



# Ethnic Identity in Yugoslavia and its Role in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s

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## Abstract

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) existed as a peaceful country from its inception following World War II until its dissolution which began in the late 1980s. By 1992, the country ceased to exist, and wars had erupted throughout several former Yugoslav republics. In order to determine how these events unfolded, this paper first seeks to analyze ethnic relations in Yugoslavia following Tito's death and secondly, how the deterioration among the country's ethnic groups led to war in the early 1990s. Using path dependency theory, this paper analyzes the changes in political leadership with case studies of three Yugoslav republics and the Semi-Autonomous Region of Kosovo, and how these chains of events led to war. The shift from Titoist to nationalist leadership conveys how the environment in Yugoslavia became predisposed to war. However, this paper concludes that path dependency theory cannot fully explain how war broke out, as it does not incorporate human emotions. Therefore, path dependency theory will be complemented by schismogenesis and armed mobilization theory to explain the shift from an environment predisposed to war to one engaged in civil war.

Presented at the Transatlantic Students' Conference  
Addressing Diplomatic, Economic, and Migration Challenges in Southeastern Europe  
James Madison University  
Florence, 23-27 April 2018

## **I. Introduction:**

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was a multi-ethnic state that existed from the end of World War II to 1992. Following separatist movements that occurred in Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, the country erupted in civil war, which spilled into neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina more violently in 1992 and in Kosovo in 1999. The Yugoslav Wars were unprecedented in that violent conflict had returned to Europe for the first time since World War II, which had ended 46 years earlier. Not only were the wars unprecedented in a European sense, but also in a Yugoslavian one. While ethnic tensions did exist prior to the break up of Yugoslavia, Yugoslavians had lived in peace for decades until the onset of war in 1991.

**Research Topic:** My research will focus on the historical background of ethnic relations during the final years of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the post-Tito era of the 1980s and early 1990s. These ethnic relations will be examined in how they fueled nationalism and the role they played in the Balkan Wars, which began in 1991. This paper will build upon the path dependency theory, which in this paper seeks to follow the shift from peace to violence in Yugoslavia. While this social theory explains the political evolution in Yugoslavia, path dependency theory on its own cannot explain Yugoslavia's descent into violence. Therefore, the political conditions that were created via the path dependency theory will be complemented by the schismogenesis and armed mobilization theories that incorporate human emotions in explaining the violence that occurred.

**Research Question:** If Yugoslavia had existed as a peaceful country for several decades, what then could have caused such a sudden transformation from a peaceful society to one engaged in violent conflict? Furthermore, how was ethnic identity used specifically to mobilize war in Yugoslavia?

**Significance:** The history of Yugoslavia before the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s goes largely untold. This presents a fundamental problem in understanding how the violence could have begun in 1991. Without a clear understanding of the ethnic relations before the wars, it creates a skewed perception of the past that Yugoslavian society was predisposed to war. This paper seeks to gain a deeper understanding of Yugoslavia and the factors that could have led to violent conflict. The theories presented in this paper could offer insight into the factors the cause civil wars more generally.

**II. Literature Review:** Various social theories and sources will be analyzed and tested in this paper to determine which theories most accurately convey how violence broke out in Yugoslavia. The three social theories under review in this paper are path dependency theory, schismogenesis, and armed mobilization.

Maria Koinova's path dependency theory will be examined and built upon in this paper. Her book *Ethnonationalist Conflict in Postcommunist States* develops the notion of the path dependence theory in the context of how events were able to occur in the Balkans in the 1990s. As much of this paper will analyze, the social theory posited in her book provides a sound basis to how the political conditions developed differently throughout the Yugoslav republics, but it falls short in explaining the final stage of violence that broke out. Therefore, the path dependency theory will be complemented with schismogenesis and armed mobilizations theories that together provide the missing pieces of the puzzle.

Contributor to *Neighbors at War*, Bette Dennich, points to distortion through the mass media as one of the primary mechanisms to mobilize the population into war. The author

builds onto the phenomenon known as “schismogenesis”, a theory developed by Gregory Bateson, which suggests that media can create an “us” versus “them” environment. The creation of this toxic and distorted environment creates a skewed perception by the public and how this mindset develops towards negativity to other groups in society and sees them based on their perceptions rather than reality. The other group then becomes a threat and the “us” group the victim (Dennich 2000 47-48). This paper will analyze significant moments in the media and the amount of violence that erupted as a result. Popular perceptions by Yugoslavian citizens will also be analyzed. *Neighbors at War* also builds on the schismogenesis theory with the observation of Yugoslavians’ reactions to major political events that played out in the mass media.

