rejection of

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[103] *Ibid.* 243-4.
[104] *Ibid.* 240. Sell, 2002: 233.
[105] Holbrooke, 1999: 243.
[106] Sell, 2002: 254.
[107] Švarm, Filip; Dimović, Dragan, 1995. "Our Man in Pale". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 172, 6 January.

Contact Group Plan, Šešelj described it as a definite proof that Milošević had betrayed the interests of the Serb people.[108] But even though Karadžić needed the support in Belgrade, he was still cautious not to let the Radicals become too strong in the RS. The Bosnian version of the SRS was closely linked with the party in Serbia and in order to avoid increased competition from the party, Karadžić chose to curtail its activities.[109] Internal competition in the RS thereby weakened the Pale leaders in their conflict with Milošević since they could not fully embrace co-operation with the Radicals.

In addition to the obvious support from the Radicals, the SDS was also wooing other forces in Belgrade. It had most success with Vojislav Koštunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska stranka Srbije, DSS), with which the SDS had strong ideological affinity, including close links with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Throughout the conflict with Milošević, the DSS was to remain a staunch supporter of Pale and Koštunica dismissed any political attempts to divide the Serbs.[110] The position of the DS was more wavering. Ideologically it had less in common with the SDS and the party had also accepted the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, despite reservations. However, following the change in leadership and the coming to power of Zoran Đinđić, the party increasingly sought to make political capital of the Belgrade-Pale rift. The DS consequently came out against the Contact Group Plan, although it attacked it less fiercely than the DSS and emphasised the need for compromise.[111] The SPO, on the other hand, was unwilling to support Pale's intransigence, even though Drašković's decision to back the Vance-Owen Peace Plan caused a rift within the party.[112] Nevertheless, the RS leaders enjoyed the support of an almost united opposition following the Belgrade-Pale fall-out over the Contact Group Plan: they were backed by the SRS, the DSS, the DS, by the Serbian Orthodox Church and by a group of *"national intellectuals"*.[113]

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[108] Milošević, Milan et al, 1994. "Total Recall". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 150, 8 August.

[109] Švarm, Filip; Dimović, Dragan, 1995. "Our Man in Pale". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 172, 6 January

[110] Thomas, 1999: 222.

[111] *Ibid.* 220.

[112] *Ibid.* 151.

[113] Milošević, Milan, 1994. "Public Vices, Secret Diplomacy". *Vreme News Digest* no 160, 17 October.

However, this support was of limited use to Karadžić; the Serbian opposition was too weak and disunited for Milošević to be seriously concerned.[114] Even the Serbian Orthodox Church was plagued by internal divisions: at the time of the Contact Group Plan hardliners dominated,[115] but the more moderately inclined Patriarch Pavle regained control and supported the peace talks in 1995. Karadžić had counted on Milošević not being able to abandon the RS because of the Serbian opposition but he had overestimated its strength.[116] In 1993, when Milošević first decided to punish the Pale leaders, the situation had been somewhat different: the Radicals had created a huge spectacle in Serbia and the RS elite was still united. Eventually, Milošević backtracked. This furthered the intransigence of the RS leaders and, in 1994, they were convinced that Milošević would again reverse his position. But by then the situation was different: divisions, which Milošević could make use of, were appearing in the RS elite and the SRS was in a far weaker position. Milošević had concentrated his coercive force on the Radicals and Šešelj was, in September 1994, given a prison sentence for two violent attacks in the Federal Parliament. Thus amputated, the Radicals were unable to repeat the spectacles of 1993 and capitalise on their support for Pale.[117]

Strenuous relations but very significant kin-state involvement

As relations between Belgrade and Pale became increasingly frosty, Milošević was no longer seen as the legitimate leader to whom the RS leaders owed their allegiance. This change in the borders of the intra-ethnic space was, as in the RSK, based on Milošević's political position rather than on an explicitly changed view of Serb identity. Again, the analysis pointed to the degree of internal divisions and the access to alternative resources as decisive for the influence that the kin-state leader could exert. Towards the end of the war, Belgrade seemed to be more effective in influencing the internal rivalry in the RS than in the RSK, even though a change in leadership never materialised. This difference can partly be explained by the difference in the configuration of the competition and availability of alternative resources but also owes something to the harsher measures used against the RS.

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[114] Švarm, Filip; Dimović, Dragan, 1995. "Our Man in Pale". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 172, 6 January.
[115] Milošević, Milan; Brajović, Velizar, 1994. "A magnificent landscape, poisonous atmosphere, pigheaded people". *Vreme News Digest* no. 151, 15 August.
[116] Milošević, Milan et al, 1994. "Total Recall". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 150, 8 August.
[117] Švarm, Filip; Dimović, Dragan, 1995. "Our Man in Pale". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 172, 6 January.

Milošević may, finally, have been less interested in effecting moderation in the RSK since this would have made it harder to abandon the Knin leaders. The more covert involvement in the RS before the war did not make it easier for Milošević to distance himself from the Pale leaders: the issue of Bosnia was salient in Serbian politics and the involvement of the Serbian opposition furthered the intransigence of the RS leaders.

6.3 General population:
Referenda and civil protests, but limited influence

In the pre-war period, the impact of popular attitudes was reduced once the non-ethnic parties became marginalised. Party competition re-emerged during the war but the general population remained of limited importance, despite the leadership's rhetorical regard for popular attitudes.

The RS parliament was constituted by Serb deputies elected for the Bosnian Parliament in the 1990 elections. But although they were popularly elected, their mandates were problematic on two accounts: firstly, they had been elected to a different parliament and usually on a more moderate basis; and secondly, a number of them were elected for non-ethnic parties but chose to join the SDS. Even so, in the political competition, this popular mandate would often be pointed to and Plavšić, for example, in an argument with Karadžić, emphasised that contrary to him she had been elected by the Serb people.[118] During the war, the RS population was, however, not given a chance to renew this mandate. No elections were held, despite the opposition's insistence and despite the fact that the mandates from 1990 expired in 1994. Surveys were not conducted either and it is, therefore, very difficult to assess popular opinion, but few channels were anyway open for popular influence.

Aside from the referenda held on peace agreements, the only way for the general population to register support or disagreement was through civil protests. However, the Serb Radicals argue that a local election was actually held in Jajce in 1993 but that the results were cancelled by the RS authorities when the SRS emerged as the

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[118] Anastasijević, Dejan, 1994. "Biljana Plavsic, Vice-President Bosnian Serb Republic". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 151, 15 August.

winner.[119] It has not been possible to confirm this event but it fits well with the SDS's pattern of repressing the opposition. Referenda were, on the other hand, a popular instrument which was used when the RS leaders wanted to strengthen their defiant position. Consequently, referenda were held on the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and on the Contact Group Plan since the RS leaders could thereby argue that they were only following the will of the people. The official results in both referenda pointed to a massive turnout and overwhelming rejection of the proposed plans. Thus, in the referendum on the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in August 1993, turnout was reported to be around 90 per cent with well over 90 per cent rejecting the agreement.[120] In the Contact Group Plan referendum turnout was reported to be 91 per cent with 95 per cent rejecting the plan, despite a fierce campaign in its favour waged by the Belgrade media machine.[121] In a state of war, such high turnouts seem highly unlikely and the overwhelming rejection of the plan should be taken with a pinch of salt: these are official results from authorities not averse to bending the rules of democratic competition.

Regardless of the extent to which the referenda reflected actual popular opinion, they did not have a significant impact. Everyone knew in advance what the results would be, otherwise the RS leaders would never have called a referendum, and the political agenda had already moved on by the time they were held. In late 1995, RS authorities organised a referendum on the Dayton Agreement in the Serb-controlled part of Sarajevo. The referendum was a desperate attempt to alter the agreement that had awarded all of Sarajevo to the Federation and therefore made the RS cease control of the suburbs. But despite an overwhelming rejection of the plan – 98.7 per cent of the approximately 80,000 people who voted were said to have voted against[122] – the referendum failed to achieve any changes in the Dayton Agreement or in the political position of the Serb leadership. The RS leaders knew that popular support was not enough for them to retain power and they were too weak to make use of the result. Popular opinion, therefore, cannot be said to have been an important constraint on the position of the leaders.

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[119] Interview Ognjen Tadić, Banja Luka, 7 November 2003.

[120] Lalović, S., 1993. "Nezvanični podaci: 'Ne' Vens-Ovenov Planu". *Politika* 18 May, p. 1.

[121] Silber; Little, 1996: 343. "Chronology 1994: May through August". *Croatian International Relations Review,* 2001, VII (22/23) 2001 p. 48.

[122] Lekić, Bojana, 1995. "Night Moves". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 220, 18 December.

Resistance to the policies of the RS leadership was expressed on at least two occasions. When the RS parliament accepted the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, this caused strong reactions in the territories that were to be ceased.[123] Of greater concern to the RS leadership was, however, the September 1993 rebellion in Banja Luka which was accompanied by civilian demonstrations of discontent.[124] When the SDS feared competition from other parties, its primary concern was, nevertheless, not focused on popular support. The SDS leadership feared growing divisions within its own ranks as well as an intensification of the conflict with the army; it feared co-operation between its rivals and a possible coup. The SDS's rivals could conceivably have made use of popular discontent and thereby weakened the leadership but as long as the war was ongoing, the possibilities for doing so were limited and other resources were of greater importance. Judah argues that by 1995 it was common for Serbs in Bosnia to privately whisper that Karadžić and the other leaders were "*all crooks*".[125] But even if this were true for the majority of the population, there were no channels through which it could affect the leadership and the opposition was unable to utilise such attitudes.

Support for urban Serb leaders?

The Serbs remaining outside the RS were also represented by deputies elected in the 1990 elections. The Sarajevan deputies claimed to represent all Serbs who had stayed in the areas controlled by the Bosnian Government[126] and argued that these Serbs rejected Karadžić's policies and supported their moderate position.[127] Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain surveys that backup or reject this assertion. But the few available surveys point to limited support among the Sarajevan Serbs for the people who claimed to represent them. In the summer of 1993, *Dani* asked the Sarajevans which politicians they trusted the most. And somewhat surprisingly, the most trusted politicians among the Serb respondents were not Serbs: on the top place was the Bosniak Fikret Abdić, while the highest placed Serb, Mirko Pejanović, was

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[123] Bougarel, 1996: 105.

[124] *Ibid.* 107.

[125] Judah, 2000: 296. See also Glenny, 1996: 263.

[126] When the Serb Civic Council was established in 1994, it claimed to represent around 200,000 Serbs. Pejanović, Mirko, 1994. "Srpsko građansko vijeće i budućnost RBiH". Vijeće kongresa bosankomuslimanskih intelektualaca, *Tribina* br. XV. p. 4

[127] "Deklaracija Skupštine građana srpske nacionalnosti," In SGV, 2004. *10 godina Srpskog građanskog vijeća – Pokret za ravnopravnost u Bosni i Hercegovini.* Sarajevo: SGV. p. 31-33.

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trailing behind at number four. The Serb Speaker of Parliament, Miro Lazović, was only regarded as the most trusted politician by 1 per cent of the Serb respondents, while the other Serb member of the Presidency, Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, did not get a single vote from the Serb respondents.[128]

Abdić was the leader of the self-declared Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia; he was in opposition to the Bosnian Government and had signed an agreement with the RS. The Serb support for him, therefore, could conceivably be an expression of support for the RS, or at least against the Bosnian Government. Thus, while the support for non-Serb candidates could indicate a more moderate stand, it could also reflect lack of backing for the position of the Sarajevan Serb representatives. 83 per cent of the Serbs questioned, furthermore, said that they supported direct negotiations between Izetbegović and Karadžić, which the Serb representatives in the Bosnian institutions were against.[129] Either way, the Serb population outside the RS did not have a chance to make their opinions heard. Their representatives were elected based on popular support before the war, which was not limited to support from Serb voters, and based on the fact that they were deputies of Serb nationality who had chosen to stay in Sarajevo. Therefore, wartime popular opinion among the 'urban Serbs' was not decisive for their position.

As in the case of Croatia, the impact of popular attitudes during the war was consequently limited at best. Other resources were more effective in the elite competition and they were widely available. Finally, the importance of the inter-ethnic interplay was, as in Croatia, largely based on the military balance.

6.4 Inter-ethnic interplay: Mutually hurting stalemate decisive

Direct interaction between the leaders of the ethnic parties was reduced considerably once war broke out.[130] Moreover, due to the RS leaders' uncompromising insistence on a separate Serb territory, the positions of SDA and HDZ leaders were of limited importance: they were not interested in any proposals for co-existence. The possibility for alliances spurred by the tripartite structure, nevertheless, meant that

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[128] "Sarajlije se izjasnile".*Dani*, 3 June 1993, p. 9-14.
[129] *Ibid.*
[130] It was limited to negotiations, usually under international auspices, where the opposing leaders might not even meet face to face.

the interplay was still of some importance. In negotiations, the position of the other leaders, furthermore, made a difference for the extent to which the RS leadership would be pressured by the international community. The interplay between the ethnic leaders finally mattered in a military sense: was there a military stalemate? Had this become a mutually hurting stalemate? Ultimately, the latter led to a change in the Serb position, in combination with the changed dynamics of intra-ethnic competition and kin-state pressure.

Changing alliances

After war broke out, the Pale leaders put some effort into breaking up the Bosniak-Croat alliance, realising that this would significantly strengthen their military position. Unlike in the pre-war period, the wooing was mostly reserved for the Croats, and the SDS's strategy was to get the Herzegovin faction of the HDZ to agree to a division of Bosnia. HDZ and SDS leaders met frequently, and in Graz in May 1992, Karadžić and Boban agreed on dividing Bosnia between them. The Pale leaders were, however, competing with the Bosnian Government over the Croats' favour. Croatia continued to pursue two separate and contradictory policies: their secret collusion with the Serbs and their formal alliance with the SDA and the Bosnian Government.[131] But the latter alliance broke down in the spring of 1993 when war broke out between the Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko vijeće odbrane, HVO) and the Bosnian Army. This greatly strengthened the Serb military position and the RS leadership sought to build on the broken alliance by co-operating with the Bosniak Fikret Abdić, who had declared an autonomous province in northwest Bosnia and was now at war with the Sarajevo Government.[132] With this move, the RS leaders hoped to strengthen their position in Krajina and weaken the Bosnian Government. By 1994 Pale's luck in terms of shifting alliances was, however, changing: the Bosnian and the Croatian Government signed the Washington Agreement on a Bosniak-Croat Federation in March and Abdić was defeated in August. Consequently, the RS was facing a much more united front and the stalemate began to hurt.

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[131] Silber; Little, 1996: 306-8.
[132] *Ibid.* 306.

The rapprochement between the Croats and Bosniaks demonstrated a change in the Croat strategy, which was mostly caused by a rethinking of Zagreb's course. Among the Bosniaks, divisions were, however, still plentiful and were, furthermore, complicated by the non-ethnic option which still survived in Sarajevo.

Divisions in Sarajevo

Owen argues that Izetbegović had two loyalties: to multi-ethnic Bosnia and to his party, the SDA.[133] But the SDA was itself marked by deep divisions and Izetbegović consequently had to concern himself with ensuring cohesion in the party while simultaneously keeping up the image of a multi-ethnic state. The lack of cohesion within the SDA, again according to Owen, resulted in Izetbegović frequently wavering when it came to peace negotiations: he had to make sure that he could take the party with him and he often failed to do so.[134] In the course of 1993-4, Izetbegović seemed to be increasingly leaning on the hardliners in the SDA and consequently emphasised the Muslim nature of the SDA-dominated Government. This move caused a rift with the Bosnian Prime Minister, Haris Silajdžić, which again led to immobility on the Bosnian side[135] and, furthermore, put the non-ethnic forces in the Bosnian Presidency in an even less influential position.

In the Presidency, Izetbegović played a much more dominant role than his constitutional status as 'first among equals' allowed for, and by the autumn of 1993, the collective Presidency mostly existed on paper.[136] The non-ethnic forces in the Bosnian authorities were particularly alarmed by the increasing ethnification of the Bosnian army; the increasing insistence that this was a *Bosniak* army.[137] And, in early 1995, the opposition centred on the Bosnian Presidency started a battle with the SDA. They distanced themselves from the introduction of religious ideology in parts of the army and generally spoke out against the increasing ethnification of the war.[138] Although the increasing ethnification of the Bosnian authorities weakened the

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[133] Owen, 1995: 40.

[134] *Ibid.* 236, 248.

[135] Peranić, Dražena, 1994. "Where are the politicians heading?". *AIM Press*, 7 April.

[136] Bougarel, 1996: 109.

