

Srebrenica: a 'safe' area

Appendix VI

The Background of the Yugoslav crisis: A
review of the literature

Contents

Introduction.....	3
1. Selection criteria	5
Chapter 1 The history of the Yugoslav state	8
1. South-Slav national ideology	8
2. The history of the Yugoslav state (1918-1992).....	11
3. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav state	12
4. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav state and the Serbo-Croat conflict.....	16
5. The legitimacy of the Communist Yugoslav federation, 1945-1992	18
6. The demystification of Communist history	20
7. The ideological background of extreme nationalist movements and political parties.....	24
Chapter 2 Theories concerning the disintegration of Yugoslavia	27
Introduction	27
1. The question of succession: 'Tito after Tito?'	27
2. The economic crisis	29
3. The crisis of the federal system.....	31
4. The question of the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia.....	33
5. Definitions of the nature of the conflict	35
6. Historical alliances and rivalries	37
7. Hereditary alliances: Russia, Serbia and Montenegro	39
8. Traditional geo-political alliances: England, France, Germany.....	42
9. A historical conflict.....	44
10. Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the disintegration of Yugoslavia.....	46
11. Ethnic conflict.....	55
12. Religious conflict.....	60
13. Ideological conflict	63
14. Political conflict.....	66

Introduction

There is no consensus among experts about the causes and even the course of the conflict, and the factual details of this conflict and their interpretation are still under discussion. The British Yugoslavia expert James Gow¹ pointed out in his review of the relevant literature entitled “After the Flood: Literature on the Context, Causes and Course of the Yugoslav War - Reflections and Refractions” that the publications devoted to the former Yugoslavia often reveal a situation in which each fact, claim or interpretation given by one author is refuted by another: “It is clear that not only was the Yugoslav war hideously complex in its detail and in the variety of issues raised, but comprehension of it was made more difficult by the welter of competing narratives seeking to explain it.”² Another important remark by Gow referred to the many factual errors and dubious interpretations in the literature on both the history of Yugoslavia and the current crisis. Gow concludes that: “Mistakes and important omissions are common in the literature - and both inevitable and understandable, given the complex nature of the subject and the period in question. There is a danger for the non-expert reader (or even for the expert reader who may have happened to have missed something) that, where a mistake is repeated from one author to another, it will be taken as correct.”³ In “Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession,” four Yugoslavia experts review recent English-language publications dealing with the war in the former Yugoslavia.⁴ On the basis of a limited number of books, they try to find answers to a series of questions which have been regularly posed since the start of the conflict: “While the peoples of the former Yugoslavia have suffered and died, a horrified but nevertheless fascinated world has wondered how it was possible that a seemingly prosperous and stable country could collapse into such brutal internecine war. Was this caused by “ancient ethnic hatreds” breaking loose? Who was at fault, the Yugoslav communists or ethnic nationalists, western financial pressures or indecisive western policy? Could the wars have been prevented? What to do now?”⁵

The literature on the history of the Yugoslav state and the crisis of the nineties is vast but of variable quality. The authors of “Instant History...” point out a wide diversity of themes and a lack of theoretical orientation in the literature they select. They distinguish between books written by academics (historians, political scientists, sociologists, etc.) and those by non-academics (journalists, diplomats and other writers). The American historian Sarah A. Kent also stressed the problem of the lack of a proper theoretical framework in the publications about the recent war in the former Yugoslavia in her review article “Writing the Yugoslav Wars: English-language books on Bosnia (1992-1996) and the challenges of analysing contemporary history”.⁶ She considered that “The challenge for historians is how to employ the distinctive analytical tools of our discipline to evaluate the basically ahistorical body of work on a current event”.⁷ While she also stressed the distinction between publications written by scholars and those by non-scholars, she pointed out that the three best books on the crisis in the former Yugoslavia were actually written by non-scholars.⁸

¹ The main books by Gow on this topic are *Legitimacy and Military: The Yugoslav Crisis* (London 1992) and *Triumph of Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (London 1997).

² Gow (1997) 477.

³ *Ibid.*, 481.

⁴ G. Stokes, J. Lampe, D. Rusinow, J. Mostow, ‘Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession’ *Slavic Review* 55 (Spring 1996). 138-162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶ Sarah Kent, *A Writing the Yugoslav Wars: English-language Books on Bosnia (1992-1996) and the Challenges of Analyzing Contemporary History*; *American Historical Review* (October 1997) 1087-1114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1086.

⁸ Kent means the books by C. Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course, and Consequences* (New York 1995). B. Magas, *Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-up, 1980-92* (London 1993), and L. Silber and A. Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York, 1996)

On this basis, Sarah Kent warned against looking for the “truth” in the literature on the Yugoslav crisis: “A general reader’s principal task in approaching these books, like those produced by similar contemporary conflicts, is therefore to develop a critical perspective: that is, to examine authorial intent, to reconstruct the context of the author’s experience, and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an author’s interpretation.”⁹ In other words, it is important not only to understand the claims made in the books but also to consider who wrote them. A clear impression that the authors are very closely involved with their topic may lead the reader to suspect that they are biased. Most of the authors who have written about the former Yugoslavia - especially those writing about the recent war - have been accused by their colleagues, book reviewers or the parties involved in the conflict of being biased or of favouring one particular side, of being pro-Serb, pro-Croat or pro-Muslim. For example, critics accuse the American Yugoslavia expert Susan L. Woodward of defending Serb policies in her book *Balkan Tragedy* - but they still regard this work as an indispensable contribution to the debate.¹⁰ Other authors have openly taken sides, such as the Austrian writer Peter Handke who is now regarded as pro-Serb. When anti-Serb feeling was at its height in Europe, he travelled through Serbia to gain a better understanding of Serb political viewpoints, after which he adopted an extreme stance by depicting the Serbs as innocent victims. On the other hand, the British historian and commentator Noel Malcolm is regarded by some as a supporter of the Bosnian Muslims. His book on the history of Bosnia appeared in 1994, when the foreign mediators involved in the negotiations had arrived at a position of extreme doubt about the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unitary state. In his book, Malcolm defended the historical legitimacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state, in line with the official position of the Bosnian government under Alija Izetbegovic.¹¹

The British author Rebecca West gave a telling description of the lack of objectivity and tendency to take sides exhibited by her compatriots in their writings about the Balkans more than half a century ago¹²: “English persons, therefore, of humanitarian and reformist disposition constantly went out to the Balkan Peninsula to see who was in fact ill-treating whom, and, being by the very nature of their perfectionist faith unable to accept the horrid hypothesis that everybody was ill-treating everybody else, all came back with a pet Balkan people established in their hearts as suffering and innocent, eternally massacree and never a massacer.”¹³

A typical example of bias in modern times is provided by the scientific staff of the Institute for Slav and Balkan Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Most of the researchers there were experts in one particular region such as Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. Great disagreement arose between these various regional experts during the Yugoslav war, each specialist showing a very marked tendency to defend the political stance adopted by “his” or “her” republic. The publications produced by the staff of the institute during this period show for example that the Croatia expert Sergej Romanenko was critical of Serb policy concerning Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the Serbia expert Elena Guskova defended this policy.¹⁴ This type of bias could be regularly observed in similar institutes in other countries during the recent war.

⁹ Kent (1997) 1087-1088.

¹⁰ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, 1995). It is stated in ‘Instant History...’ e.g. that she avoided writing about Kosovo and that she found countless ways of defending the policies of Milosevic (146-147).

¹¹ Peter Handke, *A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia* (New York, 1997). Noel Malcolm, *A Short History of Bosnia* (London, 1994).

¹² West herself was (and still is) regarded as pro-Serb and anti-Croat.

¹³ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon - a Journey through Yugoslavia* (Harmondsworth, 20th edition, 1994). This book was first published in 1942. Since then, it has gone through many editions and been translated into many languages.

¹⁴ Elena Guskova had a big colour photograph of the Serb general Ratko Mladic (who has been accused of war crimes) on the wall of her room in the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1998. When asked why it was there, she replied that she had a great admiration for him as a soldier, and that it was not his fault that his political masters had adopted such a catastrophic policy.

As a by-product of this trend, authors with roots in the former Yugoslavia were often regarded *a priori* as biased. Even though some of them had worked abroad for many years (or had even been born abroad), there was a tendency to think that they could not be objective because of their ethnic origin.¹⁵ For example, if authors of Serb descent were critical of Serb policy in their writings, no one will think of accusing them of doing this because they are pro-Croat or pro-Bosnian. At most, they could be characterized as “traitors” by Serb ideologists. But if these same authors expressed criticism of Bosnian policy, their criticism ran the risk of being disregarded as biased.

This problem is made more complicated by the fact that some authors of Yugoslav descent do support the policies of the ethnic group to which they belong - or would like to belong. A well known example is John Zametica¹⁶, a political scientist who worked in Great Britain before the war. He was the author e.g. of the study *The Yugoslav Conflict* in the authoritative *Adelphi Papers*, which appeared in the summer of 1992. Though not of Serb origin, he acted as the spokesman of the Bosnian Serb government in Pale in 1993. In his analysis of the political crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he questioned the concept of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a ‘republic of burgers’. His argument that the Serbs would always be voted down as a minority by the other two population groups in such a state agreed with the line followed by nationalist Serb politicians from Bosnia.¹⁷

A separate group is formed by the authors who played an active role in formulating nationalist ideologies and in fomenting inter-ethnic intolerance. Some of them were respected as experts in their own field before the conflict started, such as the Bosnian historian of Serb descent Milorad Ekmecic who has written a number of standard works on the history of the South Slav people.¹⁸ He was however also one of the founder members of the nationalist party of the Bosnian Serbs, the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party). He fled from Sarajevo to Belgrade in 1992, and has since written a number of political pamphlets about the risks posed by Muslim fundamentalism in Bosnia.¹⁹

1. Selection criteria

It remains difficult to find a clear, comprehensive explanation of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This is certainly not due to a lack of literature about the region. Even before the start of the Yugoslav crisis, there was a vast literature about the history, politics and culture of Yugoslavia available in many languages, especially in English. The main problem, however, is that there are hardly any good works reviewing the field and summarizing the different views expressed by the various authors. The objective of the present text is to collect as many representative views as possible concerning the above-mentioned topics.

This text is based in the first instance on an analysis of the English, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian literature. The English-language literature on the history of Yugoslavia and the recent war predominates in terms of both quality and quantity. The great advantage of the English-language literature is that it is accessible to an international audience and that it is read world-wide by journalists,

¹⁵ A few more of the many examples of such authors are the British journalist of Croatian descent, Christopher Cvijic (known in Croatia as Krsto Cvijic), the American historian of Croatian descent Ivo Banac, the British historian of Serbian descent Stevan Pavlowich and the American diplomat and historian of Serbian descent Alex Dragnich.

¹⁶ John Zametica is an example of how ethnic origin need not always imply political loyalty. He was a child of an ethnically mixed marriage and is half Slovak and half Muslim. His original name was Omer. When the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina broke out, however, he took the side of the Bosnian Serbs and now calls himself Jovan Zametica.

¹⁷ According to the Serb journalist Slavko Curuvija, Zametica offered his services to the Bosnian Serbs in London in 1992. It has been claimed that he influenced public opinion in Great Britain in favour of the Bosnian Serbs even before the war broke out (see the article ‘Dzon Vejn na Miljacki’, in *Borba*, 10-11 April 1993).

¹⁸ M. Ekmecic, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1789-1918* (Belgrade, 1989). One of Ekmecic’s best known works is the book *Ratni ciljevi Srbije* (Belgrade, 1973), which won him international acclaim.

¹⁹ For example, he published two long essays in the weekly *Nedeljni Telegraf* under the title ‘Islamerika’, in which he accused the USA of giving worldwide support to Islam (25 February and 4 March 1998).

diplomats, politicians, military personnel, scholars and students. In addition, major works not originally written in English are regularly translated into this language.²⁰

In addition to the English-language literature, it is essential to study the literature in the languages that are spoken in the region if one wishes to have an optimum understanding of the history of the region and of the political developments in the recent past. This literature is only accessible to a limited audience outside Yugoslavia, viz. the regional experts and a few journalists and diplomats. For the purposes of this review, in particular the relevant Serb, Croat and Bosnian sources have been consulted, as has the Dutch, French, German and Russian literature (albeit to a much lesser extent).

The various themes found in the literature concerning the former Yugoslavia and the recent war have been collected in two chapters, entitled:

- The history of the Yugoslav state
- Theories concerning the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Some details concerning the content of these two chapters are given below.

(Chapter I). The main themes concerning the history of Yugoslavia in the 19th century are the development of the South Slav national question and the power struggle in the Balkans during this period. The following books have been analysed in this context: *National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, (Ithaca, 1983) by Ivo Banac; *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1790-1918*, (Belgrade, 1989) by Milorad Ekemčić; and *Jugoslavenska ideologija u hrvatskoj i slovenskoj politici: Hrvatsko-slovenski politički odnosi 1848-1870*, (Zagreb, 1986) by Petar Korunić.

The following books dealing with the creation and dissolution of the Yugoslav state in the 20th century has been analysed: Ivo Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Conference: A Study in Frontiermaking* (New Haven, 1977). D. Djordjević and S. Fisher-Galati (eds.) *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara, 1980). A. Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia* (New Brunswick, 1974). - *Serbs and Croats: The struggle in Yugoslavia* (New York, 1992). Dusan Bilandžić, *Historija SFRJ: glavni procesi, 1918-1985*, (Zagreb 1985). Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918-1988*, 3 vols, (Belgrade 1988). Vladimir Dedijer et al., *History of Yugoslavia* (New York 1974). John Lampe, *Yugoslavia, Twice There was a Country* (Cambridge (UK), 1996); Stevan K. Pavlowich, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and its Problems 1919-1988* (London, 1988) and Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York, 1995).

The literature on the history of the Yugoslav state tends to concentrate on Serbo-Croat relationships. Much less attention has been (and still is) paid to the other South Slav peoples, in particular the Slovenes, the Montenegrins, the Macedonians and the Bosnians.²¹ The Kosovo Albanians could also be considered to belong to this group of peoples, but the problems of Albanian nationality fall outside the scope of the present study. Interest in Montenegro and Macedonia since the disintegration of Yugoslavia has been limited, however. Most of the literature on the history of these regions appeared before Yugoslavia split up in 1991. Ivo Banac's book *Yugoslav National Question* gives a good overview of the growth of national awareness in Montenegro and Macedonia and the attitude of their inhabitants to the South Slav union. His work has provided a basis for more recent studies of these regions. For example, the British commentator Hugh Poulton cites extensively from Banac's work in his book *Who are Macedonians?* (London 1995); however, Poulton's book is still a useful addition to the existing literature since it places the recent confused political developments relating to Macedonia in a wider historical perspective.

Interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina has grown since the war broke out there, and dozens of books about the history of this region have appeared since 1994. The following (mainly) English-language books about the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina which were published since the outbreak of war there will be analysed in the present study: Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - A Short History* (London, 1994). Mark

²⁰ See e.g. Catharine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York, 1995), translated from the French by Peter Handke, and *A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia* (New York, 1997), translated from the German.

²¹ Gow refers to these peoples as 'uncharted territories'.

Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, Mass, 1994). R. Donia and J. Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: a Tradition Betrayed* (London, 1994). J-M. Calic, *Der Krieg in Bosnien-Herzegovina: Ursachen, Konfliktstrukturen, Internationale Lösungsversuche* (Frankfurt, 1995). Franciene Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, 1996).

In 2000, the historian Robert Donia published a review of four books on the history of Bosnia and the Bosnians published after the recent war, under the title “The New Bosniak History”. The four books in question are Ahmed Alicic, *Pokret za autonomiju Bosne i Hercegovine od 1831. do 1832. godine*, (Sarajevo, 1996); Sacir Filandra, *Bosnjacka politika u XX.. stoljecu.*, (Sarajevo, 1998); Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1996); Behija Zlatar, *Zlatno doba Sarajeva* (Sarajevo, 1996).²² Donia describes the significance of these works as follows: “Although these studies build upon several propositions advanced by Bosniak scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, they reflect substantial additional research and are characterized by originality, boldness, and a concern with the historical antecedents of contemporary Bosniak identity. Therefore, they are substantial contributions to a new Bosniak history, which may be defined as recent works written by Bosniak authors about the Bosniak past.”²³

The review in the present study of the historical roots of Bosnian identity is based on analysis of the following historical studies: Vera Krzisnik-Bukic, *Bosanski identitet izmedju proslosti i buducnosti*, (Sarajevo, 1997) and Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998).

(Chapter II). This chapter deals with the various theories about the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the various interpretations and definitions of the recent war. According to Gow, one of the main characteristics of this war was the general disagreement about its nature: “It was variously typified as, inter alia, ethnic, nationalist, historic, religious, genocidal or aggressive”.²⁴ Gow himself considered all these definitions relevant, but none of them decisive. He defines the war as “a clash of state projects”.²⁵ A very wide selection of books will be analysed in this chapter, varying from highly specialized regional studies giving details of the escalation of the conflict, to more theoretical works giving an insight into the theories about e.g. ethnic conflicts and nationalism. This selection includes the following books: *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration*, (New York, 1993) by the Yugoslav sociologist Laslo Sekelj; *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-Up*, (London, 1993) by the British journalist of Croat descent Branka Magas and *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* by the journalists L. Silber and A. Little (London, 1995). The theoretical insights into the causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia are underrepresented compared with the works dealing with the reconstruction of the escalation process. In the book *The South-Slav Conflict: History, Religion, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, edited by R. Frieman and R. Thomas (New York, 1996), the authors analyse the Yugoslav conflict from various theoretical viewpoints. Another book with interesting theoretical insights is *War and Religion in Bosnia*, edited by Paul Mojzes, (Atlanta, 1997), in which the authors deal with the historical and religious background of the war. The book *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, edited by Leo Tindemans (Washington, 1996) gives an interesting survey of perceptions in the former Yugoslavia and abroad about the causes of the war. An extensive analysis is also given of the involvement of the international community, in particular the policies of the EU member states, Russia, the USA and the UN.

²² See: Robert Donia, ‘The New Bosniak History’, in *Nationalities Papers*, (Vol. 28, No. 2) 2000: 351-358.

²³ *Ibid.*, 351.

²⁴ Gow (1997) 446.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 447.

Chapter 1

The history of the Yugoslav state

1. South-Slav national ideology

The South-Slav or Yugoslav national question is the name given to the question as to how a feeling on national identity developed among the South-Slav peoples²⁶ This topic is of great importance for the history of the 20th century and for the origin of the Yugoslav state. Right from the beginning, it comprised two diametrically opposed concepts of state formation, one arising from nationalist ideologies and aiming at the creation of separate Serb and Croat national states within their 'historical and ethnic boundaries' and the other arising from South-Slav unitarism and envisaging the formation of a joint state embodying both national entities.