Empirical data will also be analyzed throughout to determine what surveys indicated in regards to feelings held by the public throughout Yugoslavia. *The Myth of Ethnic War* uses statistical data from Yugoslavian surveys to determine how against or in favor the public was toward war. Lastly, areas with more violence will be compared with the degree of tolerance that was indicated in the surveys to see if any correlations exist. This will draw upon theories stated by guest speaker Stefano Costalli that ethnic conflict was prevalent in more ethnically heterogeneous areas.

Historical data and original sources from the time period will also be analyzed to find what clues can be found in original footage and print in the period leading up to the war. These sources should be able to provide a first-hand look into the time period to see if Yugoslavian society was becoming increasingly violent.

**III. Thesis:** The violence that occurred in the Balkans in the 1990s is less attributable to preexisting ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia, but rather a concerted effort manipulated by nationalist government elites to fulfill their own agenda. Key electoral events enabled the rise of nationalist leaders who propagated ethnic disunity, which then led to armed mobilization.

**Hypothesis:** Yugoslav republics that shifted to nationalist leadership in the final years of the SFRY developed a higher degree of schismogenesis, and consequently more armed mobilization and violence, than in Yugoslav republics lacking the shift to nationalist leadership.

**IV. Methodology:** To determine the validity of my thesis, I will first do historical background research to examine the ethnic relations among Yugoslavia’s ethnic groups in the post-Tito era of the 1980s and early 1990s. The empirical data provided by Yugoslav citizens will indicate the societal attitudes held at the time and the degree to which societal attitudes alone can explain the descent into violence.

Second, as stated in the introduction, path dependency theory will be then used to study the correlation between political changes in Yugoslavia and the degree of violence. The path dependency is based off four case studies. The case studies presented in the paper are the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Third, the role of schismogenesis will be analyzed by finding correlations between propaganda in media and ethnic violence. Fourth, Stefan Costelli’s armed mobilization theory will examine the final stage of the conflict, which moves from ethnic conflict to violence and civil war.

The overall assessment of ethnic relations in Yugoslavia will provide a clearer understanding of Yugoslavian society before the war. This assessment on Yugoslav society will then be applied in observing correlations between significant historical events and incidents of violence that occurred in the country. These observations should be able to provide a way to measure the degree of violence that occurred in Yugoslavia.

To contrast with societal opinions in Yugoslavia, I will examine actions taken by government elites to determine whether or not these actions were a stronger factor in the violence that broke out beginning in 1991.

## **V: Analysis of Ethnic Identity in Yugoslavia**

In 1986, delegations of Serbs living Kosovo complained to the federal government of unfavorable living conditions and discrimination by the Albanian majority living in the autonomous region of Kosovo. This event gained little coverage nationwide (Dennich 46). However, the discontent among Serbs living in Kosovo gained media attention a year later when Slobodan Milosevic denounced the treatment of Serbian Kosovar demonstrators outside a meeting in Kosovo on ethnic tensions in the region (46-47). Serbian nationalists had actually staged the entire event by throwing rocks at the police first and then claiming that they were being attacked by the police. Milosevic then condemned the attacks on camera which was then broadcasted across Serbia (Percy, 11:45-13:15).

Statistics from the 1980s in Serbia debunked many of the preconceived notions that ethnic Albanians were pushing Serbs out of the province, as they migrated for other reasons, or that Serbs were disproportionately victims of crimes committed by Albanian Kosovars (Lazic 1995, 71). Although these statistics showed a decline in the Serb population in Kosovo, the statistics could easily be misrepresented by Serbian nationalists. This situation illustrates that the ethnic tensions which may have existed in Kosovo were distorted and manipulated by Serbian nationalists to pursue their own political agenda. Using the example of the Serbian Kosovars who petitioned in 1986, which received little media attention, in contrast to the widely covered “attack” on demonstrators a year later, media played a major role in how citizens reacted to the events. Citizens across Yugoslavia did not pay much attention to the ethnic tensions or discrimination in Kosovo prior to this, but when a national figurehead decried the events, it changed the perception that Yugoslavians had toward ethnic tension in Yugoslavia.