[137] Interview Jovan Divjak, Sarajevo, 7 July 2004. Interview Miro Lazović, Sarajevo, 29 June 2004. Interview Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, Sarajevo, 2 July 2004.

[138] Peranić, Dražena, 1995. "Divisions in the Bosnian Presidency". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 176, 13 February.

position of the non-ethnic representatives, the impact on the RS was negligible. The leaders in Pale were actually happy with an ethnically defined Government since this helped justify their position: their ethnic definition of politics and the argument that co-existence was impossible. This position was maintained during years of unfruitful negotiations.

Negotiations and stalemate

The frequency of negotiations was much higher in Bosnia than in Croatia where the RSK leaders refused to negotiate for prolonged periods of time. International mediators kept the negotiation process going but one crucial element was lacking: simultaneity; when one side was prepared to accept an agreement, the other side rejected it. The strategies chosen by the leaders were based on the proposals themselves, on the internal competition that they were faced with, as well as on an assessment of the other side's position. If the others would anyway reject the proposal, then acceptance was a strategy for winning international favour. The strategic adoption of positions was explicitly acknowledged by Izetbegović when the Bosnian Government only accepted the Contact Group Plan because they were certain that the Serbs would reject it.[139] It was, thus, a complex game: a nested game with many actors and several dynamics of intra-ethnic elite competition.

The inter-ethnic interplay that ultimately mattered for the position of the RS leadership was of a military nature. A military stalemate had already emerged in the beginning of 1994[140] but without this resulting in willingness to compromise. The leaders were still constrained by internal forces, they did not want to show weakness and, furthermore, hoped for a future improvement in their situation. For the Serbs, however, things began to change with the fall of Kupres in the autumn of 1994 which was dubbed a betrayal by the HVO.[141] It was, thus, the first tangible effect of the re-launched Bosniak-Croat alliance. This event was followed by additional changes on the battlefield and a new form of stalemate arose: a mutually hurting stalemate in which *"all involved were constrained by the prospective cost of a return to armed*

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[139] Silber; Little, 1996: 340.
[140] Gow, James, 1997. *Triumph of the lack of will.* London: Hurst. p. 261.
[141] Vasić, Miloš, 1994. "War without declaration". *Vreme News Digest* no. 164, 14 November.

hostilities".[142] The stalemate was made to hurt even more following NATO bombings of Serb positions in August 1995; it was made clear that continued Serb radicalism would come at a price. The change in relative military strength deepened existing divisions in the RS and the combined dynamics of hurting stalemate, significant pressure from the kin-state and changed internal dynamics finally resulted in acceptance of a settlement.

In conclusion, while the relative military strength of the Serbs had a significant effect on elite positions, the positions of the other ethnic leaders only had a limited effect. Due to the extremism of the RS leadership and their denial of future co-existence, the position of the Bosnian Government and the HDZ primarily mattered as an indication of potential weakness and in terms of possible risk-free acceptance of a settlement. One final form of inter-ethnic interplay was the possibility of shifting alliances, which caused the Croats to be wooed by both the Serbs and the Bosniaks. However, this had only limited effect on leadership positions. The main effect of shifting alliances was the resulting changes in military balance; this change significantly influenced the dynamics of intra-Serb competition and finally led to greater willingness to compromise.

6.5 Fractionalisation and infighting in wartime Bosnia

From being a very unified party at the beginning of the war, the SDS in Bosnia became increasingly plagued by fractionalisation and the RS leaders, furthermore, had to deal with a growing rift with the military. Karadžić constantly feared being undermined from within, and after his near defeat over the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, he took no steps without ensuring the backing of the rest of the leadership and a more radical position resulted.

Competition from other parties grew in significance during the war and was affected by, and in turn affected, intra-party divisions: when the SDS was reactivated, it feared competition from the Radicals, but this move opened up for increasing competition from other parties and also helped foster divisions within the formerly so cohesive SDS. Towards the end of the war, moderating dynamics finally emerged,

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[142] Gow, 1997: 281.

whereas earlier the most serious challenges to the RS leaders had come from more extreme challengers. This was to a considerable extent the result of overlapping cleavages and issues: the oppositional forces found common ground on regional and ideological cleavages, on the issue of a settlement, on links with Belgrade and on the issue of war profiteering. The more extreme challengers had enjoyed the support of paramilitary forces, while the more moderate forces lacked this kind of resources until the army sided with the opposition and the Banja Luka faction of the SDS. This new alliance provided the opposition and the Banja Luka faction with needed military resources and it gave Mladić his first political base within the RS.[143]

The Bosnian case, therefore, again demonstrates the predominance of non-political resources in the wartime competition. Party structures as such lacked importance but the support of the RS parliament was highly valued by a constrained leadership. The need for such support, as well as the need for coercive and economic resources often emanating from within the movement itself, meant that internal challenges often resulted in radicalisation. Moreover, when internal challenges towards the end of the war came from a more moderate direction, radicalisation could not solve the problem. Challenges from other parties would, on the other hand, most often be repressed and did generally not cause radicalisation. Another reason for this is the emergence of new issues of contention and competition: the opposition became increasingly focused on war profiteering and corruption. Responses to intra-ethnic challengers are, thus, affected by both the *form* of this competition, the *resources* available and the *issues* on which it is centred.

Within the RS, the main audiences to the competition were intra-party forces and, even more decisively, paramilitary forces and various other military constellations. The general population was, on the other hand, not a significant audience during the war: there were no channels for influence, no elections were held and the opposition could not make use of its potential popular support. The only way to express support or resistance was through referenda or civil protests. However, referenda did not affect the position of the RS leaders and popular expressions of dissent, while of

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[143] Anastasijević, Dejan, 1995. "Crucial Defence of Power". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 212, 23 October.

concern to the RS leadership, were not significant as long as the leaders controlled the non-political resources that were dominant in the elite competition.

Although relations with the kin-state were increasingly strenuous, Belgrade had an important impact on RS competition. Contrary to what was the case in Croatia, Belgrade, however, only became a significant influence on the internal competition in 1994. The high degree of cohesion made it more difficult for Belgrade to affect elite positions by playing on internal divisions and Milošević had no reason to desire a leadership change until the rejection of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in 1993. Growing divisions in the statelet increased the potential for kin-state influence but the intransigence of the RS leadership was remarkably resilient. The Pale leaders had access to alternative resources and alliance partners and, furthermore, found themselves challenged on the issue of relations with Belgrade: by forces within their own party and by the Serb Radicals.

The intransigent position of the RS leaders, finally, meant that Croat and Bosniak elite positions were of limited influence; what mattered was the relative military strength but this only led to a change in position when combined with changed dynamics of intra-ethnic competition and kin-state pressure.

6.6 Wartime intra-ethnic competition

Intra-Serb competition in wartime Bosnia and Croatia was far removed from 'conventional' political competition: it was simultaneously characterised by ethnification, failed transition and a situation of war, and each of these factors had an impact on the dynamics of competition.

Following the outbreak of war, ethnification was no longer an issue; even the 'urban Serb' leaders defined themselves, and were, especially, defined by others, as *Serb* representatives. The situation in Sarajevo, however, constitutes a partial exception since the Serb representatives persistently defended a non-ethnic option and rejected forming an ethnic party. In the initial period after the outbreak of war, there was a closing of ranks behind the dominant Serb party, but this only provided a brief respite from disunity which, in a context of ethnification, returned even more

forcefully. The transitional situation, or rather the aborted transition to democracy, also had an important impact on competition. Democracy was still used as a legitimising concept and political competition formally took the form of competition between political parties in a parliamentary system. However, the parties were dominated by their leaders and party structures were strikingly weak, and one could observe high-ranking officials who were simultaneously members of more than one party. Competition between parties, therefore, did not take the form of competition between two party organisations but was rather a competition between leaders who had different levels of political and especially non-political resources at their disposal. It was about individual leaders and their ability to foster alliances with political and military forces. Due to the weak party structures and the limited programmatic differences, the transitional situation, therefore, augmented the importance of the non-political resources in the political competition, although this was more importantly the result of the war.

Throughout the war, military and paramilitary forces played a crucial role; in alliance or in competition with civilian leaders. The civilian leaders lacked full control over the military forces, but they depended on their resources. This left the civilian leaders constrained and civilian-military links were decisive for the outcome of the intra-Serb competition. Thus, the resources of importance in the political competition were often far from 'conventional' democratic resources: links with Belgrade, support from (para)military forces as well as the bending of political rules to take advantage of regional differences in parliamentary support. Popular attitudes were of limited importance; changes in the dynamics of competition were not led by popular demands and even when elections or referenda were held, these reflected the balance of power in terms of the resources that really mattered: economic resources and, above all, military resources. The elections in the RSK and the salience of the 'Belgrade issue' are, therefore, only a partial exception to the lack of significance of popular attitudes. The persistent Serb intransigence greatly reduced the impact of actions and rhetoric of the other ethnic leaders; what mattered in both cases was the military balance. Military strength and the risk of defeat directly affect the future prospects for the elites, not only for the general population. The persistent Serb intransigence greatly reduced the impact of actions and rhetoric of the other ethnic leaders; what mattered in both cases was the military balance. Military strength and

the risk of defeat directly affect the future prospects for the elites, not only for the general population.

Despite the dominant use of non-political resources in the competition, the rivalling elites often sought to bolster their position by referring to their alleged legitimacy. This form of rhetoric was especially used when it came to the representatives of the 'urban Serbs' who were both in the RS and the RSK derided as traitors and as illegitimate representatives of the Serb people. Legitimacy in this case referred to their political position. These representatives found themselves in an uneasy position between trying to mediate in the conflict and being used to serve legitimation purposes by the HDZ and the SDA. In Bosnia there was, furthermore, a schism between providing a Serb alternative and still holding on to a non-ethnic option. Their direct impact on the dynamics of intra-Serb competition was limited, partly due to the repressive measures used against anyone with whom they had links in the statelets. However, by questioning the position of the RS and RSK leadership, they did serve to undermine their claim to representing all Serbs.

Radicalisation was still the dominant dynamic when leaders were met with challenges from within their own party or from related paramilitary forces. If they had been contemplating moderation under such circumstances, they were forced to reverse their position or face defeat. However, radicalisation was *not* the chosen response to competition if it came from the outside, regardless of whether the challengers were more moderate or more extreme. In the RSK, leaders chose to negotiate with the Croatian Government despite severe challenges from other parties and independents. In the RS, such moderating dynamics were not significant for the main part of the war, but the leadership, nevertheless, did not radicalise when challenged with competition from other parties; instead, it tried to suppress the opposition with the coercive resources that the war and the SDS-dominated regime made so readily available and effective for the incumbent leadership. However, towards the end of the war, when the opposition parties, the SDS Krajina faction and the army coalesced, the RS leadership lacked the strength to continue its intransigent position and it was forced to reverse it: radicalisation would not save the leadership and its relative strength was not sufficient to marginalise the rivals. This also illustrates the effect of more moderate challenges from within: in such a situation,

radicalisation will not provide a solution and the choice is consequently to either repress the challengers or accommodate them by adopting a more moderate position. Towards the end of the war, Karadžić had to choose the latter option.

There therefore seems to be an interesting difference in the dynamics of *intra*-party and *inter*-party competition. The leaders relied on resources emanating from within the party or movement and they were, therefore, less likely to be able to merely suppress the challenges. This would, of course, have been an option had the leaders been completely monolithic within their own party, but in both cases even the strongest leaders were constrained by other leaders in the party and by paramilitary forces. Another difference between the two kinds of competition was that challenges from within the party were often focused on the issue of the war and radicalisation, therefore, provided a sufficient response. In the opposition from other parties, other issues were often also prominent, thereby preventing radicalisation from pre-empting the attacks. And it is indeed interesting, and somewhat surprising, that other politically salient issues could emerge despite the situation of war. Before the war, competition had been mainly based on the issue of the inter-ethnic conflict, even though regional and ideological cleavages had also played a role. During the war, these cleavages increased in importance, but the real change was the importance of valence issues, especially the issue of war profiteering. These cleavages and issues fostered the creation of new alliances and altered the strategies open to beleaguered leaders. The *issues* on which the intra-ethnic competition is based have an important impact on the resulting dynamics.

These divisions also influenced relations with the kin-state and one general trend clearly emerged from both cases: during the war, Belgrade fell out with almost all leaders of the local Serbs; with Babić, Martić and Karadžić. Milošević changed his strategy and goal following military failures and international pressure, but he had difficulties taking his former protégés along: the Serbian President was no longer always able to dictate developments in the two statelets. These changed relations brought about a considerable change in rhetoric. In the pre-war phase, the unity of the Serbs and the special position of Milošević as 'the President of all Serbs' was emphasised by most actors, but as the conflict deepened, the distinct nature of the Serbs in Serbia and the Serbs outside of Serbia was increasingly stressed by both

sides. When his position became questioned, Milošević sought to influence elite competition in the two statelets in order to retain control. Belgrade thereby became a very strong, but largely external, influence on the competition. There was, thus, a change in the form of influence: from being at least partly based on shared ethnicity to being almost exclusively based on the need for Belgrade's resources.

Milošević's attempt to engineer more moderate dynamics was, however, not always successful. In the RSK it worked in the conflict with Babić but failed when Babić and Martić, towards the end of the war, decided to go against Milošević's man, Mikelić. In the RS, the strategy was slow-working and only in 1995 did more centripetal dynamics emerge. One of the factors limiting Belgrade's success in engineering moderating dynamics was that the link with Belgrade increasingly became an issue of contestation among the local elites: while the elites did not change their position on the issue of the war, they could score political points by vowing to assert their independence and not take orders from Belgrade. The ability to take a more independent position was affected by the involvement of the opposition parties from Serbia, which functioned as an alternative audience that gave the leaders hope of being able to continue their intransigent positioning. Moreover, the leaders had access to alternative paramilitary resources that could be used in the internal competition. Consequently, Belgrade's influence became increasingly dependent on the credibility of its willingness to protect the statelet and, as this was being questioned, Milošević's influence was reduced. The detachment of the Serbian regime was relative, and it retained strong links with the military, but its ability to influence developments was nevertheless reduced.

When Pale and Belgrade fell out, the resulting conflict was much more intense than the one between Belgrade and various Knin-leaders: in the RSK, Milošević never used the military and economic levers he possessed and, furthermore, he did not actively push for an agreement with Croatia.[144] Milošević had generally been able to influence the RSK leadership without resorting to sanctions but, by 1995, this ability to control elite competition in the RSK had diminished whereas it was on the rise in the RS, possibly due to the sanctions imposed. In the RSK, kin-state influence was

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[144] Sell, 2002: 239.

reduced towards the end of the war by the high degree of fractionalisation, the frequently changing alliances and the access to paramilitary resources. An additional reason for Milošević's more forceful reaction may have been the greater sway of the Pale leaders in Serbia. Milošević would have been more concerned about a prolonged conflict with Pale, since the RS leaders had a greater chance of undermining his position. Milošević himself professed that the reason was that he could not afford another intra-Serb conflict.[145] Finally, from a strategic perspective, Milošević knew, in 1995, that Tuđman would not accept an agreement and the only thing Belgrade could hope for was for the situation to remain frozen.

Compared with the pre-war period, the competition during the war showed some specific characteristics: non-political and especially military resources became even more effective and more available, links with military and paramilitary forces were of crucial importance, competition with non-ethnic parties practically ceased, competition with other Serb parties was on the increase and issues other than the national issue became of importance. In the next chapter, I will analyse the competition in the different phases more fully and also look at the intra-Serb competition in the post-war period: what were the changes and what were the continuities?

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[145] Cohen, 1995: 243.

Chapter 7
Post-War Intra-Serb Competition in Croatia and Bosnia:
Change and continuity

Even though intra-ethnic elite competition does not merely mirror developments in the conflict, the end of violence is, nevertheless, expected to affect the dynamics of competition; especially the availability and effectiveness of different resources. Moreover, the absence of violence is often argued to make it more likely for issues other than the national or ethnic one to become politically salient.[1] The end of violence does not, however, result in a return to the pre-war situation, as far as intra-ethnic competition is concerned: following a war, one would expect the ethnification of politics to remain for a significant period of time and also that the leaders are constrained by their wartime positions. An important change in the post-war phase was the introduction of an important international dimension: in Bosnia and in Eastern Slavonia, international administrators became an important audience to the intra-Serb competition. The international community had also earlier influenced the dynamics of Serbs politics, but in the post-war period the influence of international authorities was much more direct: they influenced the distribution of resources between moderates and extremists and reduced the availability and effectiveness of coercive resources.