The history of the 19th and 20th centuries shows a continual alternation between nationalist and unitarist state projects. The historian Ivo Banac lays the main stress on the development of the Serb and Croat national ideologies which have been advocating the formation of national states for each group since the 19th century; he contrasted these with the 'unitarist' and 'integrationalist' ideologies which made a plea for the formation of a joint South-Slav state. Banac describes the Yugoslav national question as arising from a conflict between the various ideologies: "Yugoslavia's national question was the expression of the conflicting national ideologies that have evolved in each of its numerous national and confessional communities, reflecting the community's historical experiences. These ideologies assumed their all but definite contours well before the unification and could not be significantly altered by any combination of cajolery or coercion. The divisions inherited in the national movements of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the three principal nationalities of Yugoslavia, were not, however, sufficient to forestall the rise of a single southern Slavic state. The credit for this feat must be ascribed to the ideology of unitaristic Yugoslavism. It captured the imagination of the southern Slavic intelligentsia in Austria-Hungary and could be accepted by the Serbian elite without any significant departures from all the traditions and trappings of Serbian statehood."²⁷

The Serb historian Milorad Ekmecic distinguishes four periods in the development of the 'south-Slav national question':

- a period of belief (1790-1830);
- a period of culture (1830-1860);
- a period of politics (1860-1903);
- a period of violence (1903-1918).²⁸

The period of belief was characterized by the predominant role of religion and the church, especially in Serbia, in the growth of a proto-national identity.

The period of culture saw the secularization of national identity, with language as the main criterion of nationality. The prominent Serb intellectuals Dositej Obradovic (1739-1811) and Vuk Karadzic (1787-1864) introduced linguistic criteria for determination of Serb ethnic identity. According

²⁶ See e.g. I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, (Ithaca and London, 1984). W.D. Behschnitt, *Nationalismus bei Serben und Croats 1830-1914: Analyse und Typologien der nationalen Ideology* (Munchen, 1989). V. Cubrilovic, *Istorija politicke misli u Srbiji XIX veka*, (Belgrade, 1958). M. Ekmecic, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790-1918*, 2 vols., (Belgrade 1989). F. Gerstin and V. Melik, *Slovenska zgodovina od konca osemnajstega stoletja do 1918* (Ljubljana, 1966). P. Korunic, *Jugoslavenska ideologija u hrvatskoj i slovenskoj politicians: Hrvatsko-slovenski politicki odnosi 1848-1870*, (Zagreb, 1986). Viktor Novak, *Antologija jugoslavense misli i narodnog jedinstva (1390-1930)* (Belgrade, 1930). Carole Rogel, *The Slovenes and Yugoslavism 1890-191* (Boulder, Col., 1977). Ferdo Sisic, *Jugoslavenska misao. Istorija ideje jugoslavenskog narodnog ujedinjenja i oslobocenja od 1790-1918* (Belgrade, 1937).

²⁷ I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca and London, 1984) 406-407.

²⁸ Milorad Ekmecic, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1790-1918*, 2vols. (Belgrade, 1989).

to these criteria, all South Slavs who spoke the *sto* dialect belonged to the Serb nation.²⁹ In 1836, Karadzic wrote in an essay entitled *Srbi svi i svuda* (Serbs All and Everywhere) that 5 million people spoke the same language, though they were divided over three different religions (Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim). According to Karadzic, only the Orthodox Serbs were really 'serbs': the Muslims who spoke the same language regarded themselves as 'Turks', while the Catholic Serbs belonged to other groups such as the Slavonians, Dalmatians and Bosnians. He was surprised that the Muslims and Catholics who belonged within the Serb linguistic group did not wish to be called Serbs, while for examples Hungarians and Germans of the Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinist faith still regarded themselves as Hungarians and Germans.³⁰ Karadzic made a plea for a common Serbo-Croat language based on the *sto-ije* dialect, which was spoken by the Serbs, the Croats, the inhabitants of Bosnia (Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox) and the Montenegrin. This was also the dialect in which the oral folk literature had been created, and in which the Renaissance literature of Ragusa was written. In Karadzic's opinion, this dialect was the most suitable one for general use because apart from its rich literary tradition it was already spoken by the majority of South Slavs. Banac regarded Vuk Karadzic's 'linguistic nationalism' as the basis for the Serb territorial expansion in the second half of the 19th century. In 1844, Ilija Garasanin (1812-1874), at the time minister of Internal Affairs, drafted a secret political programme that became known as *Nacertanije* (The Plan), in which he stated that the boundaries of the new Serbian state should be such as to enclose the regions occupied by the Serbian population. Banac writes that in adopting this approach, Garasanin had distanced himself from the ideas of the religious traditionalists, who regarded the Orthodox faith as the main criterion for the determination of Serbian ethnic identity. By accepting Karadzic's linguistic criteria, he had created a much wider basis for the expansion of the Serbian state. However, this approach reduced Croatian ethnicity to the regions where the *ca* dialect was spoken (Istria, Primorje and the islands off the Adriatic coast). During the recent war, Garasanin was often called the evil genius behind the Serbs' aggressive nationalism. It should be noted, however, that the text of *Nacertanije* was not published until 1906, and that opinions about Garasanin's political intentions have been deeply divided since then. The Croat historian Ferdo Sisic, writing in 1926, saw no evil intentions in *Nacertanije* and regarded this document as the basis for innovations in Serb national policy in the second half of the 19th century. Other Yugoslav and in particular Serb historians regarded Garasanin as the founder of 'Yugoslavism', and *Nacertanije* as a political programme for South-Slav union with Serbia as the main political driving force behind the movement.³¹ It was not until 1937 that *Nacertanije* was first linked with Serb expansionist policies, when the Serb historian J.D. Mitrovic wrote that *Nacertanije* embodied a plea for a Greater Serbia rather than for a South-Slav state. Banac pointed out that there was a tendency in Serbian and Yugoslav historiography to regard any attempt at South-Slav union as Yugoslavism: "What precisely is the meaning of Yugoslavism? There is a tendency, especially in Serbian historiography but not only there, to view any attempt at southern Slavic conglomeration as Yugoslavism. And since the ideology of Karadzic and the policy of the Serbian state did take an expansive direction, their Yugoslav character is frequently assumed."³²

The Communist historiography manifests the same dilemmas: was Garasanin the 'spiritual father of Yugoslavism' or the evil genius behind the idea of a Greater Serbia?³³ Any judgement about

²⁹ The Serbo-Croat system of dialects comprises four main dialects: torlak, kajkavian, cakavian and stokavian, which are further subdivided into the sub-dialects ikavian, ijekavian and ekavian. The stokavian-ijekavian combination is the most highly developed, with four accents, seven cases etc., and is spoken by the largest number of South Slavs, including the Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Montenegrins. The stokavian-ekavian combination is only used by the Serbs of Vojvodina and Sumadija. The kajkavian dialects are spoken in the north of Croatia and Slovenia, and the cakavian in the coastal regions of Dalmatia, Primorje and Istria. See e.g. Asim Peco, *Pregled Srpskohrvatskih dialekata*, (Belgrade, 1980).

³⁰ See N. Tromp, 'servo-Kroatische talenstrijd', *Oost Europa Verkenningen* 123 (1992).

³¹ Mirko Valentic, 'Prva programska formulacija velikosrpske ideje' in Boze Covic (ed.) *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* (Zagreb, 1991) 41-64.

³² Banac (1984) 108-109.

³³ See Valentic (1991).

Nacertanije as a manifesto for the formation of a Greater Serbia can never be complete, however, without taking the time when the document was written into consideration. The formation of a strong state occupied a central position in Garasanin's geopolitical ideas, as it did in the currents of geopolitical thought throughout Europe at the time. A strong Serbian state was intended as a counter-balance against the power politics of the European great powers in the Balkans, which is why Garasanin was sometimes called the Serbian Bismarck.³⁴ Garasanin's political plans, and in particular the concept of Serbian 'linguistic nationalism', did not give rise to violent reactions from the other South Slav peoples at the time. The Illyrianists had their hands full with problems of internal politics: the repressive policies followed in Vienna with respect to the Slav peoples after 1848 did not change until 1867.³⁵ Between 1866 and 1867, the Croatian supporters of political union of the South Slavs under the leadership of Bishop J.J. Strossmayer even had talks with followers of Garasanin about the form of a joint state.³⁶ The dominant idea among Croatian adherents of Yugoslavism at that time was that the current political and economic developments meant that union would have to be realized in two phases. The first phase would comprise unification of the South Slav regions within the Habsburg Empire (i.e. Slovenia, Croatia and Vojvodina). Unification with the other South Slav regions (i.e. Serbia) would take place in a subsequent phase.³⁷ Garasanin did not intend to relinquish the Serbian leadership, but his discharge as minister in 1867 meant an end to his ambitious plans for radical restructuring of the Balkans under Serb leadership.³⁸

The 'period of politics' was characterized by the dominant role of political parties in the formulation of national interests. Ekmečić sees the political changes in the Balkans following the Congress of Berlin (1878) as decisive for the formation of modern political parties in Serbia. After 1882, Serbian politics were controlled by the Serbian Radical Party (SRP). The charismatic leader of this party, Nikola Pašić, was an active supporter of the idea of a strong Serbian state. It was not until the First World War that he changed his political strategy and began advocating a joint South-Slav state. The founder of the Serbian Socialist Party, Svetozar Marković, who was the first to use the term "Greater Serbia" as criticism of the expansionist Serb policies, was in fact the supporter of the formation of a Serbian state, which he believed however should ultimately develop into a multi-ethnic supranational federation.³⁹

In Croatia, the traditions of the Illyrianist movement were continued by an influential group of liberal intellectuals round Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905) and his disciple Franjo Rački (1828-1894). Strossmayer financed projects intended to pave the way for the political unification of the South Slavs. It was considered that the new state should have a neutral name, which would be acceptable to everyone. The group chose the name Yugoslavia, and their ideology came to be known as *Jugoslavenstvo* (Yugoslavism). Strossmayer founded the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb. Thanks to his efforts, Zagreb became the centre of activities aimed at the cultural and political unification of the South Slavs in the second half of the 19th century. One of Strossmayer's most important initiatives was his attempt to end the religious schism between the Roman and Orthodox churches, which in his opinion had had disastrous consequences for the Slavic peoples in particular. The political instrument of this influential circle of intellectuals was the National Liberal Party. The short-term political goal of this party the unification of the South-Slav peoples in Croatia, as a federal unit within the Habsburg Empire. Its long-term political goal was the formation of a great South-Slav state after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, in which the South Slavs from the Habsburg regions would join up with the Serbs and Montenegrins. However, Strossmayer found no political allies in Serbia who were prepared to work with him for a South-Slav federation.

³⁴ Zie b.v.: S. MacKenzie, Ilija Garasanin: Balkan Bismarck (Boulder Col., 1985)

³⁵ Banac (1984) 85.

³⁶ Korunić (1986) 24.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jelavich (1990) 11.

³⁹ Banac, (1984) 109.

One of the first critics of Karadzic's linguistic nationalism was the Croat Ante Starcevic (1823-1896), who together with Eugen Kvaternik (1825-1871) was the founder of a Croatian national ideology which contrasted sharply with that of the Illyrianists. They started from the assumption that the Croats were a 'political people' who had the right to a state of their own. On the basis of their interpretation of old historic sources, they concluded that the Croatian state should extend from the Alps in the west to the River Drina in the east, and from Albania in the south to the Danube in the north. Starcevic moved the eastern boundary of the state to the River Timok, thus leaving only the Croats and the Bulgarians as South-Slav peoples. He called the Slovenes 'mountain Croats' and the Serbs a 'mixed race' whose name was derived from the Latin *servus* (which means slave).⁴⁰ He also regarded the Bosnians as belonging to the Croatian nation, and he showed his admiration for Islam by calling it the 'oldest and purest nobility of Europe'.⁴¹ Starcevic and Kvaternik founded the Party of Right, whose goal was the complete independence of Croatia from the Habsburg Empire. They hoped that all South Slavs, with the exception of the Bulgarians, would become croatized on the basis of this Pan-Croatian ideology. The role that Starcevic played in the development of the Pan-Croatian or Greater Croatian idea is comparable with that of Garasanin for the formulation of the Pan-Serbian or Greater Serbian idea. Opinions about Starcevic are also divided among historians. Communist historiography regarded him as the evil genius behind the Croatian extreme nationalist Ustasa regime (1941-1945), while he is seen as the father of the nation in nationalist Croatian historiography. A more obvious choice for the role of evil genius behind Croatian extreme nationalist movements would however seem to be his successor Juraj Frank (1844-1911), who founded the Pure Party of Right in 1895 and formulated an extreme nationalist ideology which preached hatred against Serbs. Since the second half of the 19th century, a deep split has existed in Croatian political life between those who believed in South-Slav unification such as Strossmayer's National Liberal Party and their opponents such as Starcevic's Party of Right.

The 'period of violence' was dominated by factions which used violence in the conflict with their political opponents. The best known example of such a faction was the Serbian organization *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* (Unification or Death), whose aim was to unite all Serbs in a single state. Violence was used to deal with political opponents. It is noteworthy that the violence in this period was not directed against ethnic groups, but was generally used to settle political scores, and in response to domestic political issues. Deep political division existed in Serbia at this time between the three main pillars of the establishment: the royal house (the Obrenovic dynasty up to 1903 and the Karadjordjevic dynasty thereafter), the Serbian government under Nikola Pasic and the Serbian army (which also pursued the aim of a Greater Serbia and was the most radical of the three). The hard core of *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* consisted of Serb army officers; it was this organization that planned the assassination of the last Obrenovic king in 1903, and that of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914.

2. The history of the Yugoslav state (1918-1992)

It is clear from the literature concerning the South-Slav national question that there were different forms of Yugoslavism (the idea of political unification of the South Slavs), varying from Pan-Serbism and Pan-Croatism to Austro-Slavism and Yugoslavism. Ivo Banac introduced the term 'political Yugoslavism' to denote the final phase in the development of the Yugoslav idea. He ascribed these developments to the students and youth movements that were active at the beginning of the 20th century. Although various student and youth groups were active abroad, e.g. in Vienna and Prague, it was the National Youth Movement on home soil which did most to define political Yugoslavism. The members of the National Youth Movement were young intellectuals from Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia who propagated the theory of national unity (*narodno jedinstvo*). They regarded the Serbs, Croats

⁴⁰ Ibid., 87

⁴¹ Ibid., 108.

and Slovenes as all belonging to one and the same nation - an idea that is also known as 'Yugoslav unitarism'. The creators of this theory believed that the differences in linguistic and literary traditions, and the religious differences between the various South-Slav peoples, could be overcome by the political will to form a unitary state; they expected that each of the peoples in question would have to make concessions relating to their national identity in order to create a common Yugoslav identity.

The National Youth Movement was active in the period between 1909 and 1914. The First World War created new political realities: the Habsburg Empire collapsed in 1918, Slovenia and Croatia were liberated and the politically weakened Serbian government looked for new ways of uniting the Serbs in a single state. The formation of a common South-Slav state seemed one possibility.

The first common South-Slav state was founded in 1918, under the name 'the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes'. Its name was changed to 'the Kingdom of Yugoslavia' in 1929.⁴² The Kingdom of Yugoslavia collapsed in 1941 as a result of the military attack by the Axis powers. A new Yugoslav state was founded in 1945, this time as a communist federation, the official name of which was initially 'the Federative Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia' (FNRJ - *Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija*). The name was changed in 1963 to 'the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia' (SFRJ - *Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*). This state would remain in existence for more than 45 years, but collapsed in 1991. In 1992, Serbia and Montenegro founded the third Yugoslav state, the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.⁴³

3. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav state

Artificial?

Yugoslavia was founded three times, and collapsed twice. This has led to many studies of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state, especially after the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. The French journalist Catherine Samary wrote a book about the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1995, in which she devoted a great deal of space to a discussion of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state.⁴⁴ Her book rejected the thesis often put forward in the early nineties, that the common South-Slav state was 'artificial' and was 'imposed' on people who in fact could not and did not wish to live together. The following words, written by a Dutch journalist, are typical of such analyses: "In this artificial country, built in 1918 on the ruins of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and dominated by Serbia, (...) the various peoples have always treated one another with suspicion - even in the time of Tito. For 73 years, these peoples have been more separated by centuries of historical, economic and cultural differences than united by common characteristics (...). The deeper reasons for all these inequalities are hidden in the dark wood of history and in an illogical economic development."⁴⁵ These and similar arguments are supported by political theories which claim that ethnically homogeneous states are more stable and longer-lasting than multi-ethnic or multi-national ones.⁴⁶ The adherents of these approaches are surprised not so

⁴² Yugoslavia means South Slavia (the land of the South Slavs).

⁴³ For the history of the Yugoslav state see: Ivo Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Conference: A Study in Frontier-making* (New Haven, 1977). D. Djordjevic and S. Fisher-Galati (eds.) *The Creation of Yugoslavia, 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara, 1980). A. Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia* (New Brunswick, 1974). - *Srbs and Kroats: The struggle in Yugoslavia*, (New York, 1992). A. Dilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, 1991). Dusan Bilandzic, *Historija SFRJ: glavni procesi, 1918-1985*, (Zagreb 1985). Branko Petranovic, *Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918-1988*, 3 vols, (Belgrade 1988). Vladimir Dedijer et al., *History of Yugoslavia* (New York 1974). L.B. Valev, G.M. Slavin and I.I. Udal'cov (eds.), *Istoriia Jugoslavii*, 2 vols, (Moscow, 1963).

⁴⁴ Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York, 1995).

⁴⁵ Peter Michielsen et al., *Verwoesting van Joegoslavië* (Rotterdam, 1993) 9.

⁴⁶ Susan Woodward used this argument, referring to the works of Robert A. Dahl, 'Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control' (1982) and C. Tilly: 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making' in Charles Tilly, (ed.) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (1975). See: Woodward (1996) 21, 427.

much by the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia as by the fact that it managed to stay in existence for so long.

The centuries of foreign domination are regarded as the main explanation for the ‘unbridgeable’ conflicts arising between the South-Slav peoples, who were divided between two strongly opposed great powers - the Habsburg Empire (with Slovenia and Croatia) and the Ottoman Empire (with Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina). The above-mentioned Dutch journalist also stated this idea, in a rather popularized form, as follows: “This separate development has turned the Serbs and Croats into different peoples, despite the bond of a common language. Serbia is Orthodox, used the Cyrillic alphabet, and directs its gaze to the south and east. Croatia is Catholic, uses the Latin alphabet and looks westward and northward. But there is more. The Croats - in the Serbs’ opinion, at least - have felt quite comfortable throughout their history as subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the Serbs fought to the death, were impaled on stakes, while their wives were murdered and their children abducted, the Croats lived in comfort and enriched themselves.”⁴⁷

Ethnic similarities

Some authors, on the other hand, regard ethnic differentiation based on relatively minor differences as artificial, and believe that a common South-Slav state is the most pragmatic solution for a region where related ethnic groups live in close proximity. According to this approach, it was precisely the disintegration of the Yugoslav state in 1941 and 1991 and the formation of separate national states after the latter date that caused the civil war, because these processes inevitably lead to boundary conflicts. The adherents of this view regard the formation of the Yugoslav state as the realization of a centuries-old dream of the South-Slav peoples to free themselves from foreign domination and found a state of their own.⁴⁸ They see the legitimacy of Yugoslavia as based on the common ethnic descent of the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians and Macedonians, who all belong to the South Slav peoples. The differences and similarities in ethnic descent between the various South-Slav peoples have been the subject of discussion in intellectual circles for more than a century, but this debate has not produced a final conclusion. What is clear is that there are certain marked similarities, and certain marked differences, between these peoples. In reality, these and similar arguments about similarities and differences have always been subordinated to the political aims of the moment and the desire of certain political groups either to create political union at state level or to get out of existing multinational states. In any case, the union of the South-Slav peoples in 1918 would have been impossible without the political will of the political representatives of the peoples in question. When the joint Yugoslav state was founded, the main stress was laid on the similarities between the national groups that went to make it up; in 1991, on the other hand, the differences were emphasized.