*The Myth of Ethnic War* takes a microhistory approach in determining Yugoslav attitudes in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the public’s likelihood to support war. Voter data from 1990 indicates that, just one year before war broke out in Croatia, voters were more concerned about the economy than ethnic conflicts (Gagnon 2004, 35). Voting data also indicates that Serbs living in Croatia voted in large numbers for the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH) over the Serbian nationalist party (35). This data is astonishing in that it illustrates how little Serb Croats were motivated to vote along ethnic lines. Surveys conducted in 1989 even showed that the vast majority of respondents in both the Croat and Serb communities in Croatia felt that ethnic relations in their communities were good (35). When the same respondents were asked about ethnic relations on the national level, their responses indicated the exact opposite. The majority of Croats felt that ethnic relations in Yugoslavia were mostly negative (36). The ethnic tensions in Kosovo that had gained national attention were likely what came to mind to many of the respondents (36). Although the majority of Croats felt that ethnic relations were good, the media attention that amplified the situation in Kosovo most likely gave Croats the impressions that ethnic relations were bad for the most part outside of their republic. More data indicates that Serb and Croat residents were adamantly opposed to changing the education system into one based on ethnic lines (38).

Data from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1989 also provides striking findings that are in complete antithesis to the violence that broke out there three years later. Over three-quarters of young Bosnians felt that there was no need to display “caution” towards other ethnic groups and nearly the same percentage of respondents felt that “division into nations is

harmful or pointless” (Gagnon 2004, 40). When examining the data in Serbia, the data supplied by the respondents is much more pessimistic. Only a fifth of respondents felt that ethnic relations in Serbia were good (44). “According to the findings “...there is little evidence to support the contention that violence, ethnic cleansing, and a nationalist state were the top priorities for people in Serbia” (44). The author notes, “[a]gain, as elsewhere, the impressions of relations at levels higher than those experienced in everyday life are very heavily influenced by media coverage, which in this period was very much emphasizing the negative” (44). While Serbs living in Serbia provided a more negative outlook on the ethnic situation in their republic, their data also shares a commonality with respondents from the other republics in that they felt low levels of ethnic tension in their daily lives.

Data from the Consortium of Social Research Institutes of Yugoslavia interviewed of 13,000 Yugoslavians in 1989 and 1990 on their tolerance towards other Yugoslav ethnicities (Hodson 1994, 1544). The findings provide a range of opinions in Yugoslavia. While Bosnia-Herzegovina was the most tolerant of all the republics, the autonomous province of Kosovo was the least tolerant. The autonomous province of Vojvodina had a high degree of tolerance among its residents, just behind Bosnia-Herzegovina. Montenegro was slightly more tolerant than Serbia while Slovenia and Macedonia were less tolerant (1548). This data provides a wealth of information on the range of opinions in Yugoslavia, but the data does not provide specific percentages to the questions asked. Therefore, further research will have to be done to obtain a clearer understanding of societal attitudes in Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

The first major uprising in Yugoslavia following Tito’s death was the push for more autonomy by Albanian Kosovars in 1981. Although the movement was labeled nationalist because of the regionalist nature of the protests, the movement was actually prompted more by economic factors than cultural animosity among ethnic groups (Dyker 1996, 94). This case study indicates how Serbian nationalists were quick to label an economic discontent as ethnic tension.

Upon the declarations of independence of Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991, the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina initially decided to remain part of Yugoslavia (Bougarel 1996, 100). In addition to that, a massive peace demonstration took place in Sarajevo the following month. The Yutel Concert for Peace in July 1991 drew over 50,000 attendees and thousands more demonstrated for peace in the streets of Sarajevo. As late as the summer of 1991, many of the attendees at the concert, who were flying Yugoslavian flags and peace signs in an act of unity, were under the impression that Bosnia-Herzegovina could still avoid war (ZETRA 2016). Additional statistics from around that time indicate that 100,000 citizens were conscientious objectors to conscription (Braun et al. 2016). The sheer number of participants in anti-war demonstrators illustrates that many Bosnians were not inclined towards war and the statistics gathered from a nationwide survey further supports this argument.

Guest speaker Stefano Costalli in the JMU Balkan lecture series discussed the locations throughout Yugoslavia with the most violence. His findings indicated that areas consisting of more heterogeneous populations were the locations with the most violence (Costalli 2017). It is very important, however, to understand that while more ethnically heterogeneous areas had a positive correlation with more violence, the citizens in those areas were actually more tolerant of their neighbors and consequently less inclined to become violent. The citizens of ethnically heterogeneous areas of Yugoslavia did not cause more violence. Instead, other factors need to be examined in why these areas became more violent and what variable could have played a role.