The end of the war left the Serbs in significantly different positions in the two cases. Whereas the Serbs in Croatia were, in Owen's words, *"the biggest losers"*,[2] the Serb leaders in Bosnia had been more successful in pursuing their nationalist goals. In Croatia, almost no Serbs were left in Krajina and the leaders in Eastern Slavonia had to settle for the Erdut Agreement, which was all but silent on the political arrangement following the reintegration of the region. In Republika Srpska, the leaders could look to the continued existence of their statelet, albeit within a Bosnian state and with the added risk of indictment by the Hague Tribunal. The Serbs in Bosnia were, therefore, in a much stronger position than the Serbs in Croatia and this affected the position adopted by the leaders as well as the challenges facing them. The fleeing of the radicals from Krajina altered the dynamics of competition in

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[1] See e.g. Gagnon, 1995: 89.
[2] Owen, 1995: 387.

Croatia, while elections were finally held in Bosnia thereby allowing the opposition to gain an institutional foothold. The relative importance of resources underwent a change in the post-war period: the significance of coercive resources was reduced while political resources, including popular support, increased in importance. Despite the changes brought about by the end of the war, the immediate post-war dynamics were, to a considerable extent, built on wartime divisions.

7.1 Croatia:
Centripetal dynamics gradually become dominant

The Croatian offensive in Krajina brought with it a significant change in the Serb leadership. Hitherto dominating actors such as Babić and Martić fled Krajina and found themselves in Belgrade without any influence on the continued unfolding of events. The remaining Serb political elites were, therefore, the Eastern Slavonian leaders and the leaders of the 'urban Serbs'.

Eastern Slavonia: Competition for positions in the remnants of the SDS

According to the Erdut Agreement, Eastern Slavonia was to be under UN administration for a transitional period of one year, with the possibility of a one-year extension should either side request it. The powers of the local leaders were, therefore, confined and the international authorities also had influence on the balance of power between the rivalling leaders. Before his arrival, the UN's administrator, Jacques Klein, chose to circumvent the president of SAO Slavonia, Goran Hadžić, and instead work with the more moderate Vojislav Stanimirović, who was president of the Eastern Slavonia executive council. Stanimirović was given the task of forming a transitional authority, while Hadžić was largely marginalised.[3] But he was still waiting in the wings and it generally remained unclear how hardliners would react to the re-establishment of Croatian authority.[4]

The terms of reintegration were set out in January 1997 when the Croatian Government submitted a Letter of Intent to the UN that, together with the Erdut Agreement, was to form its legal basis. According to this document, Eastern Slavonia

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[3] Interview Vojislav Stanimirović, Vukovar, 25 September 2003.
[4] Hadžić's resistance to reintegration was re-enforced by the decision of the Croatian authorities to explicitly exclude him from the proposed amnesty law.

would be divided between two counties, Osijek-Baranja and Vukovar-Srijem. This was not what the Serb leaders had hoped for and Stanimirović argued that this division would make the Serbs a minority and that a single unit would offer more protection. He, nevertheless, maintained that they were not demanding political autonomy, *"that is in the past, a finished matter"*.[5] But hopes for a better deal were quashed when Jacques Klein received the document enthusiastically: *"I think the Serbs in the Podunavlje [Eastern Slavonia] will be very satisfied, as they are being offered more than they could ever have imagined"*.[6] Subsequently, Stanimirović acknowledged that they lacked support for a referendum on the 'political integrity' of Eastern Slavonia.[7] Hadžić's more radical stream had, however, not giving up on its demands and insisted on holding a referendum.[8] The outcome of the leadership struggle in the remnants of the SDS, therefore, was crucial for the dominant Serb position and for the peaceful reintegration of the region. Contrary to the wartime dynamics, the more moderate position this time prevailed, but it was a narrow victory. Although Hadžić lacked political influence in the transitional authorities, his authority in the SDS was still considerable and Stanimirović had to resort to arguing that Croatian citizenship, which Hadžić had not acquired, was a precondition for a party leader in a reintegrated Eastern Slavonia. This earned him only a slender victory in the main board (19 v. 14 votes) and Hadžić's supporters allegedly commented that it *"could be settled in the streets too"*.[9] However, coercive resources no longer decided political outcomes: the international presence was a significant influence, which supported the moderate option, but the victorious leader still had to resort to less than democratic methods. The victory of Stanimirović and his moderate position, nevertheless, illustrate that outbidding had ceased to be the order of the day in Eastern Slavonia and the reintegration of the region proceeded.

'Urban Serbs': New Serb party enters the stage

Changing dynamics also affected the urban Serb representatives but the main fault line between Milorad Pupovac and Milan Đukić persisted. Pupovac, in 1995, went

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[5] Hedl, Drago, 1997. "Svi smo mi izašli iz rovova". *Feral Tribune*, 3 March, p. 18-9.
[6] Hedl, Drago, 1997. "A Pleasant Surprise". *War Report*, Issue 48, January/February 1997.
[7] Kolovrat, Igor, 1997. "Većina Srba još nema povjerenja u Hrvatsku državu". *Globus*, 4 April p. 10-11.
[8] Hedl, Drago, 1997. "Elections as the only choice". *AIM Press*, 12 March.
[9] *Ibid.*

back on his earlier disinclination to form an ethnic party and formed the Independent Serb Party (Samostalna srpska stranka, SSS). With the already-existing Serb National Party (SNS), the post-war period therefore brought increased intra-Serb party competition but the dynamics were initially similar to the wartime dynamics: centred on the rivalry between Pupovac and Đukić. During the war, Đukić was accused of being a puppet for the Croatian Government but he now gradually began inhabiting the more extreme position. With the formation of the SSS, Đukić found himself in a situation where he had to compete directly with Pupovac, whereas during the war, he was given parliamentary representation in return for being the 'loyal Serb'. In this situation Đukić seems to have concluded that moderation was no longer opportune. The radicalisation was, however, only relative since any extremity of demands was curtailed by the weakness of the Serb position. Pupovac, on the other hand, argues that he had all along wanted to politically tie the 'urban Serbs' and the Krajina Serbs together[10] and in early 1997 this became possible.

Centripetal dynamics after merger

In March 1997, the SSS merged with the remnants of the SDS under the name the Independent Democratic Serb Party (Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka, SDSS). Eastern Slavonia was decisive for the future of the Serbs in Croatia: it was the area where the Serbs were most numerous and the only area where the war had not resulted in a total victory for the Croatian forces. The leverage of the Serb representatives was therefore greater in this area and Pupovac through the merger also secured his political future.[11] Đukić's SNS had been offered to join the new party, but the talks failed when Đukić refused to accept Stanimirović as party president and the setting up of headquarters in Vukovar.[12] The competition was therefore fuelled by different views of inter-ethnic relations, by a regional cleavage and by personal power ambitions. With the creation of the SDSS, the main Serb political forces in Croatia had chosen a conciliatory course and the party showed itself more willing than the SNS to co-operate with the Croatian Government.[13] The SDSS, thus, chose to support amendments to the Constitution in December 1997,

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[10] Interview Milorad Pupovac, Zagreb, 11 August 2003.
[11] Rašeta, Boris, 1997. "Serbs at elections". *AIM Press*, 20 March 1997.
[12] Interview Milorad Pupovac, Zagreb, 11 August 2003. Interview Milan Đukić, Zagreb, 30 July 2003.
[13] Rašeta, Boris, 1997. "Interview Milorad Pupovac: Serbs in the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) Government". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 292, 10 May.

which the SNS vehemently opposed. Đukić strongly opposed that the Serbs in the preamble would be described as a 'national minority' rather than as a 'nation' and he also argued that naming the Croatian Parliament 'Sabor' brought back memories of the pro-Nazi Independent State of Croatia.[14] The SDSS's support for the Constitution consequently led Đukić to accuse Pupovac of being a traitor.[15] Outbidding, therefore, was still taking place and the polarisation between the two Serb parties persisted, but it was accompanied by gradual marginalisation of the SNS. In July 1997, the Serb National Council (Srpsko narodno vijeće, SNV) was founded as an umbrella association of Serb associations and political representatives, but without the participation of the SNS, which rejected the initiative. The SNS's strategy was still successful in the 2000 elections for the lower house of Parliament when the party won the only Serb mandate but gradually the SNS's backing decreased and in the 2003 elections it failed to win parliamentary representation.

Kin-state involvement: What Serb minority?

Contrary to the first two phases, Belgrade now played a very limited role and the Serb minority in Croatia was largely ignored, not only by Milošević, but also by the opposition. The Serb Radical Party had, during the war, been an important factor in Eastern Slavonia, but following the signing of the Erdut Agreement, the local party chose to dissolve itself. Šešelj was against the agreement but realising that plans for a Greater Serbia were now beyond the realm of the possible, the Radicals chose to withdraw.[16] Consequently, when Eastern Slavonia was reintegrated into Croatia, the only thing remarkable about the reaction in Belgrade was the complete lack of reaction. No statements were made by Milošević's SPS nor by more extreme circles.[17] The most important effect of this silence was the lack of support enjoyed by the more radical forces that remained in Eastern Slavonia. Thus, when the Croatian Government issued its Letter of Intent, Belgrade reportedly made clear to Hadžić that it supported the arrangement and he therefore had no one else to turn to.[18]

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[14] Đukić, Milan, 1997. "Letter of Warning". Letter to the Secretary General of the United Nation, Kofi Annan, December 1997. In *News Bulletin*, Serbian Unity Congress, issue 140, 1 January 1998.
[15] Interview Milan Đukić, Zagreb, 30 July 2003.
[16] Interview Filip Švarm, Belgrade, 13 September 2004.
[17] Švarm, Filip, 1998. "Vukovar, What Vukovar?". *AIM Press*, 31 January
[18] Čulić, Marinko, 1997. "Pakleno Podunavlje". *Feral Tribune*, 10 February, p.7-8.

Belgrade had chosen to support the more moderate line represented by Stanimirović but Milošević's influence over the new leaders was limited. These leaders felt betrayed by Belgrade and, consequently, did not have warm feelings for the Serbian President.[19] Regardless of the position of the new leaders, Belgrade had no intention of becoming involved and Milošević was not pressured by the opposition to alter his position. The kin-state was, therefore, of limited importance in the post-war period, although in the immediate aftermath of war, it mattered for Hadžić's inability to support a radical stance.

General population: Increasing importance of popular attitudes

With the end of the war, democratic institutions and, thereby, popular attitudes had become an important resource for the elites. But the impact of the general population was still limited by the continued use of non-democratic resources, by self-imposed restraint and intimidation of Serb candidates, and by the absence of elections in Eastern Slavonia prior to the reintegration. As a result, intra-ethnic competition was not merely driven by popular demands.

In the 1995 elections, held immediately after the end of the war, competition was largely subdued and the choice for the Serb voters was limited. Following Operation Storm and the recapturing of Krajina, Serb representatives in Zagreb kept a low profile and the new Serb party, the SSS, did not get registration in time for the elections. Surveys from 1995 unfortunately have so few Serb respondents that it is difficult to say anything about their attitudes. What does stand out among the very few Serbs in the pre-election survey, however, is the large proportion who are still undecided as to their vote.[20] In the elections, the SNS won two of the three reserved Serb seats, while Pupovac was elected for the Action of Social Democrats and transferred his mandate to the SSS when the party got registered.

Elections were not held in Eastern Slavonia in 1995 but arguments over popular attitudes still played a role in the political competition. The competing leaders were eager to point to their alleged popular support and Hadžić demanded a referendum on

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[19] Interview Vojislav Stanimirović, Vukovar, 25 September 2003.

[20] Pre-election survey. "Anketa: Izbori 1995". Fakultet političkih znanosti, Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. The sample only includes 25 respondents, out of 1144, who reported themselves as being of Serb nationality.

the 'integrity' of the region in order to test whether his more uncompromising position represented a wish of only a *"handful of extremists"* or of *"the majority of the local Serbian population"*. In support of his stand, Hadžić could point to the several thousand people who took part in daily protests in Vukovar echoing his demand.[21] In April 1997 a referendum was organised and the result pointed to overwhelming popular support for preserving the 'integrity' of the region and hence for Hadžić's stand.[22] But it was all to no avail: Hadžić lost the battle over the party leadership and the region was reintegrated as planned. Public opinion was not put to the test and hence not allowed a possible impact on the outcome of elite competition in the region.

When the first all-Croatian elections since 1990 were held in April 1997, there no longer existed a radical Serb alternative. What remained were the newly formed SDSS and Đukić's SNS. In the local elections, the SDSS established a stronghold in Eastern Slavonia where it won majorities in 11 out of 28 municipalities and won six out of 42 seats in the Osijek-Baranja county and 10 out of 42 seats in the Vukovar-Srijem county.[23] In the election for the Croatian Upper House, the Serb parties were less fortunate: none of them succeeded in getting a candidate elected and the SDSS only gained two seats through President Tuđman's personal appointments.

The elections in Eastern Slavonia had been marked by significant problems and widespread chaos[24] but this seemed to have affected all parties equally and they consequently accepted the results. Prior to the elections, the Serb leaders in Eastern Slavonia had, however, managed to weaken their own position considerably: they hesitated until 48 hours before the elections to recommend the population to go to the polls and similar hesitation over the issue of Croatian identity papers left many prospective Serb voters without adequate documents on election day.[25] On the remaining territory of what had been the RSK, only few Serbs were left and potential Serb candidates were reluctant to run for office due to the considerable risks

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[21] Hedl, Drago, 1997. "Elections as the only choice". *AIM,* Zagreb, 12 March.

[22] Švarm, Filip, 1997. "Following Orders From Belgrade". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 228, 12 April.

[23] Zakošek, Nenad, 1997b. "Pregled rezultata izbora za domove Sabora Republike Hravtske i za županijske skupštine". *Politička Misao* XXXIV(2): 129-143.

[24] OSCE/ODIHR, 1997a. "Election of Representatives to the Chamber of Counties of the Parliament and of Representatives of Local Government and Self-Government Bodies of the Republic of Croatia, 13 April 1997".

[25] Hedl, Drago, 1997. "Two bridges and three Serb auto-goals". *AIM Press,* 20 April.

involved.[26] Although these elections were relatively free and fair, and undemocratic resources played a far less important role, voter attitudes were still not clearly reflected in the outcome: the Serb leaders had through their hesitation limited the participation of Serb voters, intimidation was a concern and Serb representation in the Upper House of Parliament was based on the will of the Croatian authorities rather than the preference of the Serb voters. In the continued competition between the two Serb parties, the SNS's strategy of outbidding was initially successful. But over the years, the SDSS gradually took over the SNS's dominant position and the SDSS in the 2003 elections won all three Serb seats in Parliament. While this would seem to reflect more moderate popular attitudes, it undoubtedly also reflects the far better party organisation built up by the SDSS.

Immediately after the war, popular attitudes were, therefore, of limited importance in the moderation of political positions. In the years to come, attitudes among Serb voters did, however, become of great importance in the competition between the SNS and the SDSS, and other resources were now of negligible importance. Tudman exhibited an increasing trend towards authoritarianism[27] but this was largely reserved for his rivals in the non-Serb parties and does not appear to have significantly affected the impact of popular attitudes on Serb politics. The position of the Croatian Government did, however, have some effect on the intra-Serb competition but this was mediated by international involvement and its impact was, furthermore, reduced by the weakness of the Serb position.

Inter-ethnic interplay: International involvement crucial for compromise

The immediate post-war period was marked by the euphoria of the Croatian Government, which at times bordered on gloating, such as when Tudman, a few weeks after Operation Storm, said about the Serbs: "*They disappeared ignominiously, as if they had never populated this land.*" "*We urged them to stay, but they did not listen to us. Well then, bon voyage*".[28] The hardening of the Croatian position did not, however, lead to a radicalisation of the Serb position: the dominant forces realised that from their position of weakness, radical posturing would not bring many

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[26] Anić, Alen, 1997. "Elections in Western Slavonia". *AIM Press*, 25 March.
[27] Tanner, 1997: 302.
[28] *Ibid.* 299.

concessions. Following international criticism, the Croatian Government, however, gradually began to moderate its position and this change helped the moderate forces come out victorious in Eastern Slavonia, although it was by no means the only factor in this rivalry.