The foreign diktat: the Versailles Peace Conference

The authors who describe Yugoslavia as an ‘artificial state’⁴⁹ argue that a variety of different peoples were forced to live together in this country against their will, and that Yugoslavia had no historical legitimacy because it was thought up and imposed on the peoples concerned by the Great Powers during the Versailles Peace Conference (1918-1919).

The criticism of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state was based in particular on the failure to hold a referendum in 1918 in which the population concerned could express its opinion about the formation of the South-Slav monarchy. Mihailo Crnobrnja, a former Yugoslav diplomat, disagrees

⁴⁷ Michielsen (1993) 10.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Branka Prpa-Jovanovic, ‘The Making of Yugoslavia’, in J. Udovicki & J. Ridgeway (eds.), *Burn This House*, (London, 1997) 49.

⁴⁹ ‘A (...) It was an artificial country, (...), the refrain goes, which never deserved to last its seventy-three years.’ Cited in Woodward (1996) 21.

however with the idea that the foundation of the South-Slav state occurred against the wishes of the majority of the population: “First and foremost, Yugoslavia was created out of, and one could say in spite of, strong national ideologies and national policies. Though blended into a new state, these did not cease to exert some centrifugal force, even when the official and dominant ideology became centralist. But it would be wrong to say it was created against the will of the people. The people in the proper sense of the word were never asked. No one can say with certainty what the verdict would have been had a referendum on the proposition tested the will of the people. Political decision-making at that time did not take account of popular expression, and not only in Yugoslavia was this true. The people involved in politics, the unchosen representatives, clearly made the decision to unite of their own free will and without overt pressure. If there was implied pressure, especially from the big powers, that was a part of the game at the time, not entirely unlike current events.”⁵⁰

According to Ekmecic, support for the unification of the South Slavs was growing steadily among the general population towards the end of the First World War. It varied from 100 % in Dalmatia to 60 % in Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵¹

Another historian, Stevan K. Pavlowich, wondered whether the mainly agrarian population was really able to give a well considered answer to this question: “The declarations of politicians had been full of good intentions; for the population at large it corresponded to vague feelings rather than to a clearly expressed national will. Modern scholarship has yet to consider the question of peasants’ consciousness of their common ‘ethnicity’ before 1914, or that of the common person’s view of the future over the war years to 1918.”⁵²

According to Dragnich, the arguments for doubting the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state could be applied equally well to all the other states built up on the ruins of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires in 1918. The new system of states in Central and South-East Europe was in theory based on the right to self-determination of the peoples concerned, as defined by the American president Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Points. But the people were rarely consulted. Dragnich describes Wilson’s intentions with regard to the South-Slav peoples as follows: “Conveying confidence and idealism, President Wilson, in January 1918, announced his Fourteen Points as the basis of an honourable peace. Although he did not use the word ‘self-determination’, his reference to the indigenous rights of peoples within Turkey and Austria-Hungary made his meaning unmistakable. Of the Balkan states he mentioned only Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania by name (along with Poland, not then in existence independently). (...) The reason for this omission is simple: the victorious Allies had not yet agreed on the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Only when they did so, about mid-1918, was it realistic to think that peoples in the territories of the Dual Monarchy could attempt to form independent states.”⁵³

The domestic diktat: the Corfu declaration

The idea that the joint South-Slav state would never have been possible without international pressure is countered by those authors who have followed the creation of this state from the perspective of the negotiations between Serb and Croat politicians. They point out that a basic agreement about the future state was concluded as early as the summer of 1917. This document, known as the Corfu Declaration, represented a compromise between the Serb and Croat positions regarding the political structure of the future state. It was agreed that the new state would be a monarchy, ruled by the Serbian royal house of Karadjordjevic. No concrete agreements were made about further details of the state’s constitution, due among other things to the great differences of opinion between the Croats and the Serbs. The Croats were in favour of a confederation in which each ethnic group would have a high degree of political and

⁵⁰ M. Crnobrnja, *Yugoslav Drama* (London, 1994) 48-49.

⁵¹ Ekmecic (1989) 829-832.

⁵² S. K. Pawlowich, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and its Problems, 1918-1988*, (London, 1988) 1.

⁵³ A. Dragnich, *Srbs and Kroats: The struggle in Yugoslavia*, (New York, 1992) xix.

cultural autonomy; the Serbs, on the other hand, wanted a centralized state. “Serbs claimed that centralized control by the government under the Serbian monarchy was necessary to keep the fledgling multi-ethnic state together in its formative stage.”⁵⁴

The Corfu Declaration was however criticized by other historians, who doubted whether the Croat politicians involved had any real authority to enter into these negotiations. These politicians were representatives of an informal political organization known as the *Jugoslavenski odbor* (Yugoslav Committee), which operated in exile and had no political basis in Croatia.⁵⁵ The members of the Committee were political émigrés from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who maintained contacts with intellectuals and politicians in the European capitals in order to convince them that the Habsburg monarchy had no future and that a joint South-Slav state would be the best political solution for all the peoples concerned. They were supported by the British commentators Robert Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed, who were powerful advocates of South-Slav political union among Western European politicians. Another weak point of the Corfu Declaration, according to some, concerned the motives of the Serb politicians and intellectuals who were actively working towards the creation of a South-Slav state: “However, the vision of South Slav unity for many Serbian intellectuals usually implied an inclusive Greater Serbia, where all Serbs would be incorporated within a single state. In other words, the uniting of the South Slavs was secondary to the uniting of the Serbs.”⁵⁶

The significance of the Corfu Declaration was also appreciably lessened by the fact that the Montenegrins and Slovenians were not directly involved in the negotiations (with the exception of the Slovenian politician Antun Korosec), though they were intended to be part of the joint state. The Montenegrins would lose their separate ethnic status, and their king, in the new state. The Montenegrin Committee (consisting of Montenegrin émigrés in Paris) reacted positively to the Corfu Declaration. King Nikola of Montenegro was less enthusiastic, however, since the new state would mean the end of his rule. As soon as the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy was announced, the Croatian parliament (the *Sabor*) created the National Council of Slovenians, Croats and Serbs, which then decided to form a joint state together with the Slovenians and Serbs.

The unification of the South Slavs was thus not imposed by Versailles, but was the result of the unitary ‘Yugoslav ideology’, which had developed during the First World War and had gained a steadily increasing number of adherents in Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian political circles during the war. No foreign power would have been able to impose this unification without the support of the local politicians and political parties.

The influence of external factors on the political unification of the South Slav peoples was nevertheless of great significance. It became known in 1917 that Italy had signed a secret treaty in London in 1915, under the terms of which it undertook to fight on the side of the Entente in exchange for major territorial gains at the expense of Austro-Hungary and Turkey, including large parts of Slovenia and Croatia.⁵⁷ The threat of Italian domination speeded up the decision-making process about the formation of a joint state among the Slovenian and Croatian politicians: “It should be strongly emphasized that the South Slavs of the monarchy were under extreme pressure, and they had no real practical alternatives. Austrian-Germans and Hungarians were in the process of organizing republics on a national basis. The imperial framework no longer existed. The realistic alternatives appeared to be either the establishment of a South Slav state or a possible partition of Croatian and Slovenian lands among Italy, Serbia, and perhaps even Austria and Hungary.”⁵⁸

The Serbian side was also under pressure from the international political developments. Czarist Russia ceased to exist in 1917, and the communist government of the new Soviet Union withdrew from

⁵⁴ R. Thomas ‘History, Religion, and National Identity’, in R.G.C. Thomas & H.R. Friman (eds.), *The South-Slav Conflict: History, Religion, Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York-London), 22.

⁵⁵ See M. Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor* (Zagreb, 1925).

⁵⁶ Thomas (1996) 21.

⁵⁷ D. Zivojinovic, *America, Italy and the Birth of Yugoslavia, 1917-1919* (Boulder-New York, 1972).

⁵⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans Twentieth Century* (Cambridge (UK), 1982) 125.

the war. In addition, the Slovenian and Croatian representatives in the Austrian parliament had already drawn up a declaration (the May declaration) in May 1917, advocating the unification of the South Slavs in the Habsburg monarchy – including the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Alarmed by this, the Serbian government speeded up their negotiations with the Yugoslav Committee. Hence, the Corfu Declaration is often interpreted as a tactical move on the part of the Serbs, which merely postponed the implementation of Serb plans for the creation of Greater Serbia. However, some Serb historians such as Ekmečić consider that the Serb war objectives were already defined in the Nis Declaration of 1914, which stated that the main Serb war aims were liberation from Habsburg occupation and unification of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians in a joint South Slav state.⁵⁹

Although Serbia's European allies did not accept the Nis Declaration, the Serbian parliament secretly ratified it a year later.⁶⁰ After the creation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, Serb politicians did all they could to impose a centralized, Serb-dominated state on the other peoples. The first constitution, the *Vidovdanski ustav* (Saint Vitus Constitution), adopted in 1921 despite strong opposition from Croatian politicians, did indeed make the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians a centralized state dominated by Serb politicians.

4. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav state and the Serbo-Croat conflict

The majority view in the historical literature is that the Yugoslav state, and particularly its stability, was closely linked with Serbo-Croat political relationships. These two, the largest ethnic groups involved, were the first South Slav peoples within the Yugoslav state in whom a sense of national identity had developed and who had already formulated their national interests in the 19th century. Indeed, the conflict between Serbs and Croats could be thought of as starting with the schism of 1054 that divided the South Slav peoples, despite their common language, into two separate religious camps, thus justifying to a certain extent the idea that this 'century-old' conflict was almost 'insoluble', it should be remembered that the Serb and Croat kingdom had never fought against one another throughout the Middle Ages. Dominated by foreign powers for centuries they had never had any independent foreign policy and could thus have no direct conflicts.

An important background factor in the Serbo-Croat political conflict was the presence of large numbers of Orthodox Slavs (not called Serbs until the 19th century) in Croatia as a result of the migrations caused by Ottoman expansion towards the north-west. The Orthodox refugees who escaped the Ottoman forces received protection from the Habsburg Emperor. A large part of Hungary fell under Ottoman occupation after the Battle of Mohács in 1526. In 1527, Ferdinand I set up a new defensive system, known under the name of the 'Military Border Zone' (*Vojna Krajina*).⁶¹ This militarized zone extended from Transylvania in the north-east to the Istrian Peninsula in the south-west. The defence line consisted of a series of small villages and fortifications where the Orthodox refugee population was offered sanctuary, adult males from this population being recruited as frontier guards. The Military Border Zone was abolished in 1881, the idea being that the Serb population there should be integrated into Croatia (the part known as 'Civil Croatia'). The period between 1878 and 1903 is known in the literature on the South Slav question as the period of South Slav conflict, characterized by deterioration of the relationships between the Croats and the Serbs living in Croatia. Political conflicts between the Croatian Serbs and the Croats were intensified after the abolition of the military border zone, and were exacerbated by the 'divide and rule' policy adopted by the Hungarians with respect to the Croatian Serbs and the Croats. The Hungarian governor (*ban*) of Croatia, Karoly

⁵⁹ Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije* (Belgrade 1974).

⁶⁰ A. Dragnich (1992) 23.

⁶¹ See G. Rothenberg, *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740-1881* (Chicago, 1966).

Khuen-Hedervary (1883-1903), was notorious for his anti-Croat policy. He gave the Serbs a preferential position, rewarding them with important functions in Croatian public life.⁶²

Tensions between Serbs and Croats at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century alternated with periods of political *rapprochement* and co-operation. Drago Roksandic, a Croat historian of Serb descent, wrote as follows in this connection: “This same history also demonstrates that the periods in which the fundamental national interests of both communities were reconciled were also periods in which Croatian society moved forward, modernised, and in which Croatian as well as Serbian national identity were preserved and developed. An example for this was the Illyrian movement of 1835-1848, which was an important phase in the national integration of the Croats, but also of the Serbs in Croatia and Slovenia. Other instances were the period of revolutionary upheaval in 1848-49, the period of renowned constitutionalism from 1860 to 1868, as well as the period of the Serbian-Croatian coalition from 1905-1918.”⁶³

Authors like Thomas and Dragnich believe that the Serbo-Croat political conflict did not arise until after the formation of the Yugoslav state. The kingdom of Yugoslavia did not meet Croat expectations, and a power struggle arose between the Serb and Croat politicians right from the beginning. Dragnich, who has described the history of the Yugoslav kingdom from the perspective of Serbo-Croat relations, disagrees with the usual interpretations involving Serb domination and suppression of non-Serb peoples. According to him, it is wrong to argue that the state was dominated by a block of Serb politicians who did their best to marginalize the non-Serbs, and whom the Croats opposed in vain: “Through all political events of the First Yugoslavia ran a two-stranded thread: Serbian politicians did not have a determined political line directing their relations with Croats; the Croats had a constant Croatian line. The Croats reduced their five or six political parties of relatively equal strength to one, a Croatian national party. The Serbs moved from two major parties to about ten, to say nothing of the factions that developed within some.”⁶⁴

Serbo-Croat political relations radicalized at the end of the 1920s. In 1928, the leader of the Croatian National Peasant Party Stjepan Radic was murdered by a Serb nationalist from Montenegro on the floor of the Yugoslav parliament (the *Skupstina*). King Aleksandar reacted by dissolving parliament and suspending the Vidovdan constitution. His personal dictatorship exacerbated ethnic tensions.⁶⁵ According to Banac, in this period Yugoslav unitarism turned into a totalitarian ideology with anti-Marxist, anti-liberal, anti-conservative, anti-urban and anti-catholic traits – all characteristic of fascism.⁶⁶ Some Croat nationalist politicians, intellectuals and artists fled the country in the 1930s. An extreme-nationalist Croatian terrorist organization, the Ustase, was set up in Italy under the leadership of a Croatian nationalist, Ante Pavelic, a lawyer of Bosnia-Herzegovina descent. Pavelic received political and financial support from the Italian fascist regime. His political aim, and that of the Ustase, was to liberate Croatia from the Serbian kingdom and to create a Greater Croatia.

The permanent political crisis in the kingdom of Yugoslavia was resolved by the *Sporazum* (Agreement) of 1939, which gave Croatia a great degree of cultural and territorial autonomy. The Croatian province, known as *Banovina Hrvatska*, included parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the Croatian population was in the majority, and also Srijem province (without East Srijem) and Dalmatia (without the Bay of Kotor).

Many historians regarded the *Sporazum* as the real solution to the Serbo-Croat conflict. Recent studies of the history of the Yugoslav state have been more critical, however. Mustafa Imamovic writes

⁶² The Croat historian Mirjana Gross points out that the Serbs played an important social role in Croatia even in the time of Hedervary's predecessor Ivan Mazuranic who was known as a Croatian nationalist. Serbs occupied the following important positions under Mazuranic: Speaker of the Croatian parliament (Sabor); Ministers of Internal Affairs (and Vice-Governor); and President of the Croatian Supreme Court. See Drago Roksandic, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, 1991) 100.

⁶³ Drago Roksandic, “The Myth of ‘Historical Conflict’” in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, (1992) 18-20.

⁶⁴ Dragnich (1992) 179.

⁶⁵ See e.g. J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941* (New York, 1963).

⁶⁶ Banac (1992) 13.

that the Bosnians initially supported the agreement between the Serbs and the Croats because it was seen as an important compromise that could lead to stabilization of the political situation. The division of Bosnia-Herzegovina was soon found to involve major drawbacks, however, to which the Bosnians responded by setting up a movement for the territorial autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶⁷

The Serb historian Branka Prpa-Jovanovic likewise believes that the *Sporazum* did not offer a lasting solution to the Serbo-Croat conflict: "But a federal Yugoslavia might have had a better chance at another time. It was now too late - not only because the Serbian-Croatian agreement was reached on the eve of the World War II, in difficult international circumstances, or because the other Yugoslav nations were bitter about being left out, but also because the solution satisfied neither the Serbs nor the Croats. Croatian politicians were angered by the limited nature of autonomy and Serbian politicians by loss of their domination, the abandonment of centralism, and the new division of administrative powers."⁶⁸

A low point in the Serbo-Croat conflict was reached during the Second World War. The kingdom of Yugoslavia disintegrated in 1941, as a result of the invasion of the Axis powers. King Petar Karadjordjevic and his government fled to London. Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Italy then occupied large areas of Yugoslav territory, and what was left was divided between the Serb and Croat Nazi satellite states. The subsequent civil war was waged between different ethnic groups. The Croatian extreme nationalist movement, the Ustase, founded the Independent Croatian State (*NDH - Nezavisna Dr'ava Hrvatska*). The Ustase wanted an 'ethnically clean' Greater Croatia; the Serb population were the main victims of their activities. The Serb nationalist extremists, the Cetniks, fought in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia for the creation of a 'Greater Serbia'; it was mainly the Bosnian Muslims from the east of Bosnia-Herzegovina who fell victim to their ethnic cleansing.

5. The legitimacy of the Communist Yugoslav federation, 1945-1992

The legitimacy of communist Yugoslavia was based on the role played by the Communist resistance movement under the leadership of Josip Broz-Tito (1892-1980) during the Second World War.⁶⁹ The Communists had clearly formulated war objectives: the expulsion of the foreign occupying forces, social revolution modelled on the example of the Soviet Union and the recovery of the Yugoslav state. Alongside the guerrilla war against the German and Italian occupiers, they were also engaged in a power struggle with their ideological enemies, in particular the Cetniks and the Ustase. The Yugoslav Communists emerged from the Second World War as victors. They also won the political and diplomatic struggle after the war, by preventing the return of the king and his government in exile.

The legitimacy of the Communist federation was based on the following arguments. Firstly, the Communists had established themselves as the protectors of the civilian population, no matter what their ethnic origin. The civilian population, that had been a target of extreme nationalist aggression, regarded the Communist resistance fighters as their protectors; this was the case e.g. with the Croatian Serbs, who had been exposed to Ustase terror for four years. They joined the Communist resistance, and remained very loyal to the Communist system after the war. The Communists stressed the ethnic similarities between the South Slav peoples, while the ethnic polarization that had manifested itself so prominently during the Second World War seemed to become less important in the light of the proclaimed supra-national character of the Communist ideology. Nationalism was regarded as anachronistic and reactionary, and the proponents of nationalist ideologies were tried by the courts as 'enemies of the people' or driven into exile. National identity was supposed to give way gradually to a Yugoslav identity based on the Yugoslav language - the *lingua franca* for all the peoples concerned, to be based on a combination of the Serb and Croat standard languages.