Factors of ethnicity including language and religion are widely cited as primary causes of the war. Yugoslavia consisted of three primary religions: Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and Islam. As the data prior data indicates, religious views did not play

a major role in relations among ethnic groups in the 1980s. Identity in Yugoslavia based on religious lines was actually not widely conceptualized until the 1970s when the Yugoslav government added Muslim to the list of nationalities on the federal census (Poulton 1997, 23). The notion of “imaginary folklore” is described in *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*. This theory stipulates that elites, through revisionist history, promoted this idea of deep-rooted hatred among the various religious groups in Yugoslavia (27). While religious differences and warfare may have existed in the distant past, religion was not a prominent cleavage in society that divided Yugoslavians.

Another scholar presents a similar argument on the role of religion and history in the Balkans. Ethnic struggles between the Serbs and Croats, which had existed, were dramatized by nationalists in the final years of Yugoslavia; “...in former Yugoslavia, popular perceptions of the past are infinitely more important than what may or may not have actually taken place” (Bennett 1995, 6). It is quite astonishing that centuries-old historical myths and legends prompted such a strong sense of nationalism among Yugoslavians.

Following the decision of the Slovenian parliament in September 1989 to incorporate language into its constitution for the right to become independent, comedians in the country satirized the move in a broadcast seen around the country (Dennich 2000, 39-40). “Throughout Yugoslavia, a significant proportion of the population rejected nationalist views in favor of maintaining a multiethnic state” (40). This quote demonstrates that many Yugoslavians had an awareness of the disconnect between government aspirations and what ordinary citizens were in support of.

## **VI: Path Dependency Theory and the Break Out of Violence**

The first part of this paper examined societal attitudes among Yugoslav ethnic groups in the post-Tito era during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The findings indicate that the vast majority of Yugoslavians at that time had a largely positive attitude toward other ethnic groups or an indifferent attitude at worst. Very few respondents felt animosity toward other Yugoslav ethnic groups. Data from the surveys did indicate, however, that a large percentage of Yugoslavians “perceived” that there was a high degree of ethnic tension outside their communities. These findings present a puzzle in determining how the citizens of Yugoslavia were then capable of the violence that came about beginning in 1991. If citizens of Yugoslavia had an overwhelmingly favorable opinion towards the other Yugoslav ethnic groups, what then could have caused the citizens to become violent towards one another?

The second part of this paper will examine the path dependency theory that can help explain how citizens became engaged in violence. Path dependence theory suggests that this is a pattern that occurs during regime change and consequently, provided a “window of opportunity” for violence to occur. Path-dependence theory seeks to help explain historical outcomes by emphasizing the interconnectedness of key events throughout time. The theory posits that in order for something to happen, a specific preceding event or condition had to first occur. Since similar situations can end with different outcomes, the path-dependence theory utilizes the notion of “critical junctures” to illustrate the differences or “trajectories” that occur (Koinova 2013, 6-7).

In the context of Yugoslavia, “...multiple changes in the political and economic environment enabled contingent events to have major consequences” (Koinova 2013, 5). Using the path-dependency theory, the chain of events leading to outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia will have to be reconstructed followed by examining whether the “critical junctures” are able to illustrate how violence was able to occur in some instances.

### **Chain of Events in Yugoslavia**

Building onto Koinova's path-dependency theory, the first "critical juncture" was the decline of communism in the 1980s (Koinova 2013, 7). When Tito died in 1980, there was an initial wave of pessimism if the multiethnic socialist federation would be able to continue. Many feared that Yugoslavia would collapse, as Tito was a key figure in maintaining unity among the various ethnic groups. The post-Tito leadership was adamant in preserving a united, multi-ethnic Yugoslavia in the initial years following Tito's death and prosecuted any dissent in order to maintain unity. The path dependence theory shows that Tito's death did not actually cause a critical juncture in Yugoslavia because Tito's successors maintained his policies thereby preventing a political climate that could have opened to violent actors. As noted in the Associated Press newsclip, "Tito's basic policy line remains unchanged" (Associated Press 1981, Roving Report Yugoslavia, 03:00-03:05). At the same time, ethnic tensions did become visible following Tito's death in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians protested the bleak economic conditions in the region. Although the demonstrations did form on ethnic lines, the demonstrations themselves were addressing the local economic grievances in Kosovo and were not promoting ethnic disunity in Yugoslavia (Associated Press 1981, 07:40-08:0).