Government rejects demands of defeated 'enemy'

In the aftermath of the military triumph, the Croatian authorities decided that it was no longer necessary to offer the Serbs anything that could be portrayed as a generous deal, and the constitutional provisions for special status districts and proportional representation were suspended until the next census.[29] Tudman's grip on power was also strengthened; there was a marked trend toward authoritarianism and the President even raised the prospects of reburying the Ustaša leader, Ante Pavelić, in the homeland.[30] In terms of Eastern Slavonia, the Croatian authorities made thinly veiled threats of military action and demands were raised for the Serbs to leave en masse.[31] For the leaders of the 'urban Serbs' it was clear that the environment was not ripe for extensive demands and they generally kept a low profile. However, the uncompromising stand served to strengthen the hardliners in Eastern Slavonia.[32] One must, nevertheless, not forget that these hardliners were competing from an increasingly weak position: they had lost Belgrade's support, the international administration sought to undermine them and non-political resources were now less available and less effective. The Croatian Government's position was, however, met with international criticism and, in July 1997, the World Bank decided to postpone indefinitely a $30 million loan. The International Monetary Fund also postponed discussions on the release of part of a $486 million credit.[33]

Croatian moderation helps Serb moderate position

As a response to this critique, the Croatian Government submitted a Letter of Intent to the UN that was assessed to be surprisingly generous and predictably led to critique from the HDZ ranks.[34] Tudman managed to weather the storm and although

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[29] Trifunovska, Snežana, 1999b. "Minority Rights in Croatia". *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* 6(4): 463-482. p. 474-5.

[30] Tanner 1997: 302.

[31] Flander, Goran, 1996. "Rejecting the UN Mandate, again". *War Report*, Issue 44, 2 August.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Trifunovska 1999b: 479.

[34] Hedl, Drago, 1997. "A Pleasant Surprise". *War Report*, issue 48, January/February 1997.

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the Eastern Slavonian Serbs were less than enthusiastic about the terms, it, nevertheless, helped the more moderate elements in the internal rivalry. Acceptance was given further impetus by statements from the Croatian side that after the 1997 elections a firmer union of Serb municipalities could be created.[35] Even though the actions of the Croatian Government, therefore, contributed to the marginalisation of the hardliners, it was not *the* decisive factor since the hardline faction was already significantly weakened. Moreover, the interplay failed to significantly affect the position of the urban Serbs, although it may have contributed to the gradual radicalisation of Đukić's SNS.

Post-war intra-ethnic competition in Croatia

Following the Croatian recapture of Krajina and the exodus of Serbs from the region, the Serbs in Croatia were but a small minority. One of the consequences of this position was that the ethnic cleavage quickly ceased to be the defining character of political competition in Croatia at large. However, among the Serbs it still was and even intellectuals, such as Pupovac, who had previously championed a non-ethnic definition of political competition continued being explicitly *Serb* representatives, concerned with the position of the Serb minority. Ethnification dominated and other issues or cleavages did not surpass the ethnic cleavage in strength. The competition among the Serb elites in Croatia was, after the end of the war, marked by the weak position of the Serbs as well as the by the departure of the Knin hardliners. This significantly changed both the dynamics of competition as well as the demands made by the dominant actors. In Eastern Slavonia, the hardliners were marginalised due to pressure and actions taking by the international authorities as well as due to 'political trickery' used by intra-party rivals. The support of the international authorities was an important resource in the elite competition in Eastern Slavonia and the presence of international forces also meant that the threat of Hadžić's supporter to take the intra-party struggle to 'the streets' did not prove decisive. But despite this change in the resources of importance, strategies not clearly democratic in nature were still used to settle leadership struggles. Among the leaders of the 'urban Serbs' there was greater continuity but the introduction of electoral competition meant that political positioning became a strategy in the competition. This led the SNS to adopt a more

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[35] Čulić, Marinko, 1997. "Pakleno Podunavlje" *Feral Tribune*, 10 February, p.7-8.

extreme position. However, after the merger of the SSS with the remnants of the SDS, the SNS was gradually weakened and dynamics of outbidding did not become dominant. The SDSS had a much stronger geographical basis than the SNS and made good use of this, and the party was, furthermore, far better organised. Thus, in this second transitional situation, ethnification was still characteristic of Serb politics but there was a marked shift in the availability and effectiveness of resources used in the competition.

Notwithstanding the end of violence, popular attitudes do not, however, appear to have been decisive for the initial centripetal dynamics in the post-war period. This was due to the involvement of international authorities, the continued use of non-democratic means and the nomination of Serb representatives by the Croatian President. But despite the temporary support for a more radical SNS, popular attitudes mattered for the persistence of the centripetal dynamics since elections were held and other resources had become of less importance. With the increased significance of the general population for the intra-Serb rivalry, the inter-ethnic interplay also increased in importance. It was, however, still limited by the pronounced weakness of the Serbs in Croatia, which reduced their ability to reciprocate radicalisation of the other side. The moderation of the Croatian position, following international pressure, helped the moderates come out victorious in Eastern Slavonia, without it being the decisive influence. The role of the kin-state was reduced significantly in this phase and the Serbs in Croatia were all but ignored by Belgrade. The importance of political resources located *within* Croatia increased and kin-state influence was reduced accordingly.

7.2 Bosnia: Hardliner moderates and the SDS splits

In Bosnia the situation for the Serbs was markedly different and the end of the war did not initially bring about any changes in the RS leadership, although the indictment for war crimes eventually forced Karadžić to exert his power from behind the scenes. However, the end of the war and the holding of elections lent greater strength to the divisions that had emerged during the war. Ethnification was still dominant: political competition was confined to *intra*-ethnic competition and even

within this separate party system socio-economic cleavages were insignificant.[36] But this did not prevent the intra-Serb competition from becoming even more fragmented and the dynamics of competition were now very significantly influenced by the international presence.

SDS factions leave the party

The SDS, and especially Karadžić, had been significantly weakened by the signing of the Dayton Agreement, which constituted a humiliating defeat for the war-bent leaders who were left completely without influence during the negotiations. Karadžić, at first rejected the settlement but, following this automatic demonstration of continued radicalism, he quickly backed down and for the next couple of months kept a low profile.

Due to this weakening of the party, factions in the SDS saw both the need and the opportunity for changing the party from within. These forces were gathered around the RS vice-President, Nikola Koljević; the Mayor of Banja Luka, Predrag Radić, who was one of the most outspoken leaders of the Krajina faction; the RS Prime Minister Rajko Kasagić; and military authorities such as the commander of the 'Panthers', Ljubisa Savić 'Mauzer'. These were powerful individuals who now saw their chance to transform the party, repair its tarnished reputation and win the elections.[37] However, when Karadžić re-emerged on the political scene, his position was a policy of strict non-co-operation and, in the spring of 1996, he stated: *"the international community is wasting its time looking for Serbs with moderate stands"*.[38] Within the SDS, Karadžić made sure that this statement would hold true and he ousted the RS Prime Minister, Kasagić, for being too moderate, for being too willing to co-operate with the international authorities.[39] Kasagić had managed to become very unpopular with the RS President for a number of reasons: he announced his intention to replace part of the hardline RS leadership; he reported to the RS Assembly that Karadžić had stolen money from the RS central bank; and he, finally,

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[36] Bose, 2002: 210.
[37] Todorović, Dragan, 1996. "Radic in Center". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 246, 25 June.
[38] Švarm, Filip, 1996. "Kasagic fired". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 234, 2 April.
[39] "Cooperation – My Deadly Sin!". *Evropski Novosti,* Belgrade 18 May 1996. >http://www.ex-yupress.com/evnovosti/evnovosti5.html <

wanted to move the RS capital to Banja Luka.[40] Karadžić, therefore, called a parliamentary session without Kasagić's presence[41] and he managed to rid himself of his Prime Minister with the help of deputies from Krajina, who were allegedly promised that Banja Luka would become the capital of RS if they helped topple Kasagić.[42] At the time, Kasagić acknowledged the legality of the decision[43] but he now argues that Karadžić actually lacked the needed support in the Assembly and that only two out of the 20 required deputies supported his dismissal.[44] Karadžić also tried to oust Radić but the popular Banja Luka Mayor dodged this first attempt to remove him from his post. Competition in the RS, thus, continued to be based on the issue of inter-ethnic relations, on valence issues such as corruption and war profiteering, and on regional and ideological cleavages.

Since they had failed to transform the party from within, the holding of elections in September 1996 gave a stimulus for SDS factions to establish themselves as parties and try to wrest power from the SDS. This resulted in the creation of a number of smaller parties that joined forces under Radić's leadership in the Democratic Patriotic Bloc (Demokratski patriotski blok, DPB). The DPB included both SDS and SRS splinter parties: the Democratic Party, the Party of the Democratic Centre, the People's Radical Party and others. Radić's creation of an opposition bloc finally proved too much for the SDS in Banja Luka and the local party committee expelled him. It attests to the weakness, or insignificance, of party structures that Radić formed an oppositional party without immediately losing his SDS membership. While the parties in the DPB were against the SDS, they did not necessarily take a more moderate position. They criticised individuals in the party and the concentration of power in Pale but they did not argue for greater moderation on the issue of inter-ethnic relations. Radić argued that the main difference between the SDS and the DPB were the people in the coalition rather than its programme: *"our common goal is to preserve what was won and defended with blood"*.[45]

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[40] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] "Cooperation – My Deadly Sin!". *Evropski Novosti*, Belgrade, 18 May 1996.
>http://www.cdsp.neu.edu/info/students/marko/evnovosti/evnovosti5.html<
[43] Vučinić, Perica; Švarm, Filip, 1996. "Dama iz starog špila". *Vreme*, 25 May p. 12-16.
[44] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.
[45] Todorović, Dragan, 1996. "I won't keep quiet". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 246, 29 June.

The elections, however, also gave the wartime opposition parties a chance to test their strength against the SDS. The left-opposition was united in the People's Union for Peace – Union for Peace and Progress (Narodni savez za slobodan mir – Savez za mir i progres). This coalition was made up of the Socialist Party, the Liberal Party, the Yugoslav United Left (JUL) and the newly formed Serb Independent Social Democrats (Srpski nezavisni socijaldemokrati, SNSD), which was created on the basis of Dodik's Club of Independent Deputies. Karadžić feared this coalition and already in February 1996 he had stated: *"The new enemies are people with left-wing ideas that are alien to the Serbian people"*.[46] The two opposition coalitions had tried to unite to present a stronger front against the SDS but they failed due to political and personal differences.[47] In addition to these two coalitions, a number of smaller parties formed by individuals formerly associated with the SDS or the SRS also contested the elections. Finally, the SDS was faced with the Serb Radicals who ran with a programme almost indistinguishable from the SDS's.[48] Thus, the SDS was met with opposition from both sides, although the moderation of the more moderate forces should not be exaggerated: apart from the only 'civic' party, the Liberal Party, most parties maintained that unification with Serbia was a priority, although the imagined time frame for this unification differed significantly between the parties.[49] The most well-organised of the opposition parties were the Radicals and the Socialists, which were the only parties apart from the SDS that had organised municipal committees in all RS municipalities.[50] The remaining parties mainly had to rely on their coalition partners or on well-known individuals for their electoral success.

The SDS could, on the other hand, make full use of the resources it controlled as the incumbent party and it, for example, made sure that the opposition would lack media access.[51] In addition to this control of important resources, the SDS was also inadvertently aided by the international community: the removal of Karadžić and the arrest of a Serb general and a colonel strengthened Karadžić and the SDS and helped

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[46] Pomfret, John, 1996. "Bosnia's Serb's Leader Stages Show of Defiance". *Washington Post*, 10 February, p. 1.
[47] Interview Igor Radojičić, Banja Luka, 1 December 2003.
[48] Vučinić, Perica, 1996. "Conflicting forces". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 254, 17 August.
[49] Stavljanin, Dragan, 1996. "Belgrade or Pale". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 227, 12 February.
[50] Stefanović, Nemanja, 1996. "What do Serb parties have to offer?". *AIM Press*, 6 July.
[51] Vučinić, Perica, 1996. "Conflicting forces". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 254, 17 August.

make the national issue the dominant electoral issue.[52] While the opposition made significant inroads into the SDS's support, they therefore failed to wrest power from the party that had dominated Republika Srpska since its creation: with 52 per cent of the votes, the SDS secured 45 seats and an absolute majority in the RS Assembly, the Union for Peace and Progress got 10 seats, the SRS got six seats, the Democratic Patriotic Bloc got two seats, while other Serb parties got two seats in total. In addition, however, non-Serb parties got 18 seats and the Bosniak SDA became the second-largest party with 14 seats.[53] The uneven distribution of resources between the competing parties played an important role in the SDS's continued hold on power and the party did not change its position when faced with competition from other parties. One of the reasons why the SDS could avoid this was that it had already established its nationalist credentials in the eyes of the public. When the challenges came from within the party, as was the case immediately after the end of the war, radicalisation was, however, pursued and party structures were (mis)used to cut deals and expel dissenters. Thus, despite this significant strengthening of the opposition, the result meant that it would take a split in the SDS or new elections for the opposition to gain power. Within little over a year, both were to occur.

Emergence of new dynamics

Immediately after the elections, the SDS leadership appeared to be united with Karadžić ruling from behind the scenes. Karadžić had chosen Biljana Plavšić as his replacement and with this choice of a hardline loyalist his continued control seemed ensured.[54] This was, however, only until Plavšić started asserting herself and from being a Karadžić loyalist became an increasing liability for the SDS leadership. Strongly pressured by international authorities, Plavšić came to the conclusion that greater pragmatism was the best way to preserve the RS but this view was not shared by Karadžić and co. and the conflict rapidly intensified. In order to strengthen her position, Plavšić went public with documentation of corruption and other crimes committed by the authorities. The existence of such activities was surely not news to Plavšić, who had been highly placed from the beginning, but it proved useful in discrediting Pale and competition thereby moved away from the national or ethnic

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[52] Bildt, 1998: 189, 229.

[53] Tomić, Zoran; Herceg, Nevenko, 1998. *Izbori u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sveučilište u Mostaru, Centar za studije novinarstva.

[54] Vučinić, Perica, 1996. "The man in the high castle". *Vreme News Digest*, no. 242, 28 May.

issue. Increasingly pressured by the Pale-dominated Government, Plavšić tried to turn the anti-terrorist battalion of the Banja Luka police into her loyal intelligence and security service[55] but this move pushed the conflict over the top and SFOR-forces had to protect the RS President. The SDS leadership accused Plavšić of being influenced by sedatives and 'foreign forces' and she was derided as a traitor.[56] However, as a legacy from the wartime system, Plavšić was anything but powerless and she used her constitutional powers to dissolve the Assembly and call new elections. This decision was, unsurprisingly, not accepted by Pale and the conflict left the RS sharply divided: each side had part of the media, police and even army loyal to them.[57]

The competing centres of power became formalised when Plavšić was expelled from the SDS and subsequently formed the Serb National Alliance (Srpski narodni savez, SNS). As with the other SDS splinter-parties, the differences between the SDS and the SNS were limited: their political programmes were very similar and the vice-president of the SNS, Ostoja Knežević, stated that they had left the SDS "*because the program of the SDS was not implemented in practice although it is good*".[58] The ability of Plavšić to retain her post as President despite having fallen out with the SDS leadership depended crucially on the presence of international forces: Pale's inability to solve the conflict, i.e. get rid of Plavšić, through coercive means owed more to the presence of SFOR than to the end of the war. The local military was now an ineffective source of power since it was faced with the much stronger SFOR. Moreover, Plavšić's institutional powers, inherited from Karadžić, also gave her access to significant resources. Finally, the opposition given its new parliamentary basis was able to exert significant influence on the competition within the SDS.

Initially, the opposition parties were, however, indecisive as to what role to play and in the summer of 1997, when the conflict between Plavšić and Pale was at its most intense, the RS opposition organised a big rally in support of Plavšić's ideas but *not* in support of her personally.[59] The parties had been created in opposition to the SDS

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[55] Vasić, Miloš; Švarm, Filip, 1997. "Tobacco Road". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 301, 12 July.

[56] Topić, Tanja, 1997. "Grim business". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 300, 5 July.

[57] Topić, Tanja, 1997. "Twilight Zone in Republika Srpska". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 307, 23 August.

[58] Novaković, Dejan, 1997. "Party against 'position' and 'opposition'. *AIM Press,* 30 October.

[59] Topić, Tanja, 1997. "The generals' flour". *Vreme News Digest,* no. 301, 12 July.

and Plavšić was still too closely associated with the party's history. But, except for the Serb Radicals and the Liberal Party, the opposition parties eventually chose to support Plavšić as RS President. When Plavšić formed her own party, the support of the opposition parties once again wavered since she was now a rival to them in the upcoming extraordinary elections; it was no longer merely about defeating the SDS.[60] In the campaign for the 1997 extraordinary elections to the RS Assembly, Plavšić received substantial support from the international authorities and the SDS, while still the largest party, came out significantly weakened with only 24 mandates and did not even have a majority with the Serb Radicals.