⁶⁷ M. Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998) 520-521.

⁶⁸ Prpa-Jovanovic (1997) 57.

⁶⁹ See Bogdan Denich, *Legitimation of a Revolution: The Yugoslav Case* (New Haven, 1975).

Many historical studies have been written on the role of the Communist resistance to the Axis powers and the civil war between the different nationalist movements. A great deal of attention was paid in this context to the role of the Cetnik⁷⁰ resistance to the Axis powers. Were they fighting for a Greater Serbia or for the kingdom of Yugoslavia? Were they patriots who organized the resistance to the Nazis, or collaborators who worked together with the enemy to defeat their common enemy, the Communists? Other important themes concern Ustase violence and the place of their extreme nationalist ideology in Croatian history.⁷¹ The questions about the collective guilt of the Croats and national reconciliation between the Yugoslav peoples who adopted opposing positions during the war received little attention after the war. According to the Communists, the national question had been solved: "During a war with all the features of a religious and ethnic war, the Communists offered - at the time when the renewal of Yugoslavia seemed entirely impossible - a new vision of Yugoslavia, expressed in the slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity'. Yugoslavism was reborn in blood, but on new foundations. The Communists hoped not to repeat the errors of their predecessors."⁷²

The first step towards establishing the legitimacy of Yugoslavia in the post-war international system of states was taken when the Allies recognized of the Yugoslav communist guerrilla forces as the official resistance movement in 1943. Nora Beloff regards Great Britain's decision to drop Draza Mihailovic's Cetniks and to support Tito's Partisans as a big mistake on the part of the Allies. While Great Britain and the USA opposed the formation of a Communist Yugoslav federation after the war, the recognition of Tito as the leader of the resistance contributed to his political victory over his domestic enemies. Tito's greatest political rival was King Petar. Great Britain, supported by the USA, assumed that the Yugoslav king would return after the war. Stalin, on the other hand, planned to set up a Communist Balkan federation including Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria. It was decided by way of compromise during the Yalta conference that Yugoslavia would be divided into two spheres of influence – a Communist half and a capitalist half. Tito managed to ensure, however, that the new Yugoslavia became a Communist federation in 1945, and that the king did not return. The initial fear of the western countries that Yugoslavia would end up in the Soviet sphere of influence turned into euphoria in 1948 when the split between the Yugoslav Communists and Stalin led to complete cessation of contacts between the two states. Yugoslavia acquired a special position as 'no man's land' in European politics during the Cold War'.

Communist Yugoslavia was set up as a federation, within which the Slovenes, Croats, Montenegrins, Serbs and Macedonians were recognized as the constitutive nationalities. Bosnia-Hercegovina became one of the six Yugoslav republics, but the Bosnian Muslims did not acquire the status of constitutive nationality until the 1960s.⁷³ The other nationalities – including the large numbers of Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo – were classified as national minorities. The main constitutional difference between a people (*narod*) and a national minority (*narodnost*) was that the former had the right to self-determination and got a republic of its own. This also gave it the formal right to secede from the federation, if the other constitutive nationalities agreed. The national minorities did not have this right. Bosnia-Hercegovina received a special status within the federation because the three constitutive nationalities who lived there, the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, were all placed on an equal footing. Bosnia-Hercegovina was therefore often called 'Yugoslavia in miniature'.

⁷⁰ See Jozo Tomasevich, *The Chetniks - War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (Stanford, 1975) and Matteo Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance* (Baltimore/London, 1975). Fikreta Jelic-Butic, *Cetnici u Hrvatskoj 1941-1945* (Zagreb, 1986).

⁷¹ See Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelic i Ustase* (Zagreb, 1978). - *NDH između Hitlera i Mussolinija* (Zagreb, 1980). - *Ustase i Treci Reich* (Zagreb, 1983). Fikreta Jelic-Butic, *Ustase i Nezavisna država Hrvatska 1941-1945* (Zagreb, 1978).

⁷² Prpa-Jovanovic (1997) 59.

⁷³ For details of Yugoslav federalism see e.g. P. Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*, (New York, 1968). P. Lendvai, *Eagles in Cobwebs: nationalism and communism in the Balkans* (London, 1970) S. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992).

6. The demystification of Communist history

The Communist rulers saw the history of the Second World War in black and white and the historiography of this period provided the basis for an important part of Yugoslav Communist ideology, leading to the creation of new historical myths. The Communist intellectual elite even produced a myth of Tito's leadership while the Second World War was still continuing. This myth bore striking resemblances to those dealing with the epic heroes in folk tales: a poor Croatian boy becomes the leader of an important state, fights against social injustice and powerful foreign enemies, and even becomes a respected world leader thanks to his role in the movement of non-aligned nations. Other historical myths created and fostered by Communist historians and ideologues dealt with the role of the Communist anti-Fascist resistance in the liberation of Yugoslavia, Tito's 'historic no' to Stalin, the 'brotherhood and unity' of the Yugoslav peoples, and workers' self-rule as an alternative to the capitalist and Communist political systems.

Although these myths were thought up by the Yugoslav Communists, western historians and regional experts made an important contribution to their popularization and propagation beyond the boundaries of Yugoslavia. An influential group of intellectuals was writing sympathetically about Yugoslavia in the West. The British authors Stephan Clissold, Fitzroy McLean and F.W. Deakin, who had been liaison officers with the task of maintaining contact with the Yugoslav Partisans on behalf of the British government, wrote a number of influential books about the Communist resistance and Tito after the war. These publications made a big contribution to the formation of the positive image of Tito's Yugoslavia held by the West.⁷⁴ Another group of authors who contributed to the positive image of Communist Yugoslavia consisted of young westerners who had helped in the rebuilding of war-ravaged Yugoslavia as members of international youth brigades in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Some of them later became influential scientists, writers and politicians. One of these was the British historian and regional expert Fred Singleton who subsequently played an important role in the setting up of the department of Yugoslav studies at the University of Bradford, where many generations of young historians have been trained.⁷⁵ The former Swedish premier Olaf Palme also belonged to this group.⁷⁶

The world first began to hear dissident voices from within the Yugoslav Communist Party itself in the 1950s. Milovan Djilas, one of the five most important Communist politicians, made furore with his criticism of the privileges of the Communist rulers, whom he called the 'new class'. He did not, however, distance himself from Communist ideology or the Yugoslav state. His criticism was aimed at the Communist elite and the way they dealt with power. He belonged to this elite himself, and initially believed that the solution for these shortcomings was to be found in liberalization of Yugoslav society.⁷⁷ Those at the top of the party, and in particular Tito, had no wish to consider such criticism and Djilas ended up in prison. After his release, he began a successful career as an author and political commentator whose publications played an important role in bringing about a change in the perception of Communist Yugoslavia abroad.

Critical works on the history of Communist Yugoslavia originated mainly from the circles of anti-Communist political émigrés, who came from widely differing ideological backgrounds. Some of them, for example, had a liberal-democratic viewpoint: they accepted the idea of the Yugoslav state, but

⁷⁴ See S. Clissold, *Whirlwind; An Account of Marshal Tito's Rise to Power* (London, 1949). *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973* (London, 1975). F.W.D. Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain*, (London, 1971). F. Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*, (London, 1949). *Disputed Barricades: the Life and Time of Josip Broz Tito, Marshal of Yugoslavia*, Cape, (London, 1957). *Tito: A Pictorial Biography*, (New York and London, 1980).

⁷⁵ See e.g. F. Singleton, *Twentieth Century Yugoslavia* (New York, 1976) and *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge, 1985-1993).

⁷⁶ The group also included many young people from the Netherlands who went on to occupy important positions in society, such as Marius Broekmeyer the expert on Yugoslavia and Russia, and the former minister of Defence Relus ter Beek.

⁷⁷ See e.g. M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962). *The Imperfect Society*, (New York, 1969). *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (New York, 1973). *The New Class* (New York., 1974). *Wartime* (New York 1977). *Tito: The Story from the Inside* (New York, 1981). *Rise and Fall* (New York, 1984).

were critical of Communism. The nationalist émigrés, on the other hand, were against both Communist ideology and a shared Yugoslav state.⁷⁸

In the 1970s, the 'Praxis' group of Marxist humanist philosophers attracted a great deal of attention outside Yugoslavia. Their main criticism of Yugoslav society was that the Communists paid too much attention to life in the ideal society of the future. They wanted to investigate the real face of Communist society.⁷⁹

The demystification of the historiography of Yugoslavia in the Second World War came from an unexpected source. In 1985 the Yugoslav émigré Bogoljub Kocovic, who had left Yugoslavia in 1943, published a statistical study of the demographic losses in Yugoslavia during the Second World War - a very sensitive issue in Communist circles. He distinguished between demographic losses in a wider and in a narrower sense, the latter including actual war victims only while the former included losses due to emigration and the drop in birth rate as well. Kocovic estimated the total demographic losses in the wider sense at 2 million, including between 900 000 and 1 150 000 war victims.⁸⁰ His final estimate of 1,014,00 war victims included 478,000 Serbs, 207,00 Croats, 86,000 Muslims and 60,000 Jews. Another book published in 1989 by Vladimir Zerjavic, a Croat economist and demographer, and entitled *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, showed similar results. According to Zerjavic, the total number of war victims on Yugoslav soil was 1,027,000, including 271,000 from Croatian territory and 316,000 from Bosnia-Hercegovina.⁸¹ He further calculated that the total number of victims in all concentration camps within the territory of the NDH was 92,000.⁸² These figures differed widely from the estimates put forward by the Communists and by the nationalist émigrés. According to Communist sources, the Ustase-run Jasenovac concentration camp alone was responsible for between 350 000 and 700 000 deaths, while the 1959 edition of the Yugoslav General Encyclopaedia gave a figure of 350,000 victims in the article on "Concentration camps". The 1950 edition of the same encyclopaedia stated that the exact number of victims was impossible to estimate, but it was sure to exceed 700,000. The lack of exact data on war victims made it possible for a myth to grow up around Jasenovac, which according to some Croat historians and intellectuals have led to the stigmatization of the Croatian people. A heated public debate about the past was held in Yugoslavia in the 1980s. Despite Communist claims that an open-hearted reconciliation process had taken place between the various ethnic groups in Yugoslavia soon after the Second World War, in fact there had never been a widely based discussion involving all layers of society about how people had dealt with the traumatic events of the war. According to official Communist historiography, the Serb and Croat versions of extreme nationalist ideology were regarded as opposite poles of the same evil. Historical studies of the Cetnik movement published outside Yugoslavia reveal a different picture, however. The American historian of Yugoslav descent Jozo Tomashevich wrote in his book on the history of the Cetnik movement that this movement was not a homogeneous political/military organization. The main Cetnik movement was that of General Draza Mihailovic (1893-1946), which may be regarded as the official resistance movement of the Yugoslav government in exile. Mihailovic was loyal to the king, and officially his Cetniks fought for the restoration of the kingdom of Yugoslavia. There was, however, another Cetnik movement in Croatia which was led by an Orthodox priest, Momcilo Djuic, and which collaborated with the Italian Fascists. Bands calling themselves Cetniks, but not under the direct authority of Mihailovic, also operated in Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia. The public debate was extended to cover the role of the Cetnik movement in the anti-fascist resistance and the 'collective guilt of the

⁷⁸ See Mirko Galic, *Politika u emigraciji: demokratska alternativa*, (Zagreb, 1990). Mustafa Imamovic, *Bosnjaci u emigraciji*, (Sarajevo, 1996).

⁷⁹ See e.g. S. Stojanovic, *Between Ideals and Reality* (New York, 1973). S. Cohen and M. Markovic, *Yugoslavia: the rise and fall of socialist humanism* (Nottingham, 1975)

⁸⁰ Bogoljub Kocovic, *Zrtve drugog svjetskog rata* (London 1985). Details of the discussion about the number of victims are given by Franjo Tudjman, *Bespuca povijesne zbiljnosti* (Zagreb, 1990).

⁸¹ Vladimir Zerjavic, *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb 1989).

⁸² Vladimir Zerjavic, *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga* (Zagreb 1992)..

Croats' in connection with the past deeds of the Ustase. A discussion also arose about whether Mihailovic had had a double agenda and had been fighting for a Greater Serbia right from the start. It is known that the Cetniks were responsible for the slaughter of groups of Muslims in Sandzak and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Historians still cannot agree whether Draza Mihailovic knew about these atrocities. Serb historians and commentators like Vladimir Dedijer, Velimir Terzic and Vuk Draskovic resisted the idea of 'equal responsibility' and 'symmetry' of the crimes committed by the Serbian Cetniks and the Croatian Ustase. While they conceded that the violence committed by the Cetniks could be regarded as genocide, they defended it as necessary in the struggle against the terror of the Partisans and the Ustase. In Draskovic's opinion, these were rare cases of vengeance, 'for which the Serbian people have often expressed regret and condemnation after the war.' The accusation of a Greater-Serbian hegemony in the kingdom of Yugoslavia was rejected as a fabrication by the Comintern. Franjo Tudjman (1922-1999), a historian as well as a former general, also took part in the public debate about the Second World War. Tudjman had been one of the first communist intellectuals to state, as early as the 1950s, that an anti-fascist movement including non-Communists had been active in Croatia since 1941. According to official Communist historiography, anti-fascist resistance in Croatia had not got going till 1943 and before then the communist resistance movement in Croatia had consisted mainly of the Serbian populace.⁸³ Tudjman, however, claimed that the Cetnik movement actively supported the formation of a Greater Serbia. According to him, the crimes of the Cetniks in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia were part of this policy aimed at shifting Serbia's western border. He saw this as a proof of the genocidal character of the Serb nationalist Cetnik movement, which could thus certainly not be regarded as just a reaction to Ustase terror.

Another very critical book about Communist Yugoslavia, by the British journalist Nora Beloff, appeared in 1985.⁸⁴ This book represents one of the best argued attempts to revise Yugoslav communist historiography. She showed up the falsity of the historical myths about the great leader Tito and the heroic Communist anti-Fascist resistance. Her sympathy for the Cetnik movement made her the target of criticism from those who accused her of viewing the history of Yugoslavia through Serb nationalist spectacles.⁸⁵ According to Beloff, Draza Mihailovic was a misunderstood resistance fighter who had been betrayed by the Allies. However, Beloff's book had a great influence on western thought and set the tone for a growing group of historians and regional experts who were very critical of Communist historiography.

The Serb historian Miso Lekovic wrote the book *Martovskin pregovori* (The March negotiations), about the controversial contacts between the Communist Partisans and the German occupiers, in the same year.⁸⁶ The Communists always claimed that they had used all means at their disposal to combat the foreign occupiers – unlike the Cetniks, who are known to have collaborated with the Germans. While rumours existed that the Partisans had also negotiated with the Germans about a cease-fire, official Communist historiography was silent on this point.⁸⁷ Lekovic's treatment of this politically sensitive theme led to a heated public debate about the Communist anti-fascist resistance, which had always been treated as a sacrosanct ideological dogma by the Communists.

Yugoslav media were flooded with historical debates. After nearly forty years of Communist censorship, it was suddenly possible to write about historical topics that had been taboo until recently. This led to great public interest in everything to do with the past, especially the recent past. Critical analyses of the Communist era and revelations about topics that had been closely guarded secrets until

⁸³ Tudjman wrote at length about his quarrels with Communist historians, and his interpretation of this topic is highly subjective. Nevertheless, his book offers interesting insights into the discussions of the history of the Second World War that were carried out in the 1980s. See Franjo Tudjman, *Bespuca povijesne zbiljnosti* (Zagreb, 1990).

⁸⁴ Nora Beloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West* (London, 1985).

⁸⁵ See e.g. C. Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Courses and Consequences* (New York, 1995) 253.

⁸⁶ See Miso Lekovic, *Martovskin pregovori* (Belgrade, 1985).

⁸⁷ Pavlowich (1988) 129-157.

recently, such as over Tito's private life, turned historical research into media hype.⁸⁸ There was also wide media attention for topics from the pre-Communist era that had been regarded by the Communists as 'contra-revolutionary' and dangerous, such as stories about the proponents of extreme nationalist ideologies and nationalist leaders from the Second World War. The Dutch Slavist Willem Vermeer expressed his surprise about the attention paid to history in the Yugoslavia of the 1980s, commenting that it looked as if the past had become more important than the present: "To an outsider, it is quite astonishing to see that the popular press in Yugoslavia is full of interviews with historians and similar people, evidently not because the public is really interested in what happened in the past, but because it is thought that past facts are somehow more important than present reality. (...) since the past is considered more important than the present, there is a tendency to treat reality not as something ethically neutral to be managed, but as something essentially undesirable to be changed back into a situation that is assumed to have existed at some selected period in the past and that is held to represent an ideal.(...)"⁸⁹

There was resistance to this new historiography from orthodox Communist circles, especially the leadership of the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA). However, the settling of accounts with Yugoslavia's Communist past was not restricted to incidental publications. These changes also led to another trend: the new critical approach to history which made it possible to discuss many controversial themes also facilitated the publication of studies with a nationalist tinge. The political climate changed, and post-Communist nationalist ideologies were born. The neo-nationalists in Croatia began to formulate a new interpretation of the role of the NDH and Ante Pavelic in Croatian history; for example, some intellectuals and politicians described Ante Pavelic's Ustase as a progressive Croatian national movement. The conservative politician Ivan Gabelica stated in an interview printed in the weekly *Globus* that Pavelic was the Croatian George Washington. The Croat commentator and historian Zvonimir Kulundzic said in another interview that Pavelic was a democrat of the British type. Kulundzic regarded Pavelic's links with Hitler and Mussolini as political miscalculations based on Pavelic's belief that fascism was going to come out on top throughout Europe.⁹⁰

Thomas writes that nationalist interpretations of history led each ethnic group to develop its own 'truths', which came to play an important role in the struggle against political opponents. Before the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina broke out, the Serb nationalist ideologists tried to prove on the basis of 'historical facts' that co-existence with the other 'ethnic groups' there was impossible. Thomas explains this tendency as follows: "Nationalist interpretations of history influence contemporary domestic and regional politics, which then leads to violent conflict. Selective and manipulative versions of history are then used to advance nationalist objectives of secession from the existing state. Similarly, nationalists usually seek to house their narrow concept of 'nation' within a state that is all-inclusive of their ethnic group and, in the same time, exclude other 'nations' from the state or reduce them to secondary status."⁹¹

The Communist era was nearing its end, but instead of looking to the future the post-Communist politicians sought inspiration in the past. The old ideological polarizations were reborn through the setting up of political parties based on the old ideological inheritance.

⁸⁸ A good example of this is a historical work on the life of Tito by the well known historian Vladimir Dedijer. His book, entitled *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* (Rijeka, 1981), was sold out in a few days.

⁸⁹ Willem Vermeer, 'Albanians and Serbs in Yugoslavia' in J.G. Siccama and M. van den Heuvel (eds), *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1992) 104.

⁹⁰ See e.g. the interview with Zvonimir Kulundzic in the weekly *Globus* (7 May 1993). He was working on a study entitled 'Pavelic was no fascist' at the time.