It would be several more years before a chain of events unfolded that resulted in civil war in Yugoslavia. Instead of critical juncture forming upon Tito's death in 1980 or the protests in Kosovo in 1981, the critical juncture did not occur until a non-Communist voices entered the political field. It was not the decline of communism that fostered violence, rather communism's decline provided a new "window of opportunity" for violent actors to gain access onto the political stage. During the Tito years and the immediate years following his death "...there were no alternative elites. In the 1980s new elites within the communist parties started to emerge" (Koinova 2013, 40). The critical juncture in Yugoslavia was therefore not in 1980, but in 1987 with the political shakeup that brought nationalists into power over the pro-Yugoslavs. In response to the growing ethnic unrest in Kosovo, an ideological split occurred among the Serbian Communist Party. The then-ruler of the Serbian Communist Party, Ivan Stambolic, denounced the nationalist rhetoric coming from his own party's opposition and tried to handle the crisis through peaceful negotiations with his Kosovar Albanian counterparts. President Stambolic was unable to achieve this goal and resigned. This "critical juncture" resulted in a power shift to nationalist faction of the Serbian Communist Party led by Slobodan Milosevic (41).

Following the path dependence theory, the abandonment of Tito-style communism in the mid-1980s enabled the emergence of alternative ideologies within the Serbian Communist Party to emerge, which then enabled nationalist politicians to obtain power. It is important to emphasize that the abandonment of Tito-style communism did not just result in nationalists coming to power. Instead, the abandonment of Tito-style communism allowed for a variety of alternative political ideologies to develop on the national political scene. Alternative political ideologies emerged in the other Yugoslav republics. In Slovenia, the Communist party did not transform into a nationalist party, but rather liberal reformists.

The chain of events in Socialist Republic of Slovenia differed considerably from the Socialist Republic of Serbia. The same year that Slobodan Milosevic became President of the Serbian Communist Party, the reformist Milan Kucan became President of the Slovenian Communist Party (121-122). This was a "critical juncture" in Slovenia's history as "[t]he ascent of the liberal wing was a key development in the Slovenian 'proto-transition' ... that shaped the path to liberalism" (Boduszynski 2010, 121). Using the path dependence

approach, the 1986 power shift of the Slovenian Communist Party was a key event that greatly affected the outcome of Slovenia in the early 1990s. Had the power shift also turned nationalist in Slovenia in 1986, instead of liberal, Slovenia's path may have been more in line with Serbia's. Evidence of Slovenia's reforms was apparent in its press. In the latter half of the 1980s, Slovenia strayed from Titoism in allowing freedom of the press that challenged Yugoslav policies. The magazine *Mladina* became an outspoken critic of Yugoslav and Milosevic's policies (Percy 1995, 31:15-31:45).

The decline of Titoism ushered in the emergence of alternative voices, which led to two very different outcomes, a nationalist Serbia and a liberal Slovenia. In keeping with the path dependency theory, these two conditions are essential in the next piece of the puzzle: the transformation from a peaceful society to a violent one. Until 1991, ethnic violence had not yet erupted into warfare, but the critical junctures of the path dependence theory enabled violence to break out.

### **Outbreak of Violence in Slovenia**

The initial warfare that broke out in Yugoslavia was not in nationalist Serbia, but in liberal Slovenia. Slovenia had paid close attention to the developments on the ethnic situation in Kosovo and in 1989 there was widespread condemnation of Serbia's "domination in Kosovo" (Associated Press 1989a, 00:30-00:45). The Slovenian leader Milan Kucan foresaw that Serbia's growing power throughout Yugoslavia put Slovenia at risk (Percy 1995, 23:55-24:30). Relations further diminished between the Slovenian and Serbian republics in January 1990 at the 14th Yugoslav Communist Party Congress. When upset with the Serbian delegation's behavior, the Slovene delegation of the Yugoslavian Communist Party walked out (44:00-44:45). Slovenia's political objectives had strayed so far from Serbia's that Slovenia saw it in its best interest to sever its ties with the Yugoslav Communist Party.

The declaration of secession is what ultimately triggered the outbreak violence in Slovenia. The Yugoslav People's Army quickly moved troops in from Belgrade to stop the secession. After ten days of fighting, the European Community, Yugoslavia, and Slovenia brokered a 90-day ceasefire to put an end to all the violence (Wilmer 2002, 46-47). The first instance of warfare to break out in Yugoslavia was in Slovenia, though the case of Slovenia presents a separate narrative to the other Yugoslav republics. While ethnicity may have played some role in the Ten-Day War, the actual warfare that took place in Slovenia involved very few civilians and was mainly fought between the Yugoslav's People Army and separatists in the newly-formed Slovenian military. The example of Slovenia shows that ethnic hatred played almost no role in this conflict. Therefore, the critical juncture that occurred in Slovenia in 1986 and the subsequent actions to liberalize instead of nationalize demonstrate the validity of the path-dependence theory in this argument.