Table 7.1 Elections to the RS National Assembly, 1996 and 1997

1996 elections				
SDS	**SRS**	**DPB**	**Union for Peace and Progress**	**SDA**
52 pct (45)	7 pct (6)	3 pct (2)	12 pct (10)	16 pct (14)

1997 elections					
SDS	**SRS**	**SNS**	**SPRS**	**SNSD**	**KCD (SDA)[61]**
26 pct (24)	16 pct (15)	16 pct (15)	10 pct (9)	3 pct (2)	17 pct (16)

Vote percentage and number of mandates won. Data from Tomić; Herceg, 1998.

The SDS and the Radicals, therefore, tried to woo the Socialist Party and this almost led to a split in the party when the party's founder, Dragutin Ilić, and the party's leader, Živko Radićić, took opposite sides. One party official expressed what was to prove the dominant view in the party: "*.. if we go along with them, in the next election not even members of our families would vote for us*".[62] Plavšić's supporters, however, did not have a majority either and a new prime minister would have to rely on support from Bosniak and Croat deputies. This also proved difficult to swallow for the Socialists as well as for leaders from other parties.[63] Plavšić, therefore, faced a narrow choice of options and in the end pointed to Dodik, leader of the SNSD, who accepted the nomination. Dodik's Government was finally elected at a dramatic assembly session after SDS and SRS deputies had adjourned for the night.[64] The

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[60] Novaković, Dejan, 1997. "Party against 'position' and opposition". *AIM Press,* 30 October.
[61] The SDA contested this election in a coalition with the SBiH, the GDSBiH and the Liberals of BiH.
[62] Djordjević, Ivan, 1997. "The lact big job". *AIM Press*, 4 December.
[63] Interview Igor Radojićić, Banja Luka, 1 December 2003.
[64] Chandler, David, 2000. *Faking Democracy after Dayton*. London: Pluto. p. 127.

intra-ethnic competition, therefore, eventually resulted in a moderation of the dominant position. Given the pressure from the international authorities, moderation was one way of gaining an advantage in the competition: the international authorities had been very eager for a split in the SDS to emerge and were highly instrumental in the events.

The moderation entailed by the SDS losing power should not, however, be exaggerated. Plavšić's coalition also included parties that were anything but moderate, including the Serb Party of Krajina, which was banned in 1999 for violating the Dayton Agreement. Some opposition politicians, therefore, question the significance of the split and the changes in Plavšić's position. Živanović argues: "*It was a constructed conflict ... [the SNS] was a clone of the SDS*".[65] The SDS was, in any case, far from defeated and made a strong comeback in the 2000 elections but the growth of party pluralism had by then forced the party to moderate its position.[66]

Kin-state involvement: To support or not to support the SDS?

Despite the increasing conflict between Milošević and the local leaders, Belgrade's influence over Serb politics in Bosnia had still been significant during the war. But Belgrade's impact was markedly reduced in the post-war period, although not to the same extent as in Croatia.

Milošević would most likely have preferred to leave the RS to itself but international sanctions were in place until after the first Bosnian elections and Milošević was, therefore, still held responsible for developments. Furthermore, the political scene in Belgrade did not ignore Bosnia as it did Croatia. Even though relations between the RS and Belgrade gradually decreased in significance, it was, therefore, still a factor of some importance in the immediate post-war period.

In order to maintain influence over developments in the RS, Belgrade continued its strategy of attempting to affect dynamics in the SDS. However, it was not completely clear what Milošević's strategy was: he was pressured by the international authorities

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[65] Interview Miodrag Živanović, Banja Luka, 22 October 2003.
[66] Bose, 2002: 211.

to help oust Karadžić but seemed unable or unwilling to do so.[67] Also, when Karadžić decided to rid himself of the more moderate prime minister, Kasagić, there were speculations that Milošević had silently approved and Kasagić himself is convinced that this was the case.[68]

Belgrade and the opposition

Compared with Milošević's relationship with the SDS, his links with the opposition were much more public. Close links with the Socialist Party of the RS had already been established during the war and Milošević, after the war, made sure that they would continue. The SPRS was so closely linked with Milošević's SPS that any rupture between them or bad electoral results for the SPRS would be potentially damaging to the Serbian President. Milošević therefore made sure to exert his influence and according to the then leader of the SPRS, he pressured the party into joining the Union for Peace and Progress which included Mira Marković's party, the JUL. During the war, Milošević had also had close contacts with one of the other leaders in the coalition, Milorad Dodik, and the close contacts between Belgrade and the coalition earned it the nickname 'Union for Slobodan [Milošević] and Mira [Marković]' (Savez za Slobodna i Miru). Ilić argues that he had been against this coalition with the JUL, which he felt would damage both the SPS and the SPRS, and he was consequently punished at the SPRS's first congress where he tried to assert the party's independence. At the congress, Ilić advocated changing the party's symbol and changing its name to Democratic Socialist Party but instead of these changes a message from Milošević was adopted and Ilić was ousted as leader.[69]

Milošević, therefore, had considerable sway over the opposition, but while the 1996 elections were, by some commentators, seen as a choice between Belgrade and Pale, Milošević was still close to the SDS leadership, especially after the signing of the Agreement on Special Relations between Serbia and the RS.

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[67] Smajlović, Ljiljana, 1996. "Svi Miloševićevi ljudi". *Vreme*, 25 May, p. 14-15.

[68] Interview Rajko Kasagić, Banja Luka, 11 November 2003.

[69] Interview Dragutin Ilić, Banja Luka, 23 October 2003.

Choosing between the SDS and the opposition

Biljana Plavšić had, contrary to the other SDS leaders, not supported the agreement which she denounced as unconstitutional.[70] This rejection only added to the long-felt mutual antipathy between Milošević and Plavšić and the Serbian President was more than hesitant to take Plavšić's side in her conflict with the rest of the SDS. Instead of openly supporting the SDS, Milošević used Šešelj to launch a series of attacks on the RS President and when Plavšić arrived in Belgrade airport at the height of the conflict, she was detained by the Serbian police. This was seen as a clear attempt at intimidation, and illustrated that, covertly, Milošević was supporting and directing efforts to overthrow Plavšić.[71] The Belgrade Government was, nevertheless, wavering in its support since Plavšić was increasing her strength with the help of the opposition in both the RS and Serbia.[72] Consequently, Milošević chose to sit on the fence and publicly maintained that the power struggle was an internal matter for the RS.[73] Belgrade's wavering was also reflected in the SPRS's position and its rejection of the offered premiership following the extraordinary elections in 1997.[74] Only when it became clear that Plavšić would be victorious did Milošević come out in her favour. Belgrade was no longer a crucial audience and the reduced importance of Milošević's support is well illustrated by the SPRS's poor performance in the 1997 elections when it had received significant rhetorical and financial support from the Serbian regime. Belgrade's position had become reactive, other resources were available and it no longer had a significant impact on the internal competition in the RS.

General population: Hopes of moderate groundswell disappointed

Popular attitudes finally had a chance to become known after the end of the war, and the competing elites were forced to take these attitudes seriously. This was especially so since other resources that had previously been crucial in the elite competition were of less value or had been rendered more difficult to use. But popular attitudes were, nevertheless, not decisive for the changing dynamics of competition.

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[70] Thomas, 1999: 331.
[71] *Ibid.* 332-3, 363.
[72] *Ibid.* 332, 335.
[73] *Ibid.* 363.
[74] Interview Igor Radojičić, Banja Luka, 1 December 2003.

1996 elections

The distribution of resources was, in the 1996 elections, greatly skewed in the SDS's favour and the party benefited in particular from its control of the media.[75] Opposition politicians had long suffered from lack of media access and consequently lacked a public profile. This was, however, not so much the case in Banja Luka: some of the opposition parties had been represented in the Banja Luka municipal council and a number of the new parties were, furthermore, formed by former SDS officials who had been prominent members of the Krajina faction. Unsurprisingly, the opposition did significantly better in the Banja Luka region than in the eastern part of the RS. This was likely caused by a regional division in attitudes combined with the better level of organisation that the opposition had established in the western RS.

Overall, the election results showed a considerable decrease in the support for the SDS compared with the 1990 elections; although the loss of support was clearly not as substantial as the international authorities had hoped. With 52 per cent of the votes, the SDS, while weakened compared with its wartime position, still had an absolute majority in the RS Assembly. Karadžić had, before the elections, gradually been losing support, even though 31 per cent of the RS respondents in an opinion poll in the spring of 1996 still had a very favourable view of him.[76] The SDS leaders were tainted by wartime scandals and by having had to backtrack on their intransigent position. But following some run-ins with the international authorities and the forcing of Karadžić from the political scene, the SDS regained much of its strength.[77] Even if earlier elections would have meant a weaker SDS, it would, however, also have given the opposition less time to organise itself and the result would most likely not have been markedly different.

What does the election result tell us about popular opinion? The voters did face an actual choice with a range of different parties to choose between. However, none of the parties were linked to any specific societal stratum; socio-economic issues were

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[75] OSCE, 1996. "The elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Preliminary statement of the co-ordinator for international monitoring". Vidović, Milan, 1996. "Controlled by Pale and Belgrade". *AIM Press*, 5 August.
[76] Smajlović, Ljiljana, 1996. "Svi Miloševićevi ljudi". *Vreme*, 25 May, p. 14-15.
[77] Bildt, 1998: 189, 229.

not emphasised and the political competition really boiled down to pro- v. contra-SDS. Although the SDS had many advantages as the incumbent party and there were many reports of irregularities,[78] there is nothing that indicates a landslide of moderate opinion. In a poll from 1997, 91 per cent of the Serb respondents were opposed to a unified Bosnian state[79] and the attitudes of the population and their elected leaders do not, therefore, seem far removed. Moreover, an analysis of the local elections in 1997 shows that the SDS and the SRS especially enjoyed significant support in areas with a more ethnically mixed voter composition. Ethnification was still characterising political competition and in more heterogeneous areas, the 'threat' of non-Serb parties seems to have encouraged support for the most extreme forces: the Serb voters closed ranks behind the dominant party or its ally.[80] Despite virtually identical post-war problems facing all of Bosnia's citizens, politically salient cross-ethnic cleavages did not emerge.[81] The only significant non-ethnic party in the competition, the Liberal Party, chose to run in a coalition for the 1996 elections and popular support for its moderate, non-nationalist position is, therefore, somewhat difficult to assess. However, judging from the party's poor performance in later elections, it would not have done well on its own. Popular attitudes, therefore, failed to significantly change the dynamics of elite competition but this does not mean that they had no impact. The holding of elections, moreover, gave the opposition a parliamentary foothold that was to prove decisive in the 1997 SDS split.

1997 local elections and extraordinary elections

The first elections held after the conflict between Plavšić and the Pale leadership boiled over were the September 1997 local elections. As expected, the SDS was further weakened but, contrary to expectations, the result was a great triumph for the Serb Radicals that won over 20 per cent of the votes with almost no election campaigning. Most commentators had expected the Socialist Party to strengthen its position significantly: the party had a well-developed party organisation, experienced leaders, financial support from Belgrade and a well organised election campaign. But

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[78] The International Crisis Group argued that the voter participation amounted to a 103 pct. turnout! Shoup, Paul, 1997. "The Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The end of an illusion". *Problems of Post-Communism* 44(1): 3-15. p. 10.

[79] Bose, 2002: 2.

[80] Caspersen, Nina, 2004. "Good fences make good neighbours? A comparison of conflict regulation strategies in post-war Bosnia". *Journal of Peace Research* 2004, 41(5): 569-588. p. 577-8.

[81] Bose, 2002: 212.

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despite these factors of strength, the voters still chose the ultra-nationalist option. Although the disinclination to support the more moderate option was partly caused by conflicting signals from the Socialists in Banja Luka and in Belgrade, the results still made clear that a new era of moderation was not sweeping over the RS.[82]

The results of the extraordinary elections for the RS Assembly further eroded the SDS's support but, again, it did not give a landslide victory to the more moderate parties: the SDS's support fell to 26 per cent of the votes but a considerable part of the loss was picked up by the Radicals with 16 per cent of the votes. The rest of the SDS's former votes went to Plavšić's SNS, also 16 per cent, while the remaining opposition did not make any inroads. In this election, the SDS could not to the same extent as previously make use of state resources to strengthen its position and the media was now actually biased in Plavšić's favour, following the SFOR's seizure of the Pale TV transmitters.[83] There is, therefore, no basis for arguing that the results significantly overestimated the support enjoyed by the nationalist parties. In terms of electoral competition, the opposition parties may have had good reason to be cautious of appearing 'too moderate' and were, therefore, for example, reluctant to accept the premiership which depended on support from Bosniak and Croat deputies. Consequently, it is difficult to argue that the 1997 split in the SDS and the subsequent change in dynamics of competition were voter driven. But popular attitudes were not without importance for post-war intra-Serb competition and their increased importance also increased the significance of the position of the 'other side'.

Inter-ethnic interplay: Re-enforcing radicalism

Although a settlement was reached in Dayton, this did not translate into consensus on Bosnia's future, and the leaders of the SDS, the HDZ and the SDA had radically different interpretations of the agreement. However, their interests converged on one point: radicalism on one side would justify radicalism on the other side and aid their continued hold on power. As the RS Prime Minister Dodik said in 1998: *"The ruling structures on all sides support and maintain each other. And until the first of them*

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[82] Perić, Branko, 1997. "Rise of the Radicals, decline of the Socialists". *AIM Press*, 16 September.
[83] OSCE/ODIHR, 1997b. "Republika Srpska National Assembly Elections, 22-23 November 1997".

falls, it is impossible to expect that a more lasting solution will be found.[84] Bildt argues that the immediate post-war climate was marked by increased radicalisation of both the SDA and the HDZ[85] and this radicalisation arguably helped the SDS regain some of its lost ground: it could argue that despite problems of corruption and war profiteering and the set-back in Dayton, there was still a need for the SDS's policies and its established nationalist credentials. Further ammunition for the SDS's position was provided by the exodus of Serbs from Sarajevo, which strengthened the argument for ethnic separation.[86] Just as in the pre-war period, the inter-ethnic interplay therefore ensured the dominance of the ethnic cleavage, while other issues were kept in the background.

Judging from the SDS's recovery in the polls, it therefore seems that the interplay proved important for its ability to stay in power. Popular support had become much more significant in the intra-ethnic elite competition and the general population seemed susceptible to arguments of continued threat and need for protection. Propaganda based on the alleged radicalism of the 'other side' is significantly more important when attitudes in the general population are important. The interplay thereby helped the SDS stay in power; it affected the outcome of the RS competition but it did not alter the SDS's position which remained largely unchanged. The positions of Bosniak and Croat leaders did, however, also in one instance have a more direct impact on RS competition: when Bosniak and Croat deputies, following pressure from the international authorities, agreed to support a non-SDS government in the RS. Compared with the case of Croatia, an important difference is the relative strength of the Serbs vis-à-vis the other group(s). The Serbs in Bosnia were in a much stronger position and could therefore afford to reciprocate radicalism, or even be more radical than the other side, whereas in Croatia such a strategy would likely have left the Serbs in an even weaker position. The effect of the position of the 'other side' on Serb positioning was thereby greater in Bosnia than in Croatia, although this was itself a product of the conflict situation and hence of inter-ethnic relations.

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[84] Peranić, Dražena, 1998. "Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of RS, or the shadow cabinet coming out of the shadow". *AIM Press*, 19 January.
[85] Bildt, 1998: 189.
[86] *Ibid.* 198.

Post-war intra-ethnic competition in Bosnia

Unlike the Serb leaders in Croatia, the RS leaders were not forced to admit defeat: despite the humiliation in Dayton they could claim to have successfully defended their statelet. The main part of the leadership was still in place, ethnification was still characteristic of politics and continuation of wartime dynamics of divisions and competition was the dominant trend. However, not everything was continuous and the analysis demonstrated the importance of a new audience in the intra-ethnic elite competition: the international authorities which now played a decisive role in the intra-Serb competition. Previously, more moderate challengers emerging from within the SDS would have been defeated but now moderating dynamics prevailed – at least for a while. The possibility for alliances was decisive in producing these dynamics: the break in the dominant party was necessary for the opposition to gain power and the break in the SDS would not have been of the same significance if the opposition had not been willing to act as alliance partners. But without the reduced availability and effectiveness of coercive resources, the SDS's challengers would probably still have faced defeat. The absence of violence, the international presence and the renewed process of transition all influenced this change in the resources of importance in the competition.

Even though the emerging more centripetal dynamics do not appear to have been voter led, the holding of elections meant that the RS population could no longer be ignored and the foothold gained by the opposition as a consequence was of great importance for the changing dynamics of competition. Popular support mattered, even though the emergence of centripetal dynamics did not reflect a change in popular attitudes. As a consequence, the positions of the other ethnic leaders mattered more and radical posturing prevented other issues from becoming salient and helped the SDS retain its dominance in the first election.