⁹¹ Thomas (1996) 16.

7. The ideological background of extreme nationalist movements and political parties

In 1991, at the height of the war in Croatia, a group of Croat intellectuals compiled a book from source material intended to give a survey of the development of the Greater-Serbian nationalist ideology since the 19th century.⁹² The compilers saw Ilija Garasanin's *Nacertanije* as the first major political manifesto serving as a basis for Serbia's expansionist policies. In addition to the *Nacertanije*, the book contained a reprint of Vuk Karadzic's *Srbi svi i svuda*, which was presented as the basis for Serb linguistic nationalism. Texts relating to the well known secret organization *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* (Unification or death) were also reprinted.

Of course, this collection also contains less well known texts such as *Do istrage nase ili vase* (Till our extermination, or yours), by the Serb lawyer and commentator Nikola Stojanovic (1880-1965), which was initially published in Zagreb in 1902. Stojanovic argued in this text for absorption of the Croats in the Serbian people: "The Croats...are not and cannot be a separate nation, but they are on their way to becoming - Serbs. By taking Serbian as their national language, they have taken the most important step towards unification. Also, the process of merging continues apart from the language. By reading every single Serbian book, any folk song, by singing any Serbian song, an atom of fresh Serbian democratic culture is passing into their organism (...) This struggle must be fought until extermination, yours or ours. One party must succumb."⁹³ The Croats in Zagreb reacted to the publication of Stojanovic's article with indignation, and the leader of the Croat extreme nationalist "Pure party of Right" Juraj Frank organized (with support from Budapest) the plundering of Serb houses and shops, which lasted for three days and nights. On the fourth day, the Hungarian authorities announced a state of emergency to put an end to the riots.

The interest in Serb nationalism was generated by the large-scale atrocities committed in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1991 and 1995. People tried to find an explanation in the historical continuity of Serb nationalist ideology for the slaughter of Croats and Bosnians by the Serb army and various paramilitary organisations. For example, the text by the historian Vasa Cubrilovic from 1937 on the plans for expelling the Albanian population of Yugoslavia to Albania and Turkey was regarded as a consequence of Serb nationalist ideology. Cubrilovic was inspired by Hitler's successful expulsion of the Jews and Stalin's suppression of undesired population groups. He proposed that systematic intimidation and terror should be used to make the life of the Albanians impossible, so that they would flee to Albania or Turkey. His proposal also included the deployment of various paramilitary groups, such as the Cetniks, in order to carry out violent actions against Albanian villages and neighbourhoods in collaboration with the government.

The compilation also includes the pamphlet *Homogena Srbija* (Homogeneous Serbia) by Stevan Moljevic, one of the leaders of the Cetnik movement in the Second World War. This brief manifesto included full details of the boundaries of the Serbian state to be set up after the war. Moljevic's Greater Serbia was to include parts of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania. The formation of this Serbian state was to be followed by a federative alliance with Slovenia and Croatia. This manifesto was used as a proof that the Cetnik movement during the Second World War was fighting for a Greater Serbia and not for the kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The main attention in the book was focused, however, on the Memorandum written in 1985 by a prominent group of academics from the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SANU) in reaction to the political and economic crisis that had been plaguing the Yugoslav federation since the 1960s. The compilers of *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* share the opinion of most commentators that the SANU Memorandum formed the basis for the nationalist policy followed by the Serbian Communists under

⁹² See Boze Covic (ed.), *Izvori velikosrpske agresije*, (Zagreb 1991). Philip Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and Deceit*, (Texas, 1996). M. Grmek, M. Gjidara, N. Stimac, *Le nettoyage ethnique: Documents, historiques sur une idéologie serbe* (Paris, 1993).

⁹³ This translation is taken from P. Cohen (1996) 4.

Slobodan Milosevic. It consists of two thematic parts, the first of which contains general considerations about the socio-economic, cultural and political crisis suffered by Communist Yugoslavia. The blame for the faulty policies followed in Yugoslavia is laid on the shoulders of the Communist rulers. The second part deals with the position of Serbia within the Communist federation, as defined in the 1974 Constitution. The main argument here is that the Serbian people had not been given the right to a state of their own. Serbia itself was divided administratively into three parts: Serbia proper, and the two autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. The political steps derived from this analysis were aimed in the first instance at re-uniting Serbia administratively by abolishing the autonomous status of the two other provinces. Although the SANU Memorandum did not mention any explicit links between the policies it proposed and Serb national ideology in the tradition of Garasanin or the Cetnik movement, Serbian policy under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic was placed in the tradition of 19th century Serb nationalism because both were aimed at uniting the Serb population (including that from other republics) in a single state.

It is noteworthy that while many books about the background of Serb nationalist ideology have appeared since 1991, there have been no systematic analyses of the ideological background of Croat extreme nationalist movements and political parties.⁹⁴ The Croatian share of war atrocities is generally related to the Croat extreme nationalist ideology of Starcevic and Frank. While Starcevic regarded the Habsburg monarchy as the greatest enemy of the formation of the Croatian state and warned against co-operation with Budapest and Vienna, Frank was notorious for his anti-Serb attitude. He did not hesitate to work together with Budapest to intimidate the Croatian Serbs. Frank's ideological legacy was continued by the lawyer Ante Pavelic (1899-1965), the founder of the Ustase movement. Pavelic fled the kingdom of Yugoslavia after having been found guilty *in absentia* of incitement to armed rebellion against the state. He sought refuge in Mussolini's Italy, where he set up the Ustase (Rebels) terrorist group. Pavelic was convinced that the political future of Croatia lay in the hands of the Croatian peasants and he gained a great deal of support in Lika (Knin-krajina) and Hercegovina, where the peasant population lived under very poor conditions and where the royal police were given a free hand to terrorize the non-Serb population. The Ustase's support for the poor and socially disadvantaged groups led initially to such confusion about their ideological background that even the Yugoslav Communist Party though they had gained a new ally.⁹⁵ This was a big miscalculation, because the main aim of Ustase ideology was the formation of an ethnically pure Greater Croatian state. The Ustase government unleashed a reign of terror in 1941, with the promulgation of the "Decree for the Defence of the People and the State", in which it was stated that whoever damaged the vital interests of Croatia was guilty of high treason, the penalty for which was death.⁹⁶ The "Decree for the Protection of Arian Blood" promoted the Slav Croats, by way of exception and with the implicit approval of Hitler, to the Arian race and made it an offence for them to have dealings with Jews. The Serbian question was dealt with in the "Decree concerning Conversion from one Religion to another". The Serbs were defined as 'Eastern Greek Orthodox', and Catholic priests were encouraged to convert them to Catholicism.⁹⁷ After the restoration of political pluralism in Croatia in 1990, a number of new political parties claimed an ideological affinity with the Party of Right, the Pure Party of Right and the Ustase. The winner in the

⁹⁴ See e.g. Branimir Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, (New York, 1999). Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of Ethnic Cleansing* (Texas A&M, 1996). Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and Deceit of History* (Texas A&M, 1996/1999). TH. Cushman and S. Mestrovic, *This Time we Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia* (Texas A&M, 1996). Boze Covic (ed.), *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* (Zagreb 1991). M. Grmek, M. Gjidara, N. Stimac, *Le nettoyage ethnique: Documents, historiques sur une idéologie serbe* (Paris, 1993). Stjepan. Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide After Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War* (London, 1996). Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkley, 1996).

⁹⁵ A. Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, Mass, 1991) 109-110.

⁹⁶ Z. Löwenthal (ed.), *The Crimes of the Fascist Occupants and their Collaborators against Jews in Yugoslavia* (Belgrade, 1957) 6.

⁹⁷ P. Cohen (1996) 88-92.

1990 elections was the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), a neo-nationalist party with one main aim: the creation of an independent Croatian state. Anything that stood in the way of this aim was considered to be ideologically unacceptable. HDZ policy was a combination of anti-Yugoslav, anti-Communist and anti-Serb elements.⁹⁸ Unlike the Ustase, HDZ ideologists no longer regarded the Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'natural allies' but as political opponents on the way to a great, independent Croatian state.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Franjo Tuđman, *Izabrana djela*, 3 vols. (Zagreb 1990).

Chapter 2

Theories concerning the disintegration of Yugoslavia

Introduction

After the outbreak of war in 1991, many studies of the background of the war were published. Most of these included a reconstruction of the events leading up to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In parallel with a step-by-step description of the escalation process, an attempt was made to trace the causes of the disintegration of the state. The most recent publications have tended to concentrate mainly on the question of the succession after the death of Tito, the economic crisis and the crisis of the federal system as the fundamental causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In addition, authors have tried to assign responsibility for the violent escalation of the conflict: was this perhaps due to the secessionist policies of Slovenia and Croatia, who decided to leave the Yugoslav federation in 1991? Or were these policies merely a reaction to the Serb nationalist policies of Slobodan Milosevic, who had been mobilizing the Serb population in other republics since 1987 in order, as he claimed, to 'save' them from the genocide others were planning to carry out on them?

In order to explain the causes of the violence, and in particular the escalation of violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is necessary to start off by analysing the various definitions of the conflict. Was it historical, ethnic, religious, ideological or political in nature? Or was it a confirmation of the theory of a 'clash of civilisations' that had suddenly become so popular in the 1990s?

1. The question of succession: Tito after Tito?

For more than three decades, the political leadership of the Yugoslav federation was in the hands of one single person: Josip Broz Tito. He was the State President, the Federal Premier and the Supreme Commander of the army. He fulfilled all these functions till the end of his life, and was accepted as impartial by all ethnic groups.⁹⁹

Tito started to arrange his succession in the 1960s. It was ultimately decided that he would be succeeded by a Presidium with eight members, representing the six republics and the two autonomous provinces. It was later realized, however, that such a collective presidium would be unable to save the federation if the one-party system should cease to exist. Democratic centralism provided a vital basis for the solution of political problems in Communist Yugoslavia: once the party had taken a decision, this should be followed at all levels.

The historian Stevan Pavlowich believes that Tito was not really interested in arranging his succession, and offers as evidence the fact that he expelled a whole generation of competent politicians from the party in the 1970s. In Pavlowich's opinion, these clean-ups were aimed not so much at removing deviant 'nationalist' and 'liberal' elements from the party as at dealing with his succession: "This was intended both to prevent a struggle for the succession, and anyone ever again wielding such power as he had - in order to keep his achievements and his memory intact and unique."¹⁰⁰

The question as to what would happen to the Communist Yugoslav federation after Tito's death was also of great importance for European security. The first scenarios for the future of

⁹⁹ See e.g. P. Auty, *Tito: A Biography* (New York, 1970). N. Belloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West since 1939* (London, 1985). V. Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* (Rijeka, 1981). M. Djilas, *Tito: The Story from the Inside* (New York, 1981). S.K. Pavlowich, *Tito, Yugoslavia's Great Dictator* (London, 1992). J. Ridley, *Tito: A Biography*, (London, 1994). R. West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Pavlowich (1988) 26.

Yugoslavia after the death of Tito appeared in the 1970s.¹⁰¹ A frequently recurring theme was the warning that this event was likely to lead to the loss of Yugoslav neutrality. The doom scenarios included the possibilities of regional destabilization, Soviet expansion to the South-East of Europe, and ethnic tensions: “The scenario could be grim: Tito successors are unable to impose their will on the feuding republics; nationalism, the historic bane of the Balkans, explodes with new strength, fuelled by Kosovo Albanian irredentists and the Croat clamour for more autonomy; the TDF (Territorial Defence Force, N. Tromp), the pride of Yugoslavia’s military planners, splits up along national lines; armed bands of Ustashi and Cominformist Soviet agents cross the borders, spreading terror and chaos.”¹⁰²

The German commentator and Yugoslavia expert Carl Gustaf Ströhm pointed out that radical Croatian and Serbian nationalist émigrés were waiting for the chance to topple the Communist system. An underground war had been raging outside Yugoslavia between the Yugoslav secret service (UDBA) and these groups for years. The general assumption was that Communist Yugoslavia would disintegrate along ethnic fault lines after Tito’s death, opening the door to the return of political émigrés with very radical views.¹⁰³

European diplomatic circles devoted a great deal of attention and energy to maintenance of the *status quo* during the Cold War years. Any *rapprochement* between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia could disturb the precarious balance of power in Europe. But unlike the prediction made in most doom scenarios, Yugoslavia did not fall prey to Soviet expansionism. The disintegration of Yugoslavia did not happen until the Communist system in Europe had collapsed in 1989, closely followed by the crumbling of the Soviet Union in 1991.¹⁰⁴

From 1980 onwards, the Yugoslav political elite tried to keep Tito’s legacy alive under the motto ‘Tito after Tito’.¹⁰⁵ In fact, however, the bankruptcy of Communist ideology, the economic malaise and social and ethnic tensions caused the Communist elites in the republics to distance themselves more and more from Tito and his political legacy. Various republics were on the look out for a new ‘strong man’, for Yugoslavians had never known a political system that did not derive its authority from a strong leader. This was generally explained with reference to the patriarchal traditions of the region, where democratic political institutions remained underdeveloped and all political systems in the past had rested on the power and authority of a strong leader. The Serb geographer and anthropologist Jovan Cvijic explains the tendency of the population of the Balkans to submit to the authority placed above them by the centuries of suppression undergone by the region which had forced the populace to an extreme form of adaptation if they were to survive.¹⁰⁶ Paradoxically enough, the Communist system was the most liberal political system in the history of the South Slav peoples despite all its shortcomings and its repressive character. Anyone who followed the rules could become a member of the Communist party and advance in society on that basis. But the Communist system also depended on the strong leadership of one person, Tito. It appeared with hindsight that the system could not survive without a new strong man. It has been said of Slobodan Milosevic that he was the

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Carl Gustaf Ströhm, *Ohne Tito: Kann Jugoslawien überleben?* (Graz-Vienna-Cologne, 1976). Andrew Borowiets, *Yugoslavia after Tito* (New York, 1977). Gavril Ra’anen, *Yugoslavia after Tito: Scenarios and Implications* (Boulder, 1977). Slobodan Stankovic, *Tito’s Erbe: Die Hypothek der alten Richtungskämpfe ideologischer und nationaler Fraktionen* (Munich, 1981) and, by the same author, *The End of Tito Era: Yugoslavia’s Dilemmas* (Stamford, 1981).

¹⁰² Borowiec (1977) 103.

¹⁰³ ‘Für jede ausländische macht, die an einer Desintegration des jugoslawischen Systems interessiert ist, stellt dieser Untergrundkrieg im kroatischen und serbischen Exil einen günstigen Ansatzpunkt dar.’ (This underground war between Croat and Serb exiles is a useful point of attack for any foreign power interested in the disintegration of the Yugoslav system.) Cited from Ströhm (1976) 295.

¹⁰⁴ See A. Lynch and R. Lukic, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals, the Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (Oxford, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ L. Sekelj, *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration* (Boulder, 1993) 145.

¹⁰⁶ Wayne Vuchinich, ‘some Aspects of the Ottoman legacy’, in Charles and Barbara Jelavich (eds.), *The Balkans in Transition. Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley- Los Angeles, 1963) 89.

only politician in the former Yugoslavia who had understood that Tito was dead and who wanted to become the new Tito. His problem, however, was that he was not accepted by the non-Serbs, the Serb liberal intelligentsia and the liberal Communists. His power in Serbia was based on the support of the Serbs from the other republics, in particular Kosovo and Croatia.

After the death of Tito, the new generation of Communist leaders promised never to 'depart from his ways'. However, the rise of nationalism in the Yugoslav republics at the end of the 1980s led to increasing criticism of Tito. In Croatian post-Communist historiography, he is generally described as a tyrant who used Communist ideology as an effective means of repression to hold the South Slav peoples, in particular the Croats, together against their will. In post-Communist Serb historiography, Tito is said to be responsible for splitting Serbia up into three (administrative) units, Serbia proper and the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. It is claimed that he did this because he believed that Yugoslavia could only be strong if Serbia was weak.

The bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia led to renewed interest in Tito and his times. The British commentator Jasper Ridley wrote a biography of Tito in 1994, in which he gave a more positive assessment of the Yugoslav leader. Ridley stated that Tito had long had doubts about the future of the Yugoslav federation; he apparently said as early as two years before his death that Yugoslavia no longer existed. Ridley believed that Tito was less unpopular in post-Communist Croatia than in post-Communist Serbia. The Croatian president Franjo Tudjman always showed respect for Tito, whom he praised e.g. for his creation of a federal Yugoslavia in the 1970s, which was very good for Croatia. In another biography of Tito, the British historian and Yugoslavia expert Richard West described how the inhabitants of Bosnia carried Tito's portrait through the streets and called his name during parades held in Sarajevo and Mostar on the eve of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many inhabitants of the ethnically mixed regions where the memories of ethnic violence from the Second World War were still fresh saw Tito and his Yugoslavia as guarantees of peace.¹⁰⁷

2. The economic crisis

One of the first books describing the escalating disintegration of Yugoslavia as the result of economic, political and ethnic tensions appeared in 1993.¹⁰⁸ Branka Magas, a British historian and journalist of Croatian descent, had initially been interested in the direction in which Yugoslav socialism and 'workers' self-rule' was going to develop in the 1980s. She soon realized, however, that not only the Yugoslav socialist system but also the continued existence of the state itself was at risk.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1980s, shortly after Tito's death, signs of a deep economic crisis in Yugoslavia became evident. The Communist rulers tried to deal with it with the aid of a series of economic measures. A *Long-term Programme for Economic Stabilization and Development* was introduced in 1982. The main measures this programme contained involved large-scale cuts in expenditure in all segments of society. In the view of Yugoslav economists, however, the crisis was structural and could not be solved by the proposed economic changes. Industry depended on imported raw materials and technology, and the facilities for agriculture, transport and energy were systematically neglected. Despite the strict measures taken to reduce expenditure, the foreign debt continued to rise: "In 1983 alone \$900 million were added to the country's \$20 billion foreign debt. To service this debt, and in order to be able to borrow more, the government has been cutting down imports and stepping up exports 'at all costs'. Import reductions have in turn produced a great shortage of essential materials. The result has been great industrial

¹⁰⁷ West (1995) 392.

¹⁰⁸ B. Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-up 1980-92* (London, 1993). L. Sekelj, *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration*, (Boulder, 1993). L. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder-Oxford, 1993).

¹⁰⁹ Magas (1993) Introduction.

stagnation: depending on the branch, only between 30 per cent and 60 per cent of industrial capacity is at present being utilized. This means that enterprises are increasingly operating at a loss (...)”¹¹⁰

The foreign experts who saw the crisis in Yugoslavia as basically economic in nature believed that it was a result of the oil crisis that had hit all developing countries in the early 1980s. In the opinion of the American financial expert Martin d’Andrea, the Yugoslav economy had adapted well to the consequences of the oil crisis. Susan Woodward believed, however, that the most liberal Communist country could never make a successful transition to the market economy because of its internal economic development and the monetary policy of other countries at the time of the global debt crisis. According to her, the international financial crisis led to the economic crisis in Yugoslavia, which meant that the federal government could no longer function properly; and this then led in its turn to collapse of the socio-political system. Woodward ascribes the failure of the reform process in the 1980s to the international monetary organizations, which did not consider the political consequences of their policy and which kept on making new demands on the Yugoslav government. The Yugoslav sociologist Laslo Sekelj notes that the Yugoslav crisis was long regarded simply as an economic crisis which had to be solved by appropriate ‘stabilization policies’ on the part of the federal government. Yugoslav experts, on the other hand, saw the economy as only part of the problem. The main problem, according to them, was the execution of the stabilisation programmes at republic level. Sekelj believes that the economic disintegration of the federation had already begun in the early 1980s as a result of the ‘consensus economy’ which had led to six national economies.