### **Outbreak of Violence in Croatia**

In contrast to Slovenia, the violence in Croatia was more severe. Serb areas of Croatia had actually begun to reject Croatian control in what became known as the "log revolution" (Glardic 2011, 193). The Socialist Republic of Serbia was instrumental in this affair as the Serbian State Security Service "armed and trained" the Serb Croat revolt (193). Instead of trying to secede from Yugoslavia altogether, the Serb Croats were instead looking to unite with the Socialist Republic of Serbia.

Croatia was not immune to the changes occurring elsewhere in Yugoslavia during the

1980s. While the League of Communists of Croatia did not pivot to the degree seen in Slovenia, alternative voices did enter the political scene in the late 1980s. Croatia's critical juncture, however, did not occur until 1990, when the republic held its first multiparty elections (Gagnon 2004, 136). The election resulted in a victory for the Croatian Democratic Union, (HDZ), (136). This meant a departure from communism and the emergence of nationalism. The new leader of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, (138). Tudjman's political party contained a radical nationalist faction with an anti-Serb agenda. This wing of the party contained members loyal to the former "Ustasa", a fascist organization that collaborated with the Nazis during World War II (138). Aware of the radical elements in his party, Tudjman was able to distance himself, and it was his watered-down nationalism attracted the most voters (138). Given that nationalism did exist in Croatia, more so than in Slovenia, but less powerful than in Serbia, the degree of violence seen in Croatia was in between the level seen in Slovenia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 1990 "Log Revolution" was the first instance of violence in Croatia. Unlike the Ten-Day War in Slovenia in 1991 with low civilian involvement, Croatia eventually fell into civil war. Like other republics in Yugoslavia, Croatia was also subjected to increasing pro-Serbian propaganda (Gagnon 2004, 136). Many Serb Croats living in the republic felt alienated by the new Croatian government, which used the same nationalist symbols used by the Croatian government that collaborated with the Nazis during World War II (Percy 1995, 52:00-53:20). In reaction to this sentiment, President Tudjman stated that all ethnic groups in Croatia would be treated equally (138). Despite the fact that Croatian Democratic Union had far-right elements in its party, the majority of Croatians separated the mainly moderate nationalist makeup of the party from the extreme fringe and continued to support equal rights for Serb Croats. (154-156). The ambiguity surrounding the Croatian symbolism and its nationalism in general was nonetheless used by Serbia to fulfill its own agenda of taking control over Serb areas in Croatia. Warfare then broke out between the Croatia and Yugoslav People's Army (Percy 1995, 1:35:00-1:35:45).

### **Outbreak of Violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Bosnia-Herzegovina suffered the most violence of any of the Yugoslav republics. The republic consisted of three main ethnic groups: Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats. Unlike the leadership in Slovenia and Croatia, Bosnian leaders were still negotiating future ties with Yugoslavia into 1992. Without Slovenia and Croatia in the federation, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic concluded that Serbia would dwarf Bosnia-Herzegovina in a smaller Yugoslavia and therefore called for a referendum to take place on independence on February 29, 1992 (Glardic 2011, 289).

The referendum resulted in an overwhelming vote for independence, though Bosnian Serbs had boycotted the referendum. This became a "critical juncture" in the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina as the referendum was followed by civilian violence (Glardic 2011, 292). After a Bosnian Muslim killed a Bosnian Serb at a wedding in Sarajevo, the city and republic immediately broke out in widespread ethnic violence. Using the death of the Bosnian Serb, SDS Party Chairman Kardzic demanded the deployment of Serb paramilitaries in Sarajevo. These paramilitary groups quickly engaged in fighting and sought to obtain as much territory as possible for the Bosnian Serbs throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. Violence in the Balkans reached a new level when Serb paramilitary groups engaged in ethnic cleansing by massacring Bosnian Muslim areas as was done in March and April 1992 in the Bosnian

town of Bijeljina (296). The horrors that unfolded in Bosnia continued until the Dayton Agreement was signed in late 1995 and brought an end to the war.