Belgrade's influence, however, waned considerably, even though Milošević could not afford to ignore the Serbs in Bosnia to the same extent as the Serbs in Croatia. The issue of Serbs in the neighbouring republics was no longer highly salient in Serbia, which reduced the involvement of the opposition as well the political capital Milošević could gain from supporting the local leaders. Furthermore, other resources,

especially international support and democratic resources, were now of importance for the political competition in the RS: the competition, therefore, was more difficult to influence through the supply of coercive and economic resources

7.3 Conclusion:
Intra-ethnic competition in three conflict phases

Notwithstanding the imperative of unity in the face of severe conflict, as famously called for in 'only unity saves the Serbs', disunity prevailed in all three phases. Rivalry was unrelenting and even the 'President of all Serbs', Slobodan Milošević, was unable to always dictate developments in Serb politics in Croatia and Bosnia. The need for guarding the position of the nation was evidently not enough to prevent divisions. Horowitz's thesis that intra-ethnic competition will be limited by a concern for weakening the position of the group was not, therefore, supported by the two cases. On the contrary, when military fortunes were reversing, disunity became even more pronounced. There are, however, some factors that seemed to cause greater unity and, therefore, serve as exceptions to the overall tendency of increased disunity in times of crisis. Firstly, when ethnification was still part of the political struggle and non-ethnic rivals were yet to be marginalised, the intra-ethnic competition was limited to fairly low-intensity competition within ethnic parties. Secondly, the risk of being outvoted and, more importantly, the outbreak of war caused a temporary homogenisation of the Serb community. It is, however, important to realise that this unity was in large parts enforced. Finally, the weakness of the Serbs in post-war Croatia was so pronounced that it actually fostered greater unity. But the overall picture was one of disunity and the deliberate creation of more extreme rivals even seems to have been a strategy utilised in the pre-war phase to improve bargaining positions and contribute to growing nationalist tensions while still retaining a broad appeal.

A number of interesting findings have emerged from the previous chapters; findings that contradict or add to existing theorising. Radicalisation was, contrary to what is argued in most theoretical literature, *not* the only possible outcome of intra-ethnic competition, and when radicalisation did result, this was most often not based on appeals to popular attitudes. Other resources were more available and effective in the

competition, which was consequently not driven by popular demand. The lack of success in playing the ethnic card also meant that the ethnification of politics was part of the political struggle; it was not an automatic process based on the overwhelming power of ethnicity. In terms of the interplay with 'opposing' ethnic leaders this was found to be of great importance for the ethnification of politics, but radicalisation or moderation was not necessarily reciprocated; other factors were often more significant for the direction of competition. Finally, kin-state involvement took two forms: symbolic influence largely based on shared ethnicity and more tangible influence based on supply of resources. The control that the kin-state leader was able to exercise over local leaders varied considerably in the different conflict phases and the form and degree of kin-state influence was found to be strongly influenced by the phase of the conflict, the degree of local divisions and access to alternative resources. In general, the relative importance of audiences was found to be highly variable and influenced in particular by the phase of the conflict and by the institutional framework.

Dynamics of competition

One of the most important findings was that intra-ethnic competition did not necessarily result in radicalisation, *even* in a situation of war and polarisation. Intra-ethnic challengers were often suppressed by the incumbent leaders and no change in position therefore resulted; this was most notably the case for most of the wartime period in both the RSK and the RS, when the leadership met challenges from other parties with repression rather than political manoeuvring. But the analysis also found instances of intra-ethnic competition leading to relative moderation. Examples of this include the competition over the Vance Plan in the RSK, when support for the plan provided a quick route to power. Also during the war, Hadžić began to negotiate despite being fiercely attacked by hardliners and these same hardliners continued on this course when they won power, despite also being attacked from the flanks. But the most durable example during the war was the change in dynamics in the RS towards the end of the war, when opposition parties, the army and SDS factions coalesced. Centripetal dynamics were, finally, dominant in the post-war period in both cases, despite the persistence of intense intra-ethnic competition.

An important difference was found between challenges from within the party or movement and challenges from other parties, with the former most often causing radicalisation and the latter resulting in either no change in position or even a relative moderation of the dominant position. Especially during the war, positions of power relied on resources emanating from within the party and the movement at large; paramilitary support in particular. This made it more difficult to merely suppress challengers. Furthermore, these internal divisions were mostly over the issue of the war and, by radicalising, the leader could ensure continued control of the necessary resources. In case of competition from other parties, the leader could often choose to suppress the opposition rather than change position; as long as the challenge was not accompanied by intra-party strife. Moreover, the opposition parties would frequently also challenge the incumbent leader on other issues than the war issue, and radicalisation on this issue, therefore, would not pre-empt them. Hence when Hadžić was not only facing outbidding on the issue of negotiations but was also being accused of war profiteering and incompetence, he did not have many options since he did not have the necessary resources to suppress his rivals. Instead he sought a more drastic change by initiating negotiations with the Croatian Government. Finally, more moderate opposition forces were in some instances able to force a change in the dominant position but alliances were needed in order for this to succeed. This was what happened when more moderate factions of the SDS had the opportunity to coalesce with opposition parties, with the army, with Belgrade and/or with international authorities. The incumbent leaders could then choose between changing their position or face defeat.

The issues underlying the intra-ethic elite divisions, therefore, appear to be important for the effect of competition, but the question is to what extent other issues can become salient in a situation of violence. Gagnon argues that violence has the effect of rendering all other issues politically insignificant.[87] But if all significant actors take the same position on the national issue, then political competition will likely be focused on other issues, including 'valence issues' such as war profiteering and corruption. In both cases, such issues were salient despite the situation of war and polarisation. In addition, ideological and regional cleavages mattered for the

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[87] Gagnon, 1995: 89.

dynamics of competition and the forging of alliances. If the incumbent leaders take very extreme positions on the issue of the conflict, the opposition is actually given strong incentives to take a more moderate position and/or focus on other issues. An exception to this seems to be a situation of very fragmented competition, in which alliances are constantly changing and parties are breaking apart, as was the case in wartime RSK. In such a situation, the most promising political strategy is very hard to gauge and attempting moderation would be highly risky. Disinclination to moderate is, of course, augmented by fears relating to personal safety in case a more moderate position is adopted. Both the issues salient in the competition, as well as the configuration of competition, should, therefore, be included in an analysis of intra-ethnic competition.

Regional divisions were of great significance in the intra-Serb competition in both cases. This rivalry was based on regional cleavages but fuelled by different views of the inter-ethnic conflict, ideological cleavages, valence issues and personal ambitions. Regional divisions are important because they are likely to be linked to a regional distribution of resources that are of significance in the competition, e.g. due to local paramilitary constellations, patron-client relations and the possibility of monopolising local resources, the regional leaders are often far from powerless. Regional divisions were of great importance in both cases and led to radicalisation but they were only able to significantly alter the course of the party if they penetrated the leadership or coalesced with military forces. Again, the distribution of resources and the resources effective in the competition proved crucial.

The dynamics of competition were significantly affected by the transitional context in which the competition was played out. Even when transition had failed and war had broken out, the transitional experience still affected the legitimising principles of the statelets: no matter how repressed the opposition was, the leadership would still insist that it was a democratic, multi-party system. The transitional context had an important impact on the parties involved in the competition: they were, in general, leader dominated, their organisation was weak and they resembled political movements rather than structured political parties. As a consequence, cohesion was often limited, central party structures were of negligible importance and other resources became important in intra-party struggles. This resulted in more intense

intra-party competition and greater risk of radicalisation. In the competition between parties, there was a great degree of fluctuation in political positions, parties were not organised around a consolidated programme and today's moderate could be tomorrow's hardliner. The effect of transition on party structures is, however, not uniform, as illustrated by the more structured SDS in pre-war Bosnia. In the post-war period, i.e. in the second round of transition, the dynamics of competition gradually changed: party structures and other democratic institutions became of greater importance, both for intra-party rivalry and in competition with other parties.

The transitional situation served to reduce the impact of popular attitudes on the intra-ethnic competition. This tendency of elite dominance was augmented by the communist legacy: the population was used to one-man, one-party rule and unfamiliar with democratic competition. Finally, the outbreak of war greatly strengthened this already-existing elite predominance and popular attitudes became of limited importance.

Elite competition and popular attitudes

In the theoretical literature on intra-ethnic elite competition, outbidding is held to be about mass responsiveness to playing the ethnic card, the idea being that elites will refrain from moderating since they fear that more extreme rivals can successfully outflank them by appealing to mass sentiments. But the two cases showed that popular support can, in some circumstances, be of far less importance than other resources used in the intra-ethnic elite competition: radicalisation was not driven by popular demand; it was not about elites successfully playing the ethnic card. This does not mean that popular attitudes had no importance at all. They mattered for the ethnification of politics in the pre-war period and became of increasing importance in the post-war period when outbidding was at times even an effective strategy. However, the intra-Serb competition was not *driven* by popular attitudes; the general population lacked alternatives and could be taken along, but popular attitudes were not the driving force behind radicalisation; or moderation for that matter. Other resources were more important, especially during the war when coercive resources were crucial for the direction and outcome of the intra-Serb rivalry.

Political and non-political resources can be used to manipulate the expression of popular opinion or make sure that it does not fundamentally alter the balance of power. In that way, popular support can be an important resource in elite competition without this meaning that popular attitudes are driving elite competition. Finally, various factors can distort the link between the general population and the elites, even if institutions are in place to allow for the expression of popular support. In the analysis, some of these problems, such as weak party organisations, great degree of fractionalisation and minor political differences between parties, are associated with a situation of transition. This transitional situation also influenced the limited importance of socio-economic cleavages and the dominance of the ethnic cleavage. Other problems, especially lack of alternative information, were linked with the prevailing situation of war or with remaining authoritarian tendencies. The ability for popular attitudes to significantly affect elite positions is arguably greater in later phases of transition and especially in a peaceful environment where other resources are less accessible or rendered more difficult to use.

One could argue that the limited impact of popular attitudes in a situation of post-communist transition and increasingly tense conflict is hardly a surprising conclusion. However, it does depart from existing theorising on intra-ethnic elite competition. Moreover, the holding of elections and referenda as well as elites claiming to represent the 'will of the people' would lead one to expect greater popular influence on the position of the leaders. Even in non-violent phases of the conflict, the impact of popular attitudes was often limited and violence, therefore, is not the only variable of importance. Likewise, ethnification of popular attitudes occurred before the war and cannot be explained simply by the outbreak of violence.

Ethnification of politics

In order for the SDS to become dominant in the Serb community in Croatia and Bosnia, the ethnification of politics and the subsequent marginalisation of non-ethnic rivals was necessary. But ethnification was part of the political struggle and should be analysed in terms of political competition: while being aided by outside events, the ability to make an ethnic cleavage dominant also depends on the distribution of resources between the ethnic and non-ethnic parities. Rhetorically, the ethnic parties

sought to impose the ethnic cleavage by accusing the non-ethnic parties of either being ethnic parties in disguise, of representing the other side, or of being poor representatives of their own community.

In Bosnia, the SDS benefited from the weak leadership of the SK-SDP, the problems the Reformists had organising themselves, the internal competition between the non-ethnic parties and the stronger organisation that the party had established compared with its counterpart in Croatia. The Serb voters consequently closed ranks behind the party. The SDS in Croatia also achieved dominance despite its poor showing in the elections. This process of ethnification was strengthened by the Croatian Government recognising the party as the legitimate Serb representative, increasing divisions within the SKH-SDP, improved organisation of the party and the use of non-democratic methods to force out non-SDS officials. The speed of ethnification was influenced by the distribution of resources and the dynamics of competition; an ethnic party system did not automatically emerge due to some overwhelming power of ethnicity.

In a context of gradual ethnification, with the continued existence of non-ethnic rivals, adopting a vague position was instrumental for the Serb parties: the competition was not only about mobilising the faithful since the faithful might be the minority and potential supporters could be discouraged by extreme rhetoric. It was, thus, a symptom of the lack of success in playing the ethnic card: the power of ethnicity was not enough in itself to ensure the ethnic parties' dominance. They had to make the ethnic cleavage the dominant cleavage and acquire resources in addition to popular support. From a vague position the Serb parties could, moreover, engage in negotiations or even co-operation with Croat and Bosniak parties, which served to strengthen the ethnification of politics. This vague position, however, had, as one of its consequences, that the leadership became vulnerable to outbidding. While ethnification, when complete, will generally lead to radicalisation, since incentives for vagueness disappears, a more gradual process of ethnification can, therefore, paradoxically also foster radicalisation.

One of the important factors in the process of ethnification was the interplay with the leaders of the other ethnic groups. However, the impact of the inter-ethnic interplay

varied considerably and it did not always have a significant influence on the direction and outcome of the intra-Serb competition.

Effect of inter-ethnic interplay

As a corrective to the idea that radical nationalism feeds on other radical nationalism, the analysis found that radicalism was not necessarily reciprocated and that the process of radicalisation, although aided by Croat or Bosniak radicalisation, was frequently more the result of other factors; especially intra-party competition and kin-state involvement. Changes in intra-ethnic elite competition, radicalisation or moderation, need not be a response to changed rhetoric or actions of the 'other side'. Consequently, one can question the benefit of analysing conflicts predominantly in terms of reactive frameworks.

This clearly does not mean that the interplay was not at times of great significance for the intra-Serb elite competition: in Croatia, in the pre-war period, it delivered ammunition to the extremists; during the war the cancellation of the UN mandate heightened mistrust and strengthened the hardliners; while in the post-war period, the altered position of the Croatian authorities on Eastern Slavonia helped finally marginalise the remaining hardliners. In Bosnia, in the pre-war period, the possibility for shifting alliances put a dampener on radicalisation and the change in alliance patterns significantly affected Serb positioning; during the war the mutually hurting stalemate emerging in 1995 combined with internal Serb dynamics to finally cause willingness to compromise; and in the post-war period, the radicalism of the HDZ and the SDA helped the SDS reclaim some of its lost ground. One important dynamic pointed to in the analysis was the effect of fractionalisation of the 'other side'; this provided hardliners with ammunition and it is, therefore, another way in which lack of cohesion makes radicalisation more likely. However, in neither of the above instances did the inter-ethnic interplay alone account for the dynamics of intra-Serb competition.

A structural aspect of the interplay was found to influence the significance of the position of the 'other side': the number of groups involved and their relative demographic strength. In addition, the audiences that mattered in the competition influenced the significance of the position of other ethnic leaders: the more the

general population was decisive for the elite competition, the greater the impact of the position of the 'other side'. Intra-party forces and kin-state leaders were frequently appealed to using different techniques and the leaders were less dependent on having to justify their position by pointing to the radical stance of the other side. Finally, the position adopted by the Serb leaders mattered for the effect of the inter-ethnic interplay: when co-existence was rejected outright, the negotiating position of the other side had only limited impact.

The interplay impacted to a different extent in the three phases and the effect was greatest when ethnification was still an issue, when the other ethnic leaders could help impose the ethnic cleavage as the dominant cleavage and hence help marginalise non-ethnic rivals. In this phase, the same paradox was found in both cases: the initially relative moderate position of the ethnic parties and the resulting willingness to have contacts actually helped reinforce ethnification. During the war, the intransigence related to the choice of the war-option greatly reduced the impact of actions and rhetoric of the other ethnic leaders; what mattered was the relative military strength. Finally, in the post-war phase, the general population became of greater importance, as did the inter-ethnic interplay. It was, however, still limited by continued intransigence of the Serbs in Bosnia and the pronounced weakness of the Serbs in Croatia.

What results from this is a complex picture of related fields of intra-ethnic elite competition which, while affecting each other, may also function largely independently. The resulting imperfect simultaneity in both radicalisation and moderation causes problems for reaching settlements. Both the intra-ethnic elite competition and the inter-ethnic interplay, including the military balance, have to be right and the question of timing is therefore crucial. A stalemate or a suitable configuration of intra-ethnic elite competition may persist for a long time without producing negotiation results.

Kin-state involvement in intra-ethnic elite competition

The potential influence of a kin-state on intra-ethnic elite competition can be derived from two sources. Firstly, from it being a *kin*-state that, due to the ethnification of politics, is given authority to become involved in the local political competition.

Secondly, the influence can be primarily due to it being a state, and the kin-state leader thereby has access to resources that the local leaders lack.