The emphasis of the Communist leaders on the economic aspects of the crisis led to prolonged underestimation of its political consequences. Jovan Miric, Professor of Political Science at the University of Zagreb, was the first to point out the political aspects of the crisis. According to him, the causes of the economic crisis should be sought in the fact that the administrative rules and the political control of the economy were informal in nature and not laid down by law. In other words, political involvement in the economy was anonymous and intangible; no one could be held responsible for it.¹¹¹ This politicisation of the economy led to ‘political investment’, an ironic euphemism for the building of vast industrial conglomerates in economically under-developed regions. Founded on political considerations and not on economic calculations, they suffered enormous losses.¹¹²

The economic and social crisis also manifested itself at other levels. Ever since the creation of the Yugoslav state in 1918, great economic inequality had existed between its various regions. Slovenia and Croatia already had an industrial infrastructure, while society in Macedonia and Kosovo still showed feudal traits. This economic inequality continued under Communism and even got an added ethnic dimension since the allocation of economic resources within the federation was decided at republic level. Kosovo and Macedonia were regarded as under-developed regions and Slovenia and Croatia as rich, developed ones. Simmie and Dekleva concluded that the war was due to “economic wars between the richer northern republics and the poorer southern ones.”¹¹³ According to some calculations, Slovenia was 7.5 times as rich as Kosovo.

The economist Milica Zarkovic Bookman took an interesting approach to the importance of the economy in the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation¹¹⁴. She studied the relationship between economic stagnation and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia. It is generally assumed that modernization of society leads to weakening of the forces of nationalism, and on the other hand that nationalism is reinforced when the economic situation deteriorates. Some authors believe that the consequences of the economic crisis for the population of Yugoslavia led to the disintegration of the state. The standard of living dropped: in the mid-1980s, only 16% of Yugoslav households could live from their monthly income while by 1987 this figure had dropped to 5%. The population had lost all

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹¹¹ Sekelj (1993) 160-162.

¹¹² See e.g. Marius Broekmeyer, *Joegoslavië in crisis* (in Dutch) (The Hague, 1985).

¹¹³ J. Simmie and J. Dekleva, *Yugoslavia in Turmoil: After Self-Management?* (Londen, 1991) xvii.

¹¹⁴ M. Zarkovic Bookman, *Economic Decline and Nationalism in the Balkans* (London, 1994).

confidence in the Communist leaders. By the end of the 1980s, Communism had completely lost the respect of the populace and was only associated with corruption, nepotism and incompetence. Steven Burg pointed out that populist movements and political demagogues used the economic crisis to gain political support among the population by promising quick, radical solutions to complex socio-economic problems.

Zarkovic Bookman also saw a clear relationship between the economic stagnation, the rise of nationalism and the resulting demands for secession from multi-ethnic communities.¹¹⁵ She based her analysis on the theories of authors like Karl Deutsch and Samuel Huntington¹¹⁶, who claim that modernization increases the chance of assimilation and hence reduces the risk of ethnic conflicts. It also raises the level of civilization and education or training in a society. As a result, more people come to regard themselves as members of the civil society, and identify themselves less with their ethnic descent. The contrary view is that modernization increases the competition between different peoples, as a result of which ethnic groups actually want to distinguish themselves from others. Other experts, such as Immanuel Wallerstein,¹¹⁷ believe that it is precisely the richer regions that tend to make more extreme demands such as secession. Experience in Yugoslavia actually seems to confirm both these views. The first demands for secession came from Kosovo, the least developed region in Yugoslavia. At the end of the 1980s, however, it was precisely the richest Yugoslav republic, Slovenia, that used economic arguments to legitimize its secession from Yugoslavia. The Slovene economist Joze Mencinger called the arguments about the economic exploitation of Yugoslavia's rich northern republics 'economic demagogy'¹¹⁸, which was used for political ends to legitimize secession from the federation. In fact Slovenia, which though relatively small was economically the best developed region of Yugoslavia, profited from the large market for its products offered by the rest of Yugoslavia. Slovenian complaints at the end of the 1980s referred to the execution of the federal economic policy.

The last hope for economic recovery was placed in the 'shock therapy' instituted by the last Yugoslav federal premier Ante Markovic, who started an ambitious programme of measures aimed at correcting the economic and monetary imbalance in the federation in 1989. His efforts were however continually frustrated by the republican leaders in Slovenia and Croatia, who refused to pay the customs and tax income they received into the federal chest. Serbia also refused to cooperate with the reforms at federal level. In December 1990, just before the first multi-party elections in Serbia, the Serb President Slobodan Milosevic had 1.7 billion US dollars worth of dinars printed without authorization from the federal government or the Central Bank. This measure won the elections for him in Serbia, but the monetary consequences for the rest of the federation were catastrophic. The federal government lost any credibility it still had, and Slovenia and Croatia saw it as justification for their declaration of independence.

3. The crisis of the federal system

Apart from the question of the succession to Tito and the economic crisis, the literature on the disintegration of Yugoslavia devoted a great deal of attention to the crisis of the federal system. One of the paradoxes of Yugoslav society was that while official Communist ideology sketched nationalism as ideologically dangerous and socially unacceptable, ethnic criteria were still used as starting point for the formation of the Yugoslav federal system. Sabrina Ramet used the 'balance of power' theory from

¹¹⁵ 'The greater the underdevelopment, deterioration and stagnation of regional economy, the greater the efforts of the ethnic group to differentiate itself from the union.' in Zarkovic Bookman (1994) 8.

¹¹⁶ See K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York, 1969). S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven, 1968). Cited in Zarkovic Bookman (1994) 8.

¹¹⁷ See I. Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of independence*, (New York, 1961). Cited in Zarkovic Bookman (1994) 8.

¹¹⁸ See J. Mencinger, 'Costs and Benefits of Secession' in D. Fink-Hafner and J. Robbins, *Making a New Nation: The Formation of Slovenia* (Dartmouth, 1997).

international relations to analyse the disintegration of the Yugoslav state.¹¹⁹ The relations between the republics and the federation were laid down in the Yugoslav Constitution, the last version of which (from 1974) contained provisions for decentralization of the federation. The republics were given greater independence, and could stand up for their own rights. At the same time, there was less incentive for the republics to make compromises with one another and the relations between them changed into what one author described as ‘combative federalism’.¹²⁰ Although ethnic tensions had also occurred regularly in the past, they had according to Ramet never led to eruptions within the federal system as long as the authority of the Communist party remained unchallenged. Tito acted regularly as the ultimate arbitrator in disputes between the republics right up to his death.

Many books on the crisis of the 1980s contain descriptions of the bankruptcy of Communist ideology in Yugoslavia well before the major upheavals in Eastern Europe. The Constitution of 1974 caused the Yugoslav Communist party to be split up into national Communist parties, which demanded changes in the federal system. The conflict between the Yugoslav republics was largely regarded in the late 1980s and early 1990s as one between the centre and the disobedient republics. The Dutch researcher Koen Koch describes the power struggle as a collision between ‘conflicting visions of state and society’ and distinguishes the following pairs of opposites in this context: ‘centralization vs decentralization’ (‘federation vs confederation’), ‘democracy vs communism’ and ‘pluralism vs nationalism’.¹²¹ Koch refers to the analysis by Milovan Djilas, who saw the struggle of the 1980s as a conflict between the national elites of the various republics, who used nationalism as a ‘technique for domination’.¹²² Ramet distinguishes the ‘national liberals’ (Slovenia and Croatia), and the ‘conservative anti-reformers’ (Serbia and Montenegro). The former wanted more autonomy for the republics and further decentralization, while the latter actually wanted centralization of the federation. The Serb preference for a centralized federation was thus diametrically opposed to the Slovene and Croat demands for further decentralization. In addition, Slovenia and Croatia presented themselves as proponents of democratic change while Serbia and Montenegro were not prepared to give up Communism.

When the nationalist parties came to power in Slovenia and Croatia in 1990, this marked the start of what Robert Hayden called a period of ‘constitutional nationalism’, characterized by a constitution and a legal system in each new republic that was intended to guarantee the dominance of the largest ethnic group.¹²³ The other ethnic groups were declared ethnic minorities, which led to violent reactions since no one wanted to belong to a minority. The new political elites in Slovenia and Croatia applied the principle of ‘total national sovereignty’ by claiming the right to self-determination, which led eventually to their secession from Yugoslavia.¹²⁴

During the final phase of the conflict before major violence erupted, there was a heated debate about the meaning of the term ‘self-determination’. In the Communist vision of the federal system, each people had the right to self-determination - including the right to secession - on condition that the other constitutive nationalities agreed. Slovenia and Croatia derived the legitimacy and legality of their decision from the results of the preceding referendum. In fact, however, this referendum had not given them the backing of the other nationalities or of the federal government, which had declared the independence of these republics illegal.¹²⁵ The Croatian government was not worried about the boycott of the referendum by the Serb population of Croatia. In their opinion, the right to self-determination applied to the republics within their existing boundaries – often called the communist boundaries. This

¹¹⁹ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington, 1992).

¹²⁰ Sekelj (1993) 247.

¹²¹ Koen Koch, ‘Conflicting visions of State and Society in Present-day Yugoslavia’ in M. van den Heuvel and G. J. Siccama, *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1992) 189.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 200.

¹²³ See R. Hayden, ‘Constitutional Nationalism in the Former Yugoslav Republics’ *Slavic Review* (51), 654-673.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 665.

¹²⁵ Samary (1995) 75.

difference of opinion was, however, of no importance for the resolution of the crisis, for no matter whether the self-determination of peoples or of republics was at issue, the results of the referendum meant the end of the Yugoslav federation in both cases.¹²⁶ As early as 1991, a democratic Yugoslavia was no longer a realistic possibility. The Italian minister of Foreign Affairs Gianni de Michelis said in 1991 that “According to its present constitutional structure, Yugoslavia could be either united but undemocratic, or democratic - but in pieces.”¹²⁷

Despite his rhetoric, however, the Serb president Milosevic did not appear to be willing to grant the right to the self-determination of nationalities to anyone but the Serb population. In his opinion, the Serb population of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia should have the chance of expressing their opinion about the disintegration of the Yugoslav state and of deciding whether they wanted to remain in Yugoslavia. He has never explained why he was not prepared to grant the rights he claimed for the Serb minorities in the other republics to the Kosovars in Kosovo, the Muslims in Sandzak and the Hungarians in Vojvodina. One of the causes of the fighting that broke out in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was that the Serb population there had set up Serb “autonomous regions”: according to the Serb nationalist politicians, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina could become independent – but without the regions which they (the Serb politicians) regarded as Serbian. The Croat politicians followed the Serb example, and in 1992 the Croat ‘autonomous region’ of Herceg-Bosna was proclaimed, with the intention of incorporating it into Croatia later.

4. The question of the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia

The power struggle between the various Yugoslav republics in the period from 1990 to 1992 was followed closely by foreign journalists, diplomats and politicians. The official EU policy was that Yugoslavia had to be saved. When this proved impossible, a discussion flared up about the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. While the Serb president Slobodan Milosevic has always claimed that he wanted to save Yugoslavia, he is generally considered to bear most of the blame for its disintegration. Initially, Milosevic’s claim that he was in favour of the preservation of Yugoslavia was believed in European political circles. European policy in 1991 was also aimed precisely in this direction. Things changed after the failure of the conference held in The Hague in the autumn of 1991, where a Draft Proposal for a Yugoslav confederation was presented to the leaders of the various republics. According to this proposal, the republics would get a great deal of autonomy and would be joined together in a confederation; the national minorities in each republic would have a large measure of self-government. Milosevic was the only participant at this conference to reject this proposal, because he was not prepared to grant the Kosovo Albanians a wide degree of autonomy.¹²⁸ This is the main reason why Milosevic is regarded as having prime responsibility for the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia; a subsidiary reason is that he was the first Yugoslav politician to introduce nationalist rhetoric into his discourse. The main lines of Serbian policy under Milosevic were based on the SANU Memorandum (see section 1.6 above), a manifesto produced in 1986 by a group of leading members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Serbo-Croat abbreviation SANU). According to them, the 1974 Constitution was the cause of many problems in Yugoslav – and in particular in Serbian - society. They blamed the crisis on the political and economic domination of Slovenia and Croatia in Communist Yugoslavia, because these two republics had formed a kind of anti-Serb coalition during the rule of Tito and his right-hand man, the Slovene Edvard Kardelj. But the strongest criticism concerned federal policy in Kosovo: “Everyone in this country who is not indifferent has long ago realized that the genocide in Kosovo cannot be combated without deep social (...) changes in the whole country. These changes are unimaginable without changes likewise in the relationship between the

¹²⁶ See V. Gligorov, *Why Do Countries Break Up: The Yugoslav Case* (Uppsala, 1994).

¹²⁷ Sekelj (1992) 245.

¹²⁸ Little and Silber (1995) 213.

Autonomous Provinces and the Republic of Serbia (...). Genocide cannot be prevented by the (...) gradual surrender of Kosovo and Metohija to Albania: the unsigned capitulation which leads to a politics of national treason.”¹²⁹

The word ‘genocide’ had been uttered, with the implication that the Serb population in Croatia was also at risk. This kind of language also awoke memories of the Second World War, which had far-reaching consequences for the relations between the Serbs and the non-Serb nationalities in Yugoslavia. The suggestion of a planned anti-Serb policy and the threat of genocide led to a sort of existential crisis among the Serb people. This ‘propaganda of threat’ turned all kinds of Serbs – rich and poor, Communist and non-Communist, with or without a religious belief – into political allies in a broadly based national movement.¹³⁰

Although Milosevic claimed to support the preservation of Yugoslavia, he rejected all proposals for reformation of the Yugoslav federation: the Slovenian-Croatian proposal for a confederation; the Izetbegovic-Gligorov proposal, and finally that made by Lord Carrington in October 1991. After the rejection of the last-mentioned proposal, the international community was powerless to save Yugoslavia. Slovenia and Croatia were recognized as independent states by the EU countries shortly thereafter.

While Robert Hayden and Susan Woodward recognized that Serb nationalism had had negative effects, they did not think that Milosevic bore most blame for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In their opinion, Slovenia shared the blame. The political scientist Phil Nel (1994) considers that Croatian policy under Franjo Tudjman has most to answer for, since this led to the revolt of the Croatian Serbs against the new Croatian government in August 1990.¹³¹

Although there was much criticism of Croatian policy under Tudjman, Croatia was generally held to bear a smaller share of the blame than Serbia. The mistakes made by the Croatian government relate to the treatment of the Serb population in Croatia after the elections in 1990. The new Croatian political elite did little to rebut the claims that the demands for independence in 1990 bore a striking resemblance to those made for the independent Croatian Ustase state (NDH) in 1941. Tudjman has never unconditionally condemned the Croats’ Ustase past. In fact, he made things worse by stating that even though the Ustase movement with its fascism and ethnic cleansing was reprehensible, the independence of Croatia in the period between 1941 and 1945 had been a valuable historical fact.

In the new Croatian constitution adopted in 1990, the Serb population of the state was defined as a ‘national minority’. No new legislation was passed to protect the rights of the Serb population, even though they had an absolute majority in 11 municipalities and made up nearly 12% of the overall population of Croatia. This led to increasing uncertainty among the Serbs, and finally to resistance to the new Croatian government. A majority of the Croatian Serbs voted in 1990 for the SDP (Party of Democratic Change - the old Communists, who were in favour of reformation of the federation). After the defeat of this party, however, they showed increasing support for the Serb nationalist parties. With the approval of Slobodan Milosevic, the Croatian Serbs designated a series of areas as ‘serb Autonomous Regions’ in 1991; these areas became no-go areas for the Croatian authorities.

The international community is often blamed for the outbreak of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They recognized the independence of various parts of the former Yugoslavia too quickly. This claim is difficult to substantiate, however. After the declarations of independence of Slovenia and Croatia, it would have been hard to justify leaving the population of Bosnia behind in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. Moreover, if the EU had not recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina, two ethnic groups (the Croats and the Muslims) would have revolted. But when Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized, it was the Bosnian Serbs who revolted. The political leaders of the Bosnian Serbs had repeatedly stated before

¹²⁹ Magas (1993) 49.

¹³⁰ See Z. Tomac, ‘Ozivotvorenje memorandumskih ciljeva’ in B. Covic, *Izvori velikosrpske agresije*, (Zagreb, 1991).

¹³¹ P. Nel, ‘Who is to Blame? International Responses to Serbian Fears and the Conflict in Yugoslavia’, in F. Pfesch (ed.) *International Relations and Pan-Europe*, (Munster-Hamburg, 1994) 389-417.

April 1992 that they did not wish to live in a state where the Muslims together with the Croats had a parliamentary majority and could always outvote the Serbs.¹³² The Bosnian Serbs had therefore designated a series of areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'serb Autonomous Regions' before September 1991, in preparation for a territorial division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In January 1992, these regions were proclaimed the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Republika Srpska*). This provocation exacerbated the ethnic divisions.¹³³ Thereafter, the Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum on the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They wanted the Republika Srpska to become part of the new Yugoslav state formed in April 1992 as a federation between Serbia and Montenegro.

An authoritative assessment of the causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia was made by the Badinter Commission, set up by the EC Member States in 1990. This commission consisted of the presidents of the constitutional courts of the Western European countries, and was chaired by the French judge and head of the French Constitutional Court Robert Badinter. It concluded that the Yugoslav federation had already ceased to function before Slovenia and Croatia made their declarations of independence.¹³⁴ The judgement of the Badinter Commission had far-reaching consequences for the way the crisis was dealt with in international law: Slovenia and Croatia did not end up in the dock, and the new Yugoslav federation set up by Serbia and Montenegro could not assume the mantle of the former Yugoslavia. All debts and assets of the former Yugoslavia were divided proportionately between the five states that had succeeded it: Slovenia, Croatia, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

5. Definitions of the nature of the conflict

As we have just seen, the discussion about the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia generally assigned most of the blame to Slobodan Milosevic. According to the authors who have applied conflict theory to the Yugoslav crisis, however, all parties share the responsibility for the violent escalation of the conflict, because they all played according to the rules of the 'zero-sum game'. They were prepared to use all available means, including military force, to achieve their political objectives. None of the parties was willing to compromise: the aim was winning. The content of the discussion of the background of the conflict also changed after the outbreak of war. The violence in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was played out on a world stage, and evoked first astonishment and then outrage. How could people who had lived together peaceably for more than forty years suddenly become enemies? Arguments involving the economic and constitutional crisis of the Yugoslav federation might explain why the mechanism of the federation no longer functioned, but threw no light on the intensity of the violence between the ethnic groups in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina after the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation.