### **Outbreak of Violence in Kosovo**

The outbreak of violence in Kosovo differs considerably from the chronology of violence in the aforementioned Yugoslav republics. Path dependency can help explain this phenomenon through the key political events that occurred in the province. These key events in Kosovo were dramatically different from Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and consequently the timelines of events differs as well.

Although war broke out in Kosovo last, ethnic tensions were first heightened in this part of Yugoslavia. In 1981, one year after Tito's death, student demonstrators in Kosovo protested the poor economic conditions. In addition, some protestors also demanded that the semiautonomous province become a Yugoslav republic and share the same degree of autonomy as the six republics (Bieber 2003, 2). As the decade progressed, Kosovar Serbs increasingly claimed that they were being discriminated against and filed reports of defaced churches and being violently attacked (15). Whatever tension or discrimination that may have existed, Slobodan Milosevic, the new President of the Serbia, used this tense social environment as a window of opportunity to fulfill his nationalist agenda of creating a "Greater Serbia". Amidst civil unrest in Kosovo, the Serbian parliament revoked the autonomous status of Kosovo in March 1989 (Vetter 1999, 543-544). This was a critical juncture for Kosovo as the majority-Albanian population there was no longer able to use political institutions and mechanisms to gain greater autonomy or participate meaningfully in local affairs.

After war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina, fear increased among Kosovar Albanians that Serbs would wage war on them next (Associated Press 1992, 04:45-05:00). By fall 1992, societal conditions had reached an all time low in Kosovo as ethnic Albanians were banned from attending school. The Serb-dominated government, which had overturned Kosovo's autonomous status three years prior, made it difficult and politically not feasible for ethnic Albanians to protest (00:00-00:35). The general atmosphere in Kosovo during the early and mid-1990s was one of a police state where Albanian Kosovars were attacked and monitored as a method of intimidation to any dissent against the Serb-dominated government (00:45-01:30). Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians fled Kosovo during this time escape the Serbian ethnic cleansing policy (04:50-05:05).

The situation changed in Kosovo during the mid-1990s after the Dayton Accords were signed in late 1995. While the Dayton Accords brought peace to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the accords were adamantly opposed by many Kosovar Albanians, who believed that the treaty would keep the territorial boundaries of Yugoslavia intact. This critical juncture in Kosovo resulted in the mobilization of ethnic Albanians into an underground organization known as the Kosova Liberation Army who aimed to achieve Kosovar independence through violent means. After international peace talks failed, NATO intervened in Yugoslavia in 1999 and brought the war to a close after three months of military engagement (Bieber 2003, 41). Estimates indicate that more than 10,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed in the war and hundreds of thousands more displaced (Vetter 1999, 568).

### **The Emotional Component to Path Dependency Theory**

The path dependency theory has thus far explained how the political environment

changed in Yugoslavia, and consequently, how nationalism was able to permeate throughout the country. The rise of nationalist leaders cannot fully explain how the country erupted in violence as civilians, and not just politicians and the military, engaged in the violence. Building upon the path dependency theory, schismogenesis was the development of the hostile social environment created by the rise of nationalist leaders.

### **Schismogenesis**

Following the political upheaval and chain of events in Serbia in 1987, Milosevic's rise coincided with the rise in nationalist media. Using the media to his advantage, Milosevic systematically changed the nature of popular media outlets through personnel changes and reorganization, as was the case with the Serbian newspaper *Politika* and the television station *Radio Televizija Beograd* (Bozik-Roberson 2005, 400). What were originally considered reputable sources, media outlets such as *Radio Televizija Beograd*, became mouthpieces for Serb nationalist propaganda (401-402). The shift in media in Serbian society to nationalist propaganda created an environment where "...the psycho-cultural power of ethnicity is turned into a source of hatred and stereotyping that can ultimately be mobilized into a violent conflict" (405).

Nationalist propaganda throughout the other Yugoslav republics during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Tudjman's nationalist government in Croatia embarked on a renaming policy in 1990 with the dismantling of Titoist references in favor of Croatian symbolism, much of which had fascist "Ustashe" connotations that aimed to further divide Croats and Serbs (Dennich 2000, 52-53). This policy by the new government in Croatia is another example of elite-driven "schismogenesis" that unfortunately led into future armed mobilization in Croatia.