As Milošević fell out with the local leaders, the demarcation of intra-ethnic dynamics changed. To begin with, Milošević was part of the intra-ethnic dynamics, although not part of the intra-ethnic *competition,* but when Milošević's position became increasingly questioned, he sought to influence elite competition in the two statelets in order to retain control. Kin-state dynamics and 'local' intra-ethnic dynamics are not necessarily distinct: the definition of ethnic identity is flexible and the local elites can seek to exclude or include the kin-state, thereby rejecting or accepting the authority of the kin-state leader. Brubaker's 'relational fields' may therefore also overlap, which adds further fluidity to a theory that already insists on the instability of the triadic relationship. It is, moreover, useful to make a distinction between different forms of kin-state influence, since acceptance of the special role of the kin-state leader is likely to vary in different phases. In the two cases, it was greatest in the pre-war phase, when ethnification was yet incomplete and it was important to demonstrate the unity of all Serbs. In the wartime phase and in the post-war phase, ethnification was a reality and the authority of the kin-state leader was increasingly down-played: although political competition was ethnicised, the local leaders defined the space of legitimate leadership as being limited by the border, not by ethnicity.

The effect of kin-state involvement was initially to strengthen radicalisation through support for the most uncompromising factions. Later on, following intense international pressure and military failures in Croatia, Milošević attempted to engineer more moderate dynamics but this strategy was not always successful since the local leaders enjoyed support from the Serbian opposition and controlled their own paramilitary forces. After the war ended, Belgrade did not have significant influence on the gradual emergence of centripetal dynamics. Belgrade's success in engineering moderating dynamics during the war was limited due to the availability of alternative resources and because it had become a salient issue in the local competition: even though the elites did not change their position on the issue of the war, they could score political points by vowing to assert their independence and not take orders from Belgrade. The degree of internal competition, moreover, affected the extent to which the kin-state could exert its influence. If divisions already exist

then this facilitates kin-state control, while a very high degree of fractionalisation seems to impede such influence. A high degree of divisions and frequently changing alliances will make the political scene more fluid and less controllable and the divisions may, furthermore, be accompanied by divided control over military resources.

Overall, the preceding analysis has highlighted the importance of intra-ethnic competition in ethnic conflicts and the importance of intra-Serb rivalry in the Yugoslav conflict. Intra-ethnic competition, therefore ought to constitute an integral part of conflict analysis. It is, however, important to move beyond conventional theoretical expectations: radicalisation is not the only possible outcome of intra-ethnic competition and popular attitudes can be of limited importance. Intra-ethnic competition should not, therefore, be reduced to outflanking elites successfully playing the ethnic card. Intra-ethnic competition is the norm in ethnic conflicts, and elite rhetoric alleging unity, the protection of national interests and representation of the population should not be accepted at face value. In the concluding chapter, these findings will be used to suggest a preliminary theory of the impact of intra-ethnic competition in inter-ethnic conflict.

Part III: Conclusion

Chapter 8
Intra-Ethnic Competition in Inter-Ethnic Conflict

Despite posturing to the contrary, unity was far from characteristic of the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia between 1990 and 1995. Serb politics was marked by great divisions: initially by divisions over the ethnic definition of politics and later by divisions between leaders who all gladly accepted the label 'Serb leader' and professed to be protecting the interests of the Serb nation. Such claims to a homogeneous national interest were clearly an illusion and divisions and rivalry persisted throughout the pre-war and wartime periods and continued into the post-war period. This rivalry was fuelled by differing views of the inter-ethnic conflict, ideological and regional cleavages, valence issues and personal power ambitions.

Intra-Serb elite competition constitutes an under-developed aspect of the Yugoslav disintegration and war; an aspect which significantly impacted on the dominant Serb position in Croatia and Bosnia and which is, therefore, important to understanding the intensification of the conflict, the outbreak of war and the persistent difficulty in reaching a peace settlement. Through an in-depth analysis, involving dozens of interviews with actors directly involved in the intra-Serb competition, this thesis has sought to throw some light on these dynamics of competition and on the variables affecting its impact. Theoretically, intra-ethnic elite competition is also under-analysed and almost limited to a theory of outbidding based on elite appeals to mass extremism. This thesis has sought to fill some of this gap in the literature and some interesting findings have emerged from the empirical analysis. These findings will be used to suggest a preliminary theory of intra-ethnic elite competition in inter-ethnic conflicts; a theory which emphasises that intra-ethnic competition should be analysed in terms of *political* competition with a focus on politically relevant audiences and resources, and which urges analysts to move beyond the assumption of ethnic outbidding. More research is still needed but, nevertheless, it holds some important lessons for conflict analysis and for the impact of intra-ethnic competition.

The radicalisation of the Serb position in Croatia and Bosnia owed much to the intra-Serb rivalry but the outcome was by no means inevitable and radicalisation was, moreover, not the only effect of intra-Serb competition. Ethnification was part of the political struggle and radicalisation was not driven by popular demands but contingent on especially coercive resources and support from Belgrade, although the importance of the kin-state was reduced during the war. Contrary to what is often argued in existing literature on the Yugoslav disintegration and war, the dominance of the Serb hardliners was not based on elites successfully playing the ethnic card and mobilising the population.[1] Moreover, it was concluded that Milošević was not always able to dictate the internal politics of the two Serb statelets; the local Serb leaders enjoyed a certain level of autonomy and this influenced the political position they adopted and hence the development of the war. This constitutes an important addition to existing literature on Serb politics in the 1990s.

8.1 Serb disunity in Croatia and Bosnia

The dominance of the ethnic cleavage was not an automatic result of the formation of ethnic parties in Croatia and Bosnia. The ability of the ethnic or nationalist parties to ensure the dominance of this cleavage and hence the marginalisation of non-ethnic rivals depended heavily on their control of political and non-political resources as well as on the interplay and even co-operation between the ethnic parties. This ethnification of politics was, furthermore, aided by the transitional situation and by the associated weakly developed socio-economic linkages between political parties and the general population. In addition, the transitional situation also strengthened the hardliners in the internal competition and reduced the impact of popular attitudes on elite positions.

The position of the Serb leaders was significantly influenced by intra-Serb competition and the lack of unity, therefore, had a decisive impact on the development of the conflict and the war. Intra-Serb competition greatly affected the decision by leaders to radicalise or moderate, and to reject or accept proposed settlements. This competition was characterised by a great flux in positions: today's hardliners could be tomorrow's moderates, and vice versa. Radicalisation was most

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[1] For a more detailed argument on the lack of success in popular mobilisation, see Gagnon, 2004.

often the chosen response in case of intra-party challenges but the emergence of an external opposition did not have the same effect. Moreover, when other issues were salient and/or the opposition could coalesce with (para)military forces or international authorities, moderating dynamics also ensued. But, overall, intra-Serb competition was characterised by the dominance of hardliners. How were the hardliners able to win in the intra-Serb competition? How did they marginalise the moderates? Popular attitudes as well as the position of other ethnic leaders often had remarkably little influence on the dynamics of competition and its outcome; outbidding was not about mass responsiveness to extreme rhetoric nor was it determined by 'lost generosity moments'. Generally, access to economic and coercive resources, in large part supplied by Belgrade, was much more decisive and the dominance of the hardliners was contingent on these factors. The increased importance of non-political resources in the pre-war period greatly aided the extremists and made possible the marginalisation of moderates. Timing was crucial and the outcome was by no means predetermined.

Belgrade's involvement and support for the hardliners played a crucial role but the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia, nevertheless, should not be regarded as mere puppets of the Serbian President. The leaders in the RSK and the RS played an increasingly independent role vis-à-vis Belgrade and the cooling of relations between Belgrade, Knin and Pale significantly affected the dynamics of elite competition in the two statelets. Finally, international involvement added a new audience of importance in the post-war period. This altered the incentives facing the elites and radicalisation became a problematic strategy in the intra-ethnic competition: the international authorities influenced the distribution of resources which benefited less extreme forces.

When analysing the Yugoslav conflict, therefore, it would be a serious simplification to regard the Serbs as monolithic. The dominance of hardline Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia in the pre-war period was an important factor in the Yugoslav disintegration. It strengthened Belgrade's position and made a peaceful solution increasingly unlikely. To fully understand the Yugoslav disintegration, it is therefore important to know how this dominance came about; on what it was based. During the war, the intra-Serb rivalry increased in intensity and, at first, this served to entrench

the radicalism of the leaders and made significant concessions and compromises impossible. Milošević's grip on Serb politics in the statelets gradually decreased but hardline dominance persisted. However, the dynamics of competition could also give rise to centripetal dynamics, and a complete analysis of the end of the war must include an analysis of intra-Serb rivalry: to fully explain the increased willingness to negotiate in Bosnia and to explain the lack of such willingness in Croatia and Krajina's eventual downfall. Finally, in the post-war period, the gradual moderation and increased stabilisation cannot be understood without analysing the dynamics of intra-Serb competition. This is, however, not to say that intra-Serb competition provides a complete explanation for the Yugoslav disintegration and war. The framework of analysis is relational: it has included both inter-ethnic interplay and international involvement which had a decisive impact on Serb politics. The point is that an analysis of the intra-Serb competition is *also* needed when explaining the Yugoslav disintegration and war; it is not sufficient as an analysis but it is necessary. The intra-Serb competition in Croatia and Bosnia was strongly influenced by the inter-ethnic conflict, by international involvement and by kin-state involvement, but it was not merely an epiphenomenon of these factors. It is an independent dynamics which is particularly crucial when analysing the timing of political change; of radicalisation or moderation.

Steven Burg and Paul Shoup in their book *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina* argue that Western policymakers failed to respond to changes in the Serbian position.[2] If the dynamics of intra-Serb competition had been better understood, it would arguably have aided international attempts to engineer a peaceful solution. In the pre-war period, Serb claims of unity were largely accepted at face value and attempts were not made to support more moderate voices, for example, through the supply of resources or at least through recognition of their legitimacy. During the war, an understanding of the importance of Serb internal politics gradually developed, at least in the Bosnian case, and mediators tried to foster further divisions between Belgrade and Pale and between civilian and military leaders. International sanctions were instrumental in creating the rift between Belgrade and the local Serb leaders, but the resulting divisions were only utilised to a limited extent by mediators. A

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[2] Burg, Shoup, 1999: 90

quicker result, an earlier emergence of centripetal dynamics, could conceivably have resulted from a clearer targeting of the resources on which the extremists relied or from a deliberate fostering of more moderate alliances.

In conclusion, this thesis has in two important ways contributed to the existing literature on the Yugoslav disintegration and war. Firstly, it provides a full analysis of Serb politics in Croatia and Bosnia, which has so far been lacking; an analysis which emphasises the high degree of disunity and highlights the changing relations between Belgrade and the local Serb leaders. These dynamics of competition and their effect on the dominant Serb position in Croatia and Bosnia should be included in any analysis which aims to fully understand the Yugoslav disintegration and subsequent war. Contrary to widespread assumptions, the thesis showed that Milošević was not always able to dictate developments in the statelets. Secondly, the thesis adds to the emerging evidence of the lack of importance of popular attitudes, as convincingly argued by Gagnon in his recent book.[3] However, compared to existing literature it provides a fuller picture of the links that mattered in the intra-Serb competition and consequently argue that although popular attitudes were not the primary driving force, we cannot conclude that popular attitudes had no significant impact at all: its impact varied in different phases of the conflict, depending on the availability and effectiveness of other resources, in particular coercive resources.

8.2 Impact of intra-ethnic competition

The empirical findings are at odds with the dominant theoretical assumption in the field: the theory of outbidding which holds that intra-ethnic competition will lead to radicalisation based on elites playing on extreme mass sentiments. Contrary to this argument, intra-ethnic competition and the position of the Serb leaders were only to a limited extent influenced by popular attitudes and radicalisation was not the only response to challengers. The elites were generally not constrained by the general population; they had a high level of autonomy and victory in the intra-Serb competition depended on resources other than popular support. Popular attitudes played a limited role, even though elections and referenda were held and the rhetoric of popular legitimacy and authenticity was given priority by the competing elites.

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[3] Gagnon, 2004

Crucial periods of radicalisation can fall between elections and even when elections and referenda are held, popular attitudes need not be the primary factor driving elite competition. The lack of importance of popular attitudes was especially pronounced during the war but popular sentiments were even in the pre-war period and in the immediate post-war period not determining changes in the position of the leaders: neither radicalisation nor moderation appear to have been driven by popular demands.

The theory of outbidding also holds that radicalisation will be the preferred response to intra-ethnic challenges. However, the analysis found that radicalisation or defeat were not the only options available to leaders faced with competitors and centrifugal dynamics, therefore, were not an automatic consequence in case of intra-ethnic competition. The analysis pointed to an interesting difference between competition within and between parties: while intra-party competition was generally met with radicalisation, competition from other parties or independents was not. The Serb leaders depended on the party/movement for resources and were, therefore, less likely to use repressive measures against internal challengers, whereas the same concerns did not exist with external challengers. Moreover, challenges from other parties often involved issues other than the national and ethnic one. Finally, since popular attitudes were found to be of limited significance, radicalisation in case of challenges from other parties lacked an obvious audience. Competition between parties in some instances even caused relative moderation of the dominant position. In existing theories, such moderation is argued to be based on the possibility or necessity of cross-ethnic alliances and in the case of Horowitz's Alternative Vote system it is ultimately voter-led.[4] But the moderating dynamics that were uncovered in the analysis were not based on cross-ethnic cleavages and it was elite-led; it was a moderation that took place in spite of elite dominance and ethnicised political competition.

The lack of importance of popular attitudes in a transitional context, and especially in a violent conflict, could be seen as an unsurprising conclusion. However, it runs counter to existing theorising, elections and referenda were held throughout the conflict and the Serb leaders persistently claimed to be representing the general

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[4] Sisk, 1996: 16. Horowitz, 1985: 359-60. Horowitz, 1991: 196.

population. Moreover, radicalisation as the outcome of intra-ethnic competition would be expected to be even more likely in a situation of extreme polarisation and warfare but the analysis found that radicalisation was not the only response and that relative moderation could even ensue. These findings were backed up by the theoretical discussion and I would venture to say that they do not only reflect idiosyncratic dynamics but illustrate that popular attitudes are not necessarily driving intra-ethnic competition and that this competition need not lead to radicalisation. I would, therefore, suggest an alternative approach to analysing the impact of intra-ethnic competition; an approach which holds that the key to this impact is the different audiences to which the rivalling elites appeal.

The existence of more than one politically relevant audience means that intra-ethnic elite competition can be seen as a form of 'nested games' in which the elites must consider the effect of their positions in more than one arena. In most conflicts, the elites will need to seek support from the general population and from their own party/movement, including the military. But other audiences can be added to this list. In the case of Croatia and Bosnia, the kin-state was a very significant audience and international actors became an important audience in the post-war period. The audiences are important to the elites because they provide them with the resources needed if they are to be victorious in the intra-ethnic rivalry. The attitudes found among the audiences of significance will, therefore, decisively influence the impact of intra-ethnic competition on the dominant position: what will be the best strategy to ensure the support of the audience that provides the most effective resources? One way for rivalling elites to improve their relative position is through *alliances*, such as when the more moderate opposition in the RS aligned itself with the army. Resources from one arena can, to some extent, substitute for resources from another but the relative importance of the audiences is not static: the effectiveness and availability of resources emanating from the different audiences will change in the course of a conflict and this will affect the strategies chosen by the rivalling elites and the outcome of the competition. For example, coercive resources were, during the war, more important than democratic resources, such as popular support, and the latter could not substitute for the former; having links with military forces was more important than reflecting popular attitudes. Finally, the *institutional framework*, e.g.

the regime type, will serve as an additional influence on the relative importance of the different resources as well as on their distribution.

In addition to the distribution of resources, one of the factors influencing the chosen response to intra-ethnic challenges is the *issues* on which this challenge is based. If issues other than the conflict are included then radicalisation is a less effective pre-emptive strategy. Other strategies, therefore, are likely attempted and relative moderation on the conflict issue can even be a way of trying to change the rules of the game for a cornered leader. The emergence of other salient issues is argued to be unlikely in a situation of violence[5] but the case studies clearly showed that even though the ethnic cleavage is predominant, this does not prevent the emergence of politically very salient valance issues. And it was actually not until the outbreak of war, when ethnification was complete, that such issues became salient. A final variable of importance was shown to be the *configuration of competition*, especially the fragmentation of the opposition: is it strong enough to constitute a challenge?

What, then, will be the outcome of intra-ethnic competition in a specific situation? This is illustrated in figure 8.1, which is focused on the decisions made by an incumbent leader or party faced with challenges from either a more moderate or a more extreme direction. There are three possible outcomes, corresponding to the outcomes found in the two cases: 1) the challengers are suppressed and no change in position ensues; 2) no action is necessary; 3) the incumbent leader must adopt the opposition's position or face defeat. Only the latter option corresponds with the theory of outbidding, but note that this need not be based on popular attitudes nor does the change in position necessarily take a radical direction.