The causes of the war have been studied and explained from many different perspectives. Practically all authors try to find support for their theories in the history of the South-Slav peoples, no matter whether the recent war is defined as ethnic, religious, economic, ideological or political in nature. One group of eminent intellectuals who studied the causes and consequences of the conflict saw a clear relationship between the current crisis and the history of the region. Inspired by the work of the Commission of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace which investigated war crimes during the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, they decided in 1994 to engage in a similar fact-finding mission: "As the Commission travelled the length and breadth of the Balkans during the second half of 1995 and the first half of 1996, its members were often struck by parallels between their impressions and the insights

¹³² J. Zametica, *The Yugoslav Conflict Adelphi Paper 270* (Summer 1992).

¹³³ See Cohen (1993).

¹³⁴ See K. Begic, *Bosna i Hercegovina: of Vanceove misije do Daytonskog sporazuma*, (Sarajevo, 1997).

of the first Carnegie Commission of 1913-14.”¹³⁵ They wrote in the report of their investigation that in broad lines three historical explanations of the causes of the recent Balkan wars could be distinguished.

The first explanation sees the present conflict as a continuation of the power struggle between foreign powers: the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and czarist Russia. In the post-Cold War era, Germany, Turkey and Russia may be regarded as trying to create a new balance of power in the international system by increasing their own political influence in the Balkans. Since the outbreak of the war, the parties involved in the combat have made repeated attempts to blow new life into the old alliances with European countries: Croatia with Germany, Bosnians from Bosnia-Herzegovina with Turkey, Serbia with Russia. According to the authors, this explanation is a good example of the overestimation of the geopolitical significance of the Balkans for Europe.

The second is the historical explanation of the war, which is particularly popular in Europe. Here the eruption of violence in the former Yugoslavia is seen as a resurgence of the ‘centuries of hate’ between the peoples in question. This explanation suggests that the findings of the 1914 Commission can throw light on the recent crisis. The violence between the Balkan peoples in 1914 was ascribed to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which was no longer able to control the conflicts between these peoples. It is suggested that the collapse of the Communist system led to the same consequences in 1990, causing the old ethnic conflicts to flare up again.

The third explanation, which according to the authors had many adherents both in the western world and in the Balkans, was that the war was the result of the existence of cultural and religious ‘fault lines’ running through the region. The American political scientist Samuel Huntington referred to this idea in 1993 as the ‘clash of civilizations’.¹³⁶

According to Huntington, the fault lines between the civilizations correspond to the differences between the religions, and the boundary between the three major civilizations in Europe runs right through the Balkans: “In the Balkan this line, of course coincides with the historic boundary between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. The peoples to the north and west of this line are Protestant or Catholic; they shared the common experiences of European history - feudalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution; they are generally economically better off than the peoples to the east; and they may now look forward to increasing involvement in a common European economy and to the consolidation of democratic political systems. The peoples to the east and south of this line are Orthodox or Muslim; they historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems.”¹³⁷ According to the current map of the Balkans, Slovenia and Croatia (which are mainly Catholic) may be regarded as belonging to the western civilization and Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Muslim, while Montenegro, Macedonia and large parts of Serbia belong to Orthodox Christian civilization which has its roots in the old Byzantine empire and is perhaps the one most commonly associated with the Balkans. In *Unfinished Peace...*, the authors state that the idea that the Yugoslav war was a ‘clash of civilizations’ is shared both in the Balkans and other countries.

Even before Huntington wrote his article, Slavenka Drakulic, a well known Croat commentator, had described the various dimensions of the conflict as a ‘clash of civilisations’ in a conversation with Robert Kaplan. Kaplan cites her in his book as follows: “Here (...) the battle between Communism and capitalism is merely one dimension of a struggle that pits Catholicism against Orthodoxy, Rome against Constantinople, the legacy of Habsburg Austria-Hungary against that of Ottoman Turkey - in other words, West against East, the ultimate historical and cultural conflict.”¹³⁸ Slovene and Croat politicians have repeatedly stated that they did not belong to ‘the Balkans’, but to western Christian civilization. The Croat president Franjo Tudjman put this into words as follows: “The Yugoslav experience showed

¹³⁵ L. Tindemans (ed.), *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans* (Washington, 1996) 3.

¹³⁶ Samuel Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’ *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (Summer 1993) 29-30.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³⁸ R. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York, 1993) 74.

that the cultural and geopolitical divides and constraints turned out to be decisive - so strong that the common state proved not viable. The current fault-line overlaps with those of the Roman Empire (Theodosian line) between Rome, Byzantium, and Islam, as well as with the region where this divide of civilisations is most palpable, Bosnia-Herzegovina, produced one of the most powerful crises of today."¹³⁹ A number of well known Serb intellectuals and artists, including the post-modern author Milorad Pavic, have contributed to the glorification of the Byzantine civilization which they consider to be superior to western civilization. At the same time, Serb politicians have stated that the fear of the return of Islam provided a key motivation in their policy regarding in the conflict about Bosnia-Herzegovina. Radovan Karadzic has said, for example, that the Serbs would never allow Turkey to return to the Balkans.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand the spiritual leader of the Bosnians, Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Ceric, regarded the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a Crusade aimed at driving Islam from that part of Europe.¹⁴¹

6. Historical alliances and rivalries

An important aspect of the debate on the clash of civilizations in the Balkans was the revival of the historical and cultural links between the Balkan peoples and other countries. The involvement of the EU (or the EC, as it was then) as a mediator in the crisis between the Yugoslav republics led all parties to strengthen the old ties with the European great powers. Serbia claimed exclusive rights to friendship with Great Britain and France. The Croats expected support from Austria and Germany. There was even talk of a 'Balkanization' of Europe. Great Britain and France wanted to prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia, which led to their policies being regarded as pro-Serb. Present-day political considerations were related to old geo-political alliances and friendships. After the proposal for a Yugoslav confederation had been turned down, Germany announced in the autumn of 1991 that it was prepared to recognize Slovenia and Croatia as independent states. This step was seen by many as a restoration of the Second-World-War alliance and as a result Germany was regarded as pro-Croat, even within the EU. This also led to the dramatic statement by the Yugoslav minister of Defence, Veljko Kadijevic, in the French *Le Monde* that Yugoslavia had been attacked by Germany for the third time this century.¹⁴²

At the same time, the rival political elites within Yugoslavia did not know how to interpret US policy with regard to the Yugoslav crisis, and in the early 1990s it was far from clear who was whose 'traditional ally'. One of the best known examples of the contradictory interpretations that can be given to a contemporary event concerns the visit of the American Secretary of State James Baker to Belgrade on 21 June 1991 - four days before the outbreak of war in Slovenia. It may be stated that the official American policy was to support the Yugoslav federal government of premier Ante Markovic, and America made diplomatic efforts to save the Yugoslav state from collapse. During his meeting with Markovic, Baker pointed out the consequences of the unilateral declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia: Yugoslavia's borders would be at risk and it would be necessary to deploy the federal army (JNA). This was later interpreted as giving the 'green light' for the military intervention of the JNA in Slovenia and Croatia. Baker himself, however, regarded his statement that America disapproved of any form of violence as his main message in this dialogue with the Yugoslavs.¹⁴³ The

¹³⁹ Tindemans (1996) 16.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid, 19.

¹⁴³ Baker explained in his memoirs that US policies were aimed at preservation of the Yugoslav state. While he disapproved of the Slovene and Croat desire for independence, he was also aware of the dangers of the Serb policies which aimed at achieving Serb domination under the pretence of furthering the preservation of the Yugoslav state. He warned Milosevic that Serbia would become an 'international pariah' if he continued to make claims on territories outside the boundaries of Serbia. See James Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy, Revolution, War, Peace 1989-1992* (New York, 1995).

balance of opinion after the event was nevertheless that his visit had delivered ‘mixed signals’ and that each party could interpret the American diplomatic rhetoric in its own way. For example Stipe Mesic, the last Croatian representative in the federal presidium, cited Baker’s farewell speech, in which he said that the US was against the disintegration of Yugoslavia, in his memoirs. Mesic regarded the US as an opponent of Croatia, on the basis of the principle that who is not for us is for our enemy.¹⁴⁴ The Croat commentator Tomislav Sunic similarly concluded that the American pro-Yugoslav stance was by definition regarded as anti-Croat in Croatia.¹⁴⁵ Most Serb politicians, on the other hand, were far from regarding American policies as pro-Serb or pro-Yugoslav. The Serb politician Borislav Jovic, the penultimate president of the federal presidium who had the reputation of carrying out Slobodan Milosevic’s political plans, accused the US of pro-Slovene and pro-Croat policies in his book.¹⁴⁶ General Veljko Kadijevic, the Yugoslav minister of Defence in 1991, was even sharper in his criticism. He went so far as to write that American politicians had a well thought out plan to destroy Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁷

The international community, which was trying to play the role of a mediator in the Yugoslav crisis, was in this way made part of the crisis. All individual states were continually accused of bias, as were the individual negotiators who were exposed to all kinds of provocations and accusations.¹⁴⁸

After the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, new life was also blown into the old alliances based on religion: the north-western or Catholic alliance, the south-eastern or Orthodox alliance and the Green Transversal which united the Bosnian Muslims with the Muslims from Sandzak, Kosovo, Albania and Turkey.¹⁴⁹ Velikonja called such alliances ‘hereditary alliances’. ‘Hereditary’ allies were supposed to protect their friends against their ‘hereditary enemies’. The Croats look for such allies in the West, where they see themselves as belonging in a ‘historical and cultural’ sense. The Serbs look towards the Russians and Greeks, their brothers in Orthodoxy. This has led to the ‘Bosnjaks’ (Bosnian ‘Muslim’) had come to count on the support and empathy of their ‘richer’ co-religionists from near and far.”¹⁵⁰ In other words, when conflicts arise with other countries, ‘hereditary allies’ should always back one another up, no matter whether they are directly involved in the conflict. For example, during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina the Bosnian Muslims received support from Muslim countries in the Far and Near East, even though they had had hardly any contact with these countries in the past and despite the fact that these countries, with the exception of Turkey, had no geo-political interests in the Balkans. Not only the ‘hereditary allies’ but also the ‘hereditary enemies or rivals’ are an important factor in this equation, however. Velikonja describes the ‘hereditary enemies’ of the Serbs as follows: “The Serbs for example, consider the Pope to have been a permanent malignancy from time immemorial, even though the man who sat on the throne of St. Peter during the medieval period invariably collaborated with the Serbs. The second ‘enemy’ are the Muslims. ‘Christian’ Serbia and Montenegro try to present themselves as defenders of the faith against the ‘Istanbul-Tirana-Sarajevo green crescent of Islam’ and the ‘Macedonia-Bulgaria-Romania-Albania-Bosnia axis of Turkish affinity’. (...) The third of Serbia’s ‘historical’ enemies are the Germans together with their ‘Drang nach Osten’

¹⁴⁴ See Stipe Mesic, *Kako smo srusili Jugoslaviju* (Zagreb, 1992).

¹⁴⁵ See Tomislav Sunic, *Americka ideologija* (Zagreb 1993).

¹⁴⁶ See Borislav Jovic, *Komadanje Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1992).

¹⁴⁷ See Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje videnje raspada* (Belgrade, 1993).

¹⁴⁸ The Canadian general Lewis McKenzie was accused of having visited Serb-controlled brothels. Thorsten Stoltenberg was regarded as a great friend of the Serbs since the time when he worked as a diplomat in Belgrade, and many authors wrote that he was unsuitable to be a negotiator because his children had been taught by their Serb nurse to say that they were Serbs too during that period. A great deal of malicious gossip about Carl Bildt also appeared in the media, including the completely fictitious story that he had had an affair with a Serb woman from Pale which had led to his divorce.

¹⁴⁹ Tindemans (1996) 21-22.

¹⁵⁰ Mitja Velikonja, ‘Liberation Mythology, the Role of Mythology in Fanning War in the Balkans’ in Paul Mojzes (ed.), *Religion and the War in Bosnia* (Atlanta, 1998) 40. See also the same author’s book *Masade duha: Razpotja Sodobnih Mitologij* (Ljubljana, 1995).

(eastward push) project (not to mention Austrian-German ‘meddling’ in Serbia’s affairs which directly led to World War I).¹⁵¹

One of the main points of criticism of Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ theory is the fact that most clashes actually take place within a single civilization. One of the most irreconcilable political conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries in the Balkans was the rivalry between the two neighbouring Orthodox countries Bulgaria and Serbia, which led to a series of wars about competing claims to Macedonian territory. When the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia became independent in 1992, however, Bulgaria did not become involved. In the power struggle between the different ethnic groups within Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s, power-political motives and geo-political interests were usually intentionally concealed. For example, the Serb political leaders never admitted that they wanted to found a state that would also include Serbs from other Yugoslav republics. They preferred the argument that it was (and is) impossible to co-exist with ‘hereditary’ enemies: the existence of Serb population groups in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina would be threatened by their Muslim and Catholic compatriots.¹⁵² There is however no proof of the existence of a Muslim alliance (the ‘Green Transversal’) in the Balkans. It is true that the Bosnian Muslims have close political ties with the Muslims from the Serb province of Sandzak – indeed, they consider themselves to be a single people. They have no political links with the Kosovars, however, and do not even speak the same language. Turkey was politically very active in the Balkans during the Yugoslav crisis; however, it supported not only Muslim Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina but also Orthodox Macedonia.¹⁵³ Alija Izetbegovic did strengthen the political links with the Muslim countries that provided humanitarian aid and weapons during the war, but it was the support of the United States that was decisive in preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state, and in ending the genocide of the Bosnian Muslims.

7. Hereditary alliances: Russia, Serbia and Montenegro

In particular Russia is recognized as Serbia’s historical ally. The American Russia specialist Paul Goble, who in 1996 wrote an interesting study of Russian policies in connection with the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, believes that the importance of the historical links between the Russians and the Serbs has been overestimated, and that both Russia and Serbia blew new life into the old idea of Slav brotherhood and solidarity for reasons of self-interest.¹⁵⁴ After the end of the Cold War, Russia had to secure a new place for itself in the international system and at the same time restore political authority at home, while Serbia was looking for political allies with reasonable standing in the international political world. Soviet politicians were initially worried about the comparisons that were regularly made between the Soviet Union and communist Yugoslavia, implying that the disintegration of the Soviet Union could also lead to a series of ‘Bosnias’ in its wake. The Croatian Russia specialist Radovan Vukadinovic concluded that the disintegration of Communism had made both Russia and Serbia considerably less powerful, and that the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia had had adverse consequences for both the Russians and the Serbs because the new boundaries had been fixed in such a way that a large part of the Russian and Serbian population had been left outside their respective countries.¹⁵⁵ Goble pointed out however that the role of Russia in the Soviet Union differed appreciably from that of Serbia in the Yugoslav federation. This is certainly true if we consider the position of Russia in world politics after the fall of the Soviet Union as compared with that of Serbia after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Goble went on to observe that both countries had their own

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵² ‘Memorandum SANU’ in *Nase teme* 33 (Zagreb, 1989) 128-163.

¹⁵³ Tindemans (1996) 31.

¹⁵⁴ Paul A. Goble, ‘Dangerous Liaisons: Moscow, the Former Yugoslavia, and the West’ in R. Ullman (ed.) *Yugoslavia’s Wars* (New York, 1996) 182-197.

¹⁵⁵ Radovan Vukadinovic, ‘Yugoslavia and the East: From Non-Alignment to Disintegration’ in J.G. Siccama and M. van den Heuvel (eds). *Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Atlanta-Amsterdam, 1992) 156-163.

ideas about the nature of their political co-operation: “Regular contacts between Moscow and Belgrade seem to be enabling Russia to play the role of mediator between the West and Serbia as well to show to the opposition at home its international influence.(...) Unfortunately we can speak now not only about Moscow influencing Belgrade but also Belgrade and Pale influencing Moscow’s politicians for their own ends.”¹⁵⁶

According to the Russian historian Sergej Romanenko, the current Russian political involvement in the Balkans is based on Russia’s geo-political interests, as it always has been: “It considered the Balkans as an arena, and the national movements of the Balkans and their states as tools (means), for achieving Russia’s own political, military or economic goals. These interests sometimes contradicted, and sometimes partly coincided with the interest of the Balkan peoples.”¹⁵⁷

Initially, the Serbs and the Montenegrins in the 19th century sought – and received – support from Russia in their struggle against the Ottomans. When Serbia became an independent state in 1838, however, this ushered in a new phase in Russo-Serbian relations and the two countries became rivals. The Serbian minister of Foreign Affairs wrote in the notorious ‘*Nacertanije*’ that the formation of a strong Serbian state would lead to conflicts with Russia: “Great Serbia inevitably led to a conflict with Russia, because the entire Serbian political thought was based on non-acceptance of pan-Slavism and Russia’s leadership.”¹⁵⁸

The diplomatic involvement of Russia in the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina led to much debate among Russian historians and Balkans experts about the background of Russo-Serbian relations. During a conference on the history of the ‘slav idea’ held in Moscow in 1994, the historian Pavel Gracev stressed that the idea of Slav solidarity was not thought up by the Russians but arose among the Slav peoples living under Ottoman and Habsburg domination.¹⁵⁹ The 17th- century Croatian thinker Juraj Krizanic was the first to ask the Russian Czar for support for the Slavs in the Balkans. A small group of Russian intellectuals founded the pan-Slavist movement in 1858. They saw the political future of Russia in an alliance with other Slav peoples who shared the same Orthodox Christian belief, i.e. the Bulgarians, Serbs and Montenegrins. It was not until the 1870s that pan-Slavist ideas found official recognition in Russian foreign policy. When Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Ottomans in 1876, these two countries got a lot of support from Russian public opinion. Russian volunteers travelled to the Balkans to join the fight. The Russian involvement in the war had little to do with political idealism, however, and much to do with Russian political ambitions in the Balkans. The protection of the Slav population offered a plausible basis for Russian power politics.¹⁶⁰ In line with this, most historians regard the period between 1878 and 1903 as a low point in Russo-Serbian relations. Despite the pan-Slavist rhetoric, Russia did not support Serbia during the peace negotiations in San Stefano (1878) but preferred the formation of a Bulgarian state. When the peace negotiations were continued during the Congress of Berlin, Russia allowed Bosnia-Hercegovina to be made an Austro-Hungarian protectorate – to the great frustration of the Serb politicians. In fact, the Serbian Obrenovic dynasty maintained close relations with Austro-Hungary in this period. It was not until 1903 that King Petar Karadjordjevic restored the good relations with Russia. When Russia stood up for Serbia in 1914, thus taking part in the First World War, a number of prominent Russian politicians and intellectuals openly expressed their doubts about this decision. Sergej Witte put his anger at the Russian involvement in the war into words as follows: “This war is idiocy! Why should Russia fight? To maintain our prestige in the Balkans, because of our holy duty to help our blood brothers? That is a romantic, old-fashioned delusion. No one here – no one of any intelligence at least – cares a tinker’s

¹⁵⁶ Goble cites the daily *Kommersant* (29 June, 1995) here; see Goble (1996) 182.