### **Armed Mobilization**

Taking human emotions into account, armed mobilization theory follows the negative hostile social environment created through "schismogenesis". As noted in Stefano Costalli's article on armed mobilization, "...political scientists have (re)discovered the importance of introducing ideas and emotions into explanations for internal armed conflict" (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015, 119). Path dependency explains the descent into violence in Yugoslavia by showing the rise in nationalist leadership, but it cannot explain how Yugoslavian citizens became engaged in violence. Therefore, schismogenesis helps explain how the nationalist leadership negatively Yugoslavian society. After the negative environment was created through schismogenesis, it negatively affects human emotions.

In the case of Yugoslavia, many citizens of the country developed the feeling of indignation. This feeling differs from anger in that the emotion causes citizens to react against society at large instead of a single person or perpetrator. Those consumed with indignation therefore feel that they are defending and acting on behalf of those who are thought to have been victimized (128). Indignation, however, does not fully explain the breakout in violence as Costalli's article explains that those subjected to the "unfair" environment must adhere to a new ideology that calls for violence against the "aggressors" (129).

Armed mobilization is the final step in how Yugoslavia evolved from a peaceful society to one consumed by violent conflict. Like the aforementioned path dependency theory, schismogenesis and armed mobilization theories also illustrate the path needed for violence to break out. In the case of the armed mobilization theory, a feeling of indignation that evolves into ideological revenge helps explain the descent to violence and civil war in a

country.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The path dependency theory, augmented by schismogenesis and armed mobilization theory conveys how Yugoslavia went from a peaceful society to a violent one in such a short period of time.

The path dependency theory, which looks at the “critical junctures” in Yugoslavia’s political leadership, illustrates how Yugoslavian society abandoned Titoism in favor of other political ideologies. The departure of Titoism was not a resurfacing of ethnic tensions, but rather an introduction of a variety of ideologies in Yugoslavia. While nationalism became dominant in Serbia and Croatia, the case studies indicate that a shift to liberalism in Slovenia and a commitment Yugoslav unity in Bosnia-Herzegovina until the referendum on independence in 1992. Path dependency and the case study of Kosovo illustrate how the delay in major political leadership changes in Kosovo ultimately delayed the outbreak of violence in that region until the late 1990s.

Because the Balkan Wars of the 1990s involved not only government and military officials, schismogenesis adds to the path dependency approach in explaining how the nationalist political environment affected Yugoslavian citizens. In addition, armed mobilization theory ultimately explains the change in human emotions that shifted ethnic relations from hostile to violent.

In conclusion, path dependency accurately illustrates how the change in political leadership in the various republics of the SFRY towards nationalism shows a positive correlation in the amount of violence experienced by that republic in the 1990s. This paper also shows how cultural differences such as language and religion played very little role in these conflicts, not only because of surveys documented in the late 1980s, but also because of how path dependency led to an environment of schismogenesis and eventually armed mobilization.

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## Appendix:

### Path Dependency in Yugoslavia

#### League of Communists of Slovenia

January 1990: League of Communists of Slovenia gives up its monopoly. Slovenia severs ties with the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Vetter 1999).

4 February 1990. League of Communists of Slovenia becomes Party of Democratic Reform (544)

7 March 1990 Socialist Republic of Slovenia becomes Rep. of Slovenia (544)

8 April 1990/22 April 1990: Multiparty elections in Slovenia. Milan Kucan becomes president with 58% of popular vote. (544)

June 1991: Slovenia proclaims independence from Yugoslavia (547)

#### League of Communists of Serbia

May 1986 – 3 September 1987: Ivan Stambolic (Titoist) is President of Serbia (Wetter, 542)

3 September 1987: Slobodan Milosevic (Nationalist) becomes President of Serbia through an internal party election (542).

16 July 1990: Slobodan Milosevic renames League of Communists of Serbia, which becomes Socialist Party of Serbia, and maintains position (545).

#### League of Communists in Croatia

22-23 April/6-7 May 1990: After two rounds of elections, Franjo Tudjman of the Croatian Democratic Party (nationalist) becomes president of Croatia (Vetter, 544)

June 1991: Croatia proclaims independence from Yugoslavia (547)

### League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina

November 1990: Multiparty elections on ethnic lines. Izetbegovic becomes Bosnian President (545-546)

29 February 1992: Bosnia-Herzegovina referendum (549)

1 March 1992: Violence begins after Serb shot and killed (549)

3 March 1992: Bosnia-Herzegovina proclaims independence (549)

### Kosovo

March 1989: Kosovo loses semiautonomous status (Vetter 1999, 543-544).

1995: Dayton Agreement raises unrest in Kosovo and coincides with the creation of the Kosova Liberation Army (Bieber 2003, 41).