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[5] Gagnon, 1995: 89.

Figure 8.1 The impact of intra-ethnic competition
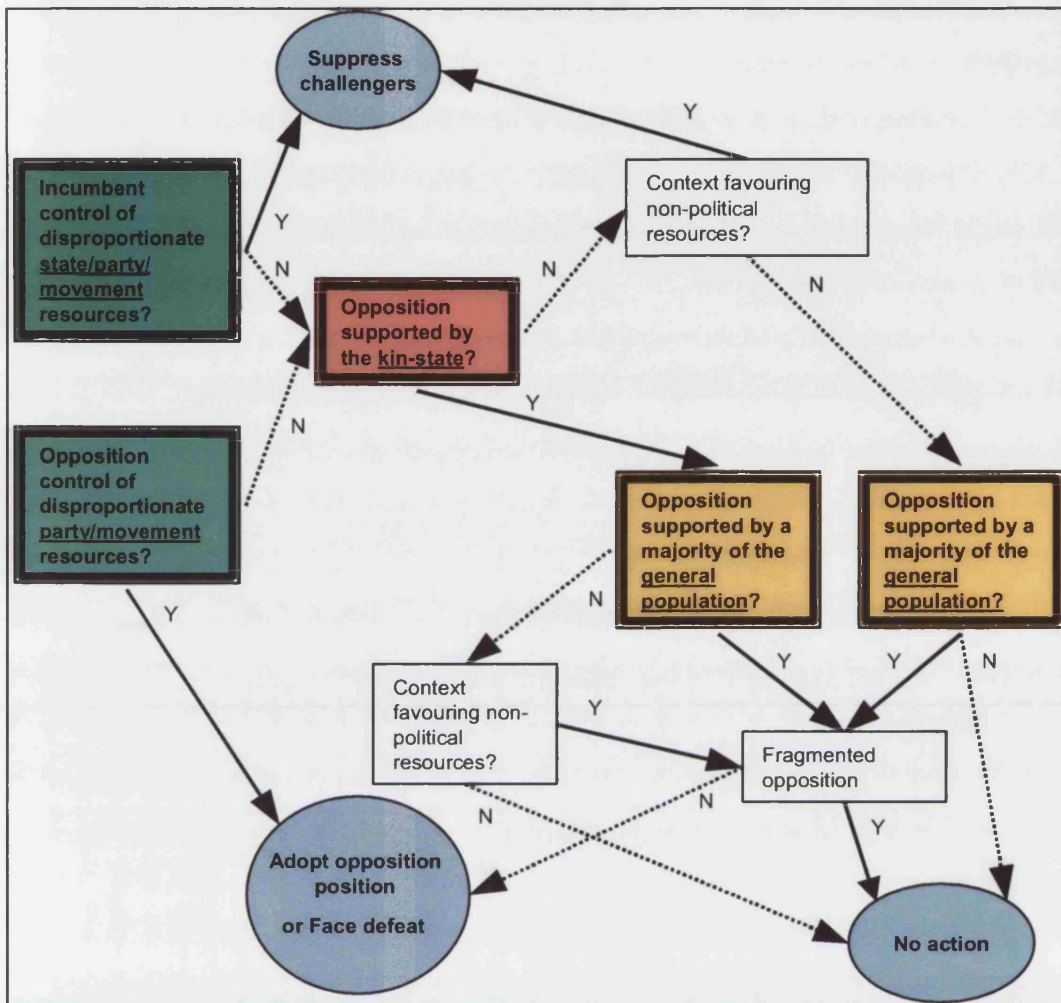
Y (➤): Yes, N (┄┄➤): No

This model is based on kin-state involvement being of significance but this audience could be substituted for other audiences, e.g. international actors, without the basic idea changing. The model is, of course, a simplification and, for example, it leaves out the issues that are salient in the competition. In case issues other than the national one are salient an incumbent leader faced with a strong opposition will not necessarily have the option of retaining power by adopting the opposition's position. Instead, the leader may attempt to compete on the other salient issues, but this is a difficult strategy if the other issues are valence issues, and the only options will then be to seek to change the rules of the game or face defeat. Otherwise, the model points to the following instances which will lead to the opposition's position becoming the dominant position, either through opposition victory or through pre-empting positioning by the incumbent leader or party: a) the opposition has disproportionate

control of party/military resources; b) the cohesive opposition enjoys kin-state support and popular support; c) the cohesive opposition enjoys kin-state support and the context (institutional framework and conflict phase) favours non-political resources; d) the cohesive opposition enjoys popular support and the context does not favour non-political resources.

Additional theoretical implications

Other empirical findings, which are partly derived from the limited or variable importance of popular attitudes, also run counter to existing theorising in the field of conflict studies. Firstly, the dominant elite position was not merely reactive: radicalisation also occurred independently of the 'other side' and radicalisation or moderation was not always reciprocated. Actions and rhetoric of the other ethnic leaders would be much more important if protection of the nation had been the primary goal, but other interests and constraints were more significant when the leaders chose their position. Contrary to what is often argued, radicalisation does, therefore, not necessarily breed radicalisation – nor does moderation. One could, consequently, question how useful concepts such as 'national interests' are when analysing elite behaviour in ethnic conflicts. An exception to this general pattern was the relative military strength which was found to be of significant importance, as argued in the 'mutually hurting stalemate' theory. But a military stalemate, nevertheless, did not have an immediate effect on elite positions and had to be supplemented by changed dynamics of intra-ethnic competition if moderation was to follow. Moreover, the need for unity in the face of outside threats did not generally reduce the intra-ethnic competition; it was, on the contrary, more intense in times of crisis. All this, nevertheless, does not mean that the inter-ethnic interplay was of no significance for intra-ethnic elite competition: the conflict situation mattered greatly, as did the relative military and demographic strength, and the position of opposing leaders could be used as ammunition by rivalling elites.

Secondly, ethnification of politics was found to be very much part of the political struggle and far from an automatic outcome following the emergence of ethnically defined parties. Furthermore, it need not reflect a voter-driven process. In the two cases, the ethnification of politics depended in particular on the distribution of

resources between ethnic and non-ethnic parties, as well as on the interplay and even co-operation between the ethnic parties. Solely playing on extremism risked alienating the middle ground and a vague, ambivalent position was, therefore, strategic for the ethnic parties. The incentives for such a position disappeared with the ethnification of political competition, when the ethnic cleavage became dominant and non-ethnic rivals consequently were marginalised. Radicalisation therefore ensued; not because of appeals to mass sentiments but because the most significant rivals for the ethnic leaders changed and so did the strategies used.

## Suggested framework for analysing intra-ethnic competition

Intra-ethnic competition has, in this thesis, been analysed based on politically relevant audiences and the resources they supply. This formed the basis of the preceding model of the impact of intra-ethnic competition. While this is far from a parsimonious theory, I would still suggest that this framework avoids the pitfall of over-simplification while pointing to factors decisive for the direction and outcome of intra-ethnic competition. In addition to party/movement forces and the general population, other audiences can, as already mentioned, also play a significant role and in both cases, the kin-state leader was of great importance, although the degree and form of Belgrade's influence varied considerably. Brubaker's concept of relational fields provides a valuable framework for analysing such influence but it is useful to distinguish between two forms of kin-state influence: one based on the leader being of the same ethnicity as the local leaders and the other based on the supply of resources. Only the former form of influence is clearly distinct from the influence exerted by other audiences. In the Croatian and Bosnian cases, kin-state influence decreased when the local leaders had other alliance partners, possessed their own resources or when competition was primarily conducted in the political sphere and through legal institutions. International actors can finally act as an important audience. Depending on the degree of international involvement, international administrators or negotiators can provide resources to the elites that will make the support from other audiences less important. Strong involvement can, under some circumstances, change the outcome of intra-ethnic rivalry, as it did in the post-war period in both Croatia and Bosnia.

The relative importance of the different audiences was found to be significantly affected by the context in which the competition is played out and the analysis in particular highlighted the importance of two variables: ethnification and violence. When ethnification was still contested, i.e. in the pre-war phase, the kin-state leader was afforded significant authority by the local leaders, who sought to impose an ethnic definition of politics and display unity. In this context, the position of 'opposing' ethnic leaders was, moreover, very significant since the inter-ethnic interplay was important for the attempt to impose the ethnic cleavage and radicalisation of the other side, furthermore, provided hardliners with ammunition against more moderate forces who were still advocating co-existence. The relative importance of the different audiences was even more clearly affected by the change from a non-violent to a violent conflict and the most significant effect of this change was the increased importance of coercive resources, especially control of (para)military forces. Finally, the conflict situation must be expected to influence the attitudes of the different audiences, with attitudes generally being hardened by violence and ethnification.

Figure 8.2 illustrates the different audiences to which the elites address their appeal as well as the interplay with the positions of 'opposing' ethnic leaders. This framework emphasises the importance of identifying the politically relevant audiences, which is done by analysing the context in which the competition is played out: the phase of the conflict and the regime type. The next step is then to uncover the attitudes in the politically relevant audiences and the resulting distribution of resources. This latter factor will also be influenced by the institutional framework, e.g. the electoral system. Finally, the issues of salience in the competition and the fragmentation of the opposition should be considered since these factors will also influence the direction and outcome of the intra-ethnic competition.

Figure 8.2 Intra-ethnic competition and different audiences
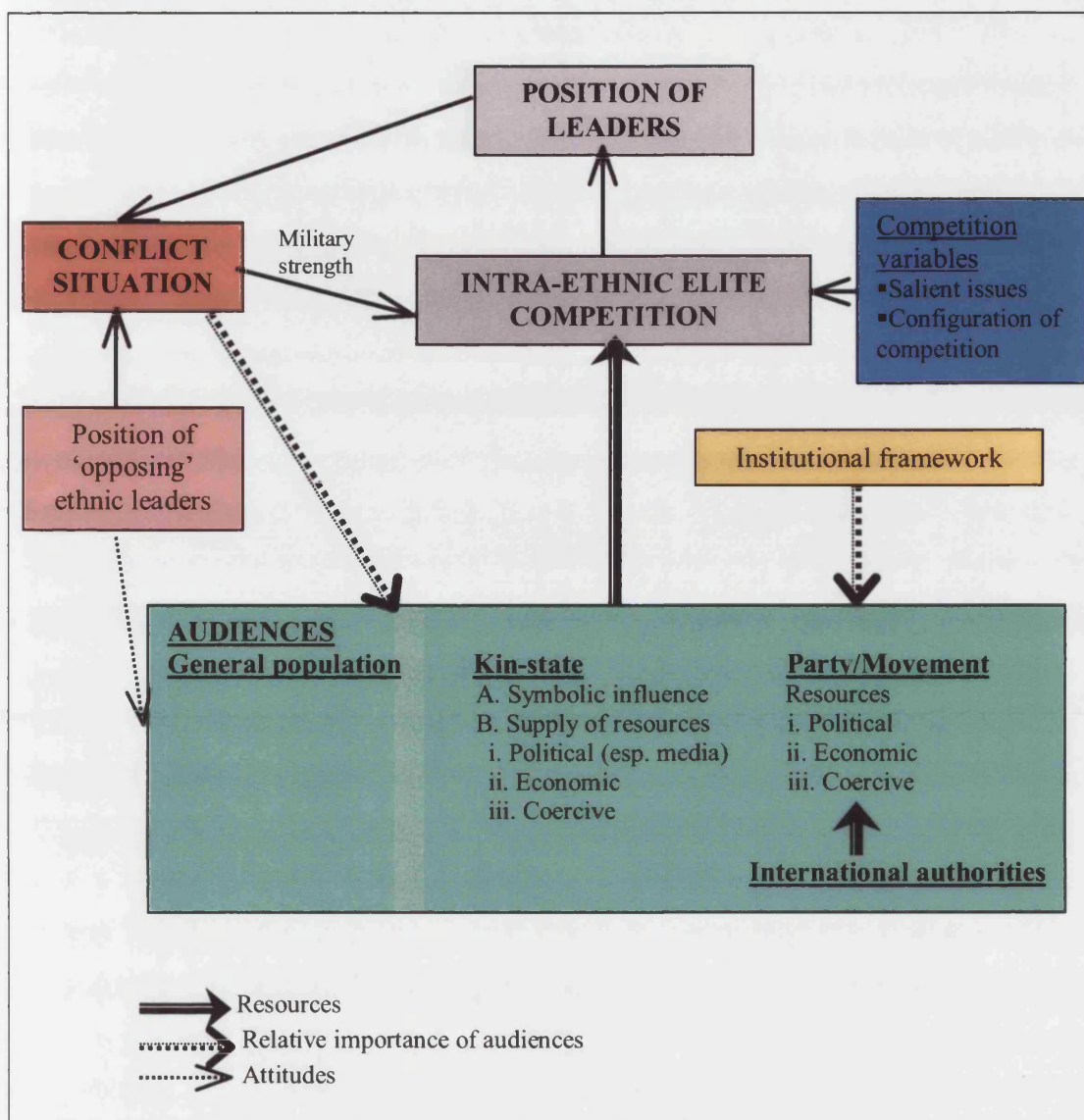
Such an approach, I will argue, forms a more useful basis for analysing intra-ethnic competition in inter-ethnic conflict than automatic assumptions of successful outbidding based on elite appeals to mass extremism.

Generalisability to other conflicts?

This thesis has been based on an analysis of two case studies that followed the 'most similar cases' design, rather than the 'most different cases' design. This is generally regarded as suitable for initial theory development.[6] But although the cases differed on a number of important variables, whose effect could therefore be analysed, the

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[6] Karl; Schmitter, 1995: 971.

empirical foundation of the suggested theory of intra-ethnic competition is clearly limited. To further develop it, more empirical analysis is needed; especially analysis which also includes less similar cases. One of the limitations of the empirical study is that it only covers transitional cases. While ethnic conflicts frequently occur in transitional settings, conflicts in other political contexts are also found: conflicts in clearly authoritarian settings, such as Sudan, or in more democratic settings, such as the conflict in the Basque Country.

The transition from a communist system significantly affected the dynamics of competition and hence the impact of intra-ethnic competition on the dominant elite position. A transitional situation in particular affects the structures of emerging parties and makes fractionalisation more likely: the first democratic election is generally associated with parties with weak organisations and undeveloped programmes, which disadvantages attempts to create cohesive political parties. Additionally, these characteristics of political competition make it difficult for popular attitudes to be reflected by the elected representatives and the impact of popular sentiments on elite positioning is therefore reduced. This tendency is re-enforced by a tradition of elite dominance. The weakness of party structures, the relative unimportance of popular attitudes and the undeveloped party programmes, furthermore, means that non-democratic resources increase in importance. Finally, well-established elite-mass linkages will be scarce and this facilitates the ethnification of political competition: other cleavage structures are under-developed and ethnic identity offers an easy answer to political parties in search of a political platform. The transitional setting therefore makes radicalisation and ethnification more likely and this would, therefore, be expected to be less pronounced in more consolidated political environments. Moreover, the elite dominance characterising the two cases would be expected to be reduced in consolidated democracies. In addition to the transitional setting, conflicts outside of the former Yugoslavia are likely to differ on a number of other factors not included in this analysis and some of these will affect the dynamics of intra-ethnic elite competition. This includes factors such as natural resources available to the elites as well as factors such as the degree of international involvement. Finally, the transitional situation can itself vary significantly and the Yugoslav republics were, for example, characterised by a

weakly developed democratic opposition compared with other Eastern European countries.[7]

Despite these caveats and the need for more empirical research, the analysis, nevertheless, demonstrated the need for analysis of intra-ethnic elite competition and the need for regarding it as more than an epiphenomenon of popular attitudes or of the position of opposing ethnic leaders. It demonstrated that popular attitudes can be of limited importance for the position of leaders and a claim to national self-determination can, paradoxically, be an authoritarian claim. Radicalisation was, furthermore, not the only outcome of intra-ethnic competition *even* in a case of polarisation and war. The process of ethnification should, finally, be seen as a political struggle and, when analysing this as well as the effect of intra-ethnic elite competition, attention should be paid to the audiences to which the elites must appeal; attitudes found among these audiences; the institutional framework and the resulting distribution of resources; the issues that are salient in the competition; and the cohesion of the opposition. By adopting such a framework, it will be easier to predict if intra-ethnic elite competition will cause a radicalisation of the position of the leaders, if it will have no significant effect or if it will, on the contrary, lead to a relative moderation of the dominant position. Intra-ethnic elite competition should be analysed in terms of *political* competition, with a focus on politically relevant audiences and resources in the competition, and not be clouded by propaganda claims of national unity and protection of national interests.

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[7] Radošević, 1996: 76.

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