¹⁵⁷ Sergej Romanenko, ‘Russia in the Balkans: Eternal Allies or Eternal Interests’ in *Balkan Forum* (September 1996) 32.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁹ V.P. Gracev, ‘Ideja Slavjanskoi vzaimnosti...’, in V.A. Djakov (ed.) *Slavjanskaja ideja: isstorija i sovremennost* (Moscow, 1998) 37-39.

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. M.B. Petrovich, *Emergence of the Russian Panslavism, 1856-1870* (New York, 1956). D. MacKenzie, *Serbs and Russian Panslavism* (New York, 1967).

cuss for those excitable, vain Balkan folk, the Serbs, who don't even have a drop of Slav blood in their veins but are simply Turks christened under a false name. We should let the Serbs undergo the punishment they so richly deserve."¹⁶¹

Serbia lost the support of Russia through the outbreak of the revolution in 1917 and the separate peace Russia made with Germany in 1918. This was one of the factors that forced Serbia to give up the hope of the formation of a Greater Serbia and to acquiesce in the formation of a joint South-Slav state. The Russian historian Romanenko writes, however, that czarist Russia was never in favour of the union of the South Slav peoples in a single state. The Russian politicians were afraid that the new state would not maintain a pro-Russian foreign policy. Moreover, a great Slav state in the Balkans would be a direct rival of Russia.¹⁶²

The relations between the Soviet Union and the kingdom of Yugoslavia were far from good. Yugoslavia was the last Balkan country to recognize the Soviet Union officially, which it did in 1940. According to the historians A.N. Gorjainov and E.P. Aksenova, the Russian Communists initially went so far as to consider 'slavic studies' socially and scientifically unacceptable, since in their eyes they made no contribution to the class struggle.¹⁶³ They were moreover extremely critical of the role of Serbia in the kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union openly criticized Serb oppression of other nationalities in the kingdom of Yugoslavia in the 1920s. "During the inter-war period, and especially in the 1920s, the SKP(b) and the USSR took advantage of the national movements of the Yugoslavs against the Serbian monarchy, which had granted asylum to many Russian emigres and to the Orthodox Church, as well as against the Versailles system. Centralist Yugoslavia, based on the foundations of Serbian statehood, followed a clear anti-Soviet policy."¹⁶⁴

The historiography concerning the relations between the Soviet Union and Communist Yugoslavia also deals with the break between Tito and Stalin in 1948. Relations were restored after Stalin's death, but Tito continued to steer an independent course. Belgrade expressed disapproval of the Soviet Union's interventionist foreign policy in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cambodia and Afghanistan, because the Yugoslav Communists feared Soviet intervention in Yugoslavia. The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev paid an official visit to Yugoslavia in 1989, to normalize relations between the two countries. In *Yugoslavia, Death of a Nation*, L. Silber and A. Little describe in detail how Serbia sought support from abroad during the late 1980s in the struggle for the preservation of Yugoslavia. When the Western European countries were not prepared to give such support, Yugoslav and Serb diplomacy turned to the Soviet Union (still in existence at this time). In March 1991, on the eve of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, General Veljko Kadijevic (still the Yugoslav minister of Defence) travelled to the Soviet Union to discuss the Yugoslav crisis with his colleague Dimitri Jazov. Word would later leak out about Karijevic's mysterious trip to Moscow. Kadijevic came back believing that President Mikhail Gorbachev would not last long and that, if they could hold out just a bit longer Communism would be shored up in the Soviet Union which, in turn, would save them."¹⁶⁵

A *coup d'état* aimed at toppling president Gorbachev did indeed take place in August 1991. This was openly welcomed by the political and military leaders in Belgrade, since they hoped that the new Soviet rulers would support the Serb policy of a centralized Yugoslav state. However, when Boris Yeltsin subsequently became president of Russia he approved the independence of the Baltic states, thus giving the starting signal for the rapid and largely non-violent crumbling of the old Communist empire. Yeltsin's subsequent pro-western foreign policy was a great disappointment to the Yugoslav and Serbian Communists.

¹⁶¹ Elisabeth Hersh, *Verraad, Lafheid en Bedrog - leven en dood van de laatste tsaar* [Betrayal, Cowardice and Deceit – The Life and Death of the last Czar; in Dutch] (Amsterdam, 1992) 186-187.

¹⁶² Romanenko (1996) 35.

¹⁶³ See V.A. Djakov (ed.) *Slavjanskaja ideja: isstorija i sovremennost* (Moscow, 1998).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁶⁵ L. Silber and A. Little, *Yugoslavia, Death of a Nation* (Hammerworth, 1997) 127.

The Russian expert on the Balkans Pavel Kandel writes that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was seen in Communist hardliner and Russian nationalist circles as a dangerous precedent for a possible fragmentation of Russia itself.¹⁶⁶ The Russian parliament made repeated pleas for a ‘pan-Slavist’ approach in Russian foreign policy towards the Balkans, which implied support for the Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins. The Russian Communists and nationalists were supported in their struggle for a pro-Serb policy by an influential group of intellectuals, including a number of staff members of the Institute for Slavist and Balkan Studies of the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences. For example the Balkan specialist Elena Guskova, who has been the head of the department for study of the Yugoslav crisis since that crisis broke out, has written a series of publications defending Serb policies.¹⁶⁷

The differences of opinion about Balkan policy in Russian politics and public opinion are by no means unique, however. As Goble has pointed out, governments and public opinion in the West also show internal divisions concerning just about every aspect of the recent wars in the former Yugoslavia.

8. Traditional geo-political alliances: England, France, Germany

Apart from ‘hereditary alliances and rivalries’, commentators in this field often speak of ‘traditional political friendships and rivalries’. The term ‘traditional’ implies the continued existence of long-term historical relations between various states or peoples. The question is what forms the basis for such alliances and rivalries. Apart from the above-mentioned religious basis for some alliances, it goes without saying that geo-political interests played an important role. From a geo-political viewpoint, the fate of the South Slav peoples since the 19th century has been closely linked to international political developments. International relations in the 19th century were characterized by varying political and military alliances, which often had little to do with religious or ideological affinities. The peoples of the Balkans found themselves in the middle of a great power struggle about the ‘Eastern Question’, which Barbara Jelavich describes as follows: “The whole cluster of issues surrounding the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the revolt of the subject people, and the European intervention became known as the Eastern Question. This problem was to become the single most important cause for diplomatic controversy among the powers and was to lead to the only two general wars in the century after the Congress of Vienna - the Crimean War and World War I.”¹⁶⁸

The geo-political and hereditary criteria for the definition of traditional alliances are conveniently mixed up in Serb collective memory. Alongside Russia as an important Orthodox power, the Serbs often count western countries such as France and England among their traditional allies. The Serbs see themselves as the defenders of European Christendom during the many centuries of Ottoman domination – even though Serbia did not start to become integrated into European politics until the 19th century. Serbia has steered a highly variable and unpredictable course in its relations with the European great powers. Velikonja gives a number of examples which could serve as evidence of a traditional friendship between Serbia, Austro-Hungary and Germany: the Austrian army supported the Serbs in 1691 and 1739 in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire; Austro-Hungary was the main political ally of the Obrenovic kings in the 19th century, in 1917, the Serb government in exile tried to sign a separate peace agreement with the Central Powers; and during the Second World War there was a Serb Nazi satellite state led by General Milan Nedic.¹⁶⁹ Philip Cohen mentions the Serb historical revisionism about the Second World War which was intended to conceal Serb collaboration with the Nazis while Nedic had worked so hard in the service of the holocaust that there were hardly any Jews left in Serbia in 1942.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ See e.g. the contributions of Pavel Kandel and Sergej Romanenko in *Rossija na Balkanax* (Moscow, 1996).

¹⁶⁷ See Elena Guskova, *Jugoslovenska kriza i Rusija* (Belgrade, 1996). *Uregulirovanie na Balkanax: ot Brioni do Deitona - mirnye plany 1991-1995 gg.* (Moscow, 1997). *Jugoslavskii krizis i Rossija* (Moscow, 1993).

¹⁶⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkan: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (1 vol.) (Cambridge, 1983) 186.

¹⁶⁹ Cohen (1996) 39.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 63-84.

The alliance between Serbia and France was geo-political in nature. France's 'historical links' with Serbia go back to the First World War. France was one of the countries that had supported the formation of the Yugoslav state. French politicians saw Serbia as the most important political factor in Yugoslavia, and when France started to play a important role in the Balkans in the interbellum years it supported the centralist regime in Belgrade and regarded Croatia as troublesome and unreliable because Croat politicians, including Stjepan Radic, had been campaigning abroad since 1918 for the federalization of Yugoslavia while French diplomacy clearly favoured a centralized Yugoslavia. Relations between France and Serbia were particularly close during the personal dictatorship of the French-speaking king Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, but the assassination of king Aleksandar in Marseille in 1934 led to a marked change in Franco-Yugoslav relations. The regent Pavle, one of Aleksandar's brothers, was pro-British while the Serbian government under Milan Stojadinovic sympathized with Nazi Germany. The Second World War put an end to Serbian diplomacy, and after the war France maintained fairly good relations with the Communist regime in Yugoslavia. It is questionable whether one can speak of a 'traditional alliance' between Serbia and France on the basis of such short-lived and unstable relations, and it may further be asked what arguments there are for calling French policy with respect to the wars in the former Yugoslavia pro-Serb. It is true that the French were regularly accused of being pro-Serb during the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina because they were against the recognition of Croatia, the ending of the UN weapons embargo for Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to give the Bosnians the chance of defending themselves, and military intervention to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nevertheless, François Mitterrand did pay a symbolic visit to Sarajevo under siege in June 1992 – right on the Serbian national holiday, Saint Vitus Day. This led to the reopening of Sarajevo airport, permitting the supply of humanitarian aid to the war zone to start up again. French policies were mainly the result of their own national agenda, in which reinforcement of France's role in European politics played an important part. France was concerned about the political influence of a united Germany in post-Communist Europe; this consideration made it support an independent European security policy for Yugoslavia, free from NATO and US control.¹⁷¹ The tendency of some French officers in Bosnia-Herzegovina to accuse all parties of crimes against the civilian population ('symmetry of blame') changed in 1995, however, when the Bosnian Serbs also took French UN troops hostage. This even led to a radical swing in French policy as regards a possible military intervention. There was no longer any trace of the 'traditional alliance' between France and Serbia: France supported the American initiatives, and the Dayton Agreement was signed in Paris.

Similar questions may be asked about the background of the 'traditional alliance' between Great Britain and Serbia and the influence of this on British policy towards Yugoslavia. It has been claimed that the political links between Serbia and Great Britain from the First and Second World Wars laid the basis for a 'historical friendship'. The fact that British policies in Yugoslavia during the Second World War made it possible for the Communists to seize power and prevented the return of the Serbian king to Belgrade are apparently disregarded as unimportant in this connection. British foreign policy during the Yugoslav crisis of the 1990s was regarded as pro-Serbian because the British government was against military intervention and 'imposed' solutions. In fact, it was the Bosnian Serbs who were determined not to accept a compromise: in view of their military superiority, they thought they were in a position to dictate the future of the Bosnian state. The question was therefore whether John Major's government was against military intervention in the Bosnian conflict because of Britain's historical friendship with Serbia (i.e. because they wanted the Serbs to win) or because British policy was based on an incorrect assessment of the nature of the conflict and underestimation of the consequences of the war for the civilian population. There is little reason to believe that John Major's view of Britain's 'historical friendships' in the Balkans would differ substantially from those of his predecessor Margaret Thatcher, who was decidedly in favour of military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina to put an end to Serbian aggression.

¹⁷¹ Tindemans (1996) 61.

9. A historical conflict

The foreign politicians, military personnel and diplomats who came to Yugoslavia after the outbreak of the war as observers and mediators were regularly confronted with emotional and mutually contradictory stories about the background of the war. The reply to each question about the conflict usually involved long stories about what terrible wrongs the one ethnic group had done to the other at some time in the past. This sometimes gave foreign diplomats the impression that the roots of each problem went right back to the dawn of history.¹⁷² Historical tales were even served up at the negotiating table. During the first peace conference on Yugoslavia in the autumn of 1991 in the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Serbian president Milosevic reminded the delegates of the crimes committed against Serbs in the Second World War in order to show that the Serbian population could not expect decent treatment at the hands of an independent Croatian state. He clearly believed that such arguments could help to prevent the recognition of Croatia as an independent state. During the negotiations, the representatives of each ethnic group told long stories about the tragic fate that ethnic group had suffered in the past. Foreign diplomats, military and journalists were expected to react appropriately to such stories and to display a greater understanding of the speaker's political standpoint. Before negotiating with a delegation of Bosnian Serbs, the American mediator Richard Holbrooke therefore told the Serbian president Milosevic that no references to history should be made during the discussions.¹⁷³ He refused to attach any special significance to the 'historical' arguments that were regularly used by the nationalist politicians to influence the current political situation, because they made it difficult to reach any reasonable practical solution. The Bosnian Serbs wished to live apart from the Muslim and Catholic inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which led them to lay claim to more than 70% of Bosnian territory. It appeared in the final analysis that their historical arguments only served as a means of winning the conflict. Mitja Velikonja tried to explain this remarkable way of dealing with history from an anthropological perspective: "Any research into history of collective conceptions must always include both an historical and sociological perspective. Whilst the former reveals the sequence of occurrences, the latter reveals their position in the stormy firmament of social conception and the ways in which authority repeatedly tries to manipulate them. Accepted historical facts are not indispensable, necessary, or even important in the construction of social conceptions. The function of society "is possible" merely if it believes in its own story, and to do that it isn't even necessary for it to be familiar with that story."¹⁷⁴

The politicians from the former Yugoslavia also used their history, the unpronounceable names and the topographic concepts as a means of gaining an intellectual edge on the foreign mediators. It regularly happened that foreign mediators who did not have a good knowledge of the history of the region were not taken seriously: "How can they command our respect and guide our negotiations if they don't know what they are talking about?" and "he can't even point to our country on a map!"¹⁷⁵ At the same time, the foreign partners in the discussions who did have some factual knowledge of the history of the South Slav peoples were often discouraged by such remarks as: "You can't learn our history from the history books, you need to be one of us to understand it!" The Dutch anthropologist Mattijs van de Port, who was carrying out an investigation in Novi Sad (Vojvodina) when war broke out in 1991, has had personal experience of such attitudes: "You don't know our history'. I don't know how many times I heard this remark. Sometimes it was whispered with fatigue, sometimes hurled at me

¹⁷² The Dutch diplomat Marco Hennis, who was involved in the first peace negotiations in the former Yugoslavia, stated that it initially looked as if all conflicts there started 'round about the time of the birth of Christ'.

¹⁷³ '(...) they must not give us a lot of historical bullshit, as they have with everyone else. They must be ready for serious discussion.' In: *How End a War* (New York, 1998) 148.

¹⁷⁴ Velikonja (1998) 20.

¹⁷⁵ See e.g. the interview with the former American ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, in the Croatian weekly *Globus* (18 December 1998: 31). He referred to a remark by the Croatian politician Ivic Pasalic describing the American senator Paul Simon, the leader of the OVSE observers at the Croatian elections at that time, as someone who would not be able to point to Croatia on a map.

in a quarrelous tone of voice. ‘You don’t know our history’ would usually follow a news report saying that some figure of international standing or some human rights committee had once more read Serbia a lecture about its misbehaviour in the war zones or its violation of the rules of diplomacy and international communication. Sometimes it would follow a remark from me that, according to my informant, was too critical. ‘What do you know? You don’t know our history!’ (...) Don’t bother, is what the phrase seemed to imply, you are not going to find out, for if you really want to find out what our history is all about, learning our language, reading our books or knowing the facts doesn’t suffice.”¹⁷⁶

The question as to whether the recent war was due to age-old disagreements was highlighted by the appearance of *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* by Robert Kaplan. In this book, Kaplan offered a fairly obvious but rather over-simplified explanation of the causes of the ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia by describing it as a prolonged conflict that was incomprehensible to outsiders and that had its roots in an equally incomprehensible past. One of the main participants in the Yugoslav conflict, Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs during the recent war, appeared to share this view. He claimed that Serbs find it impossible on the basis of past experience to co-exist with other ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina: “Mr. Karadzic, mingling historical and biological determinism wants us to believe that history has created two very different Serbo-Croatian speaking animals - sort of a Balkan version of natural selection - and that the world is foolishly ‘trying to put cats and dogs in the same box’.”¹⁷⁷

Another important aspect of the discussions on the relationship between history and the current conflict was the debate about the utility of drawing parallels between the past and the present in order to permit a better understanding of the background of the war. The core of this debate was that while comparisons with the past might be enlightening, they were not considered to be ‘politically correct’ if they confirmed stereotype images of the Balkans as being ‘non-European’ and ‘violent’. The British author Tim Judah put this dilemma into words as follows: “It is unfashionable to link the past and the present when writing about the wars in the former Yugoslavia. One stands the risk of being accused of implying that somehow the peoples of the former Yugoslavia are more predisposed to war than anyone else in Europe or that they went to war because they were led into it by their leaders. But these leaders drew on the malign threads of their people’s history to bind them and pull them into war. If Serbian history had been different, today’s generations could not have been manipulated in the same way. In the most obvious case, there might have been no Serbs in Croatia or Bosnia.”¹⁷⁸

The American historian H. R. Friman describes how links are established between history and the present, and distinguishes two approaches which he calls ‘throwback’ and ‘blowback’. “Throwback approaches seek explanatory parallels in the past. This selective use of history argues for interpreting current events as the latest manifestation of past dynamics. In contrast, blowback approaches seek to explain current dynamics as the result, often unintended, of past policies. As in the case of throwback arguments, this approach relies on the selective and simplistic use of history.”¹⁷⁹ Friman cites as the best example of blowback argumentation the analysis in which links are laid between the recent conflict and the long-term ‘ethnic hate’ between the peoples concerned, and summarizes this argument as follows: “The war in the former Yugoslavia, the extent of violence between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, the ethnic-cleansing, rapes, and camps, therefore, all stem from a long, continuous history of atrocity and counter-atrocity in the region.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Mattijs van de Port, Gypsies, ‘It takes a Serb to Know a Serb: uncovering the roots of obstinate otherness in Serbia’ in *Imagining the Balkans* Press Now Reader 13 January 1999). See also the same author’s *Wars & Other Instances of the Wild* (Amsterdam, 1998) 97-98.

¹⁷⁷ G. Walters, ‘The Future of History in the Balkans’, in Thomas and Friman (eds.) (1996) 3.

¹⁷⁸ Tim Judah, *The Serbs, History, Myths & the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, 1997) xi.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas and Friman (1996) 3-4.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

The history of the South Slav peoples and in particular that of Yugoslavia is indeed often described as an endless succession of violent incidents and ethnic conflicts. It is true that the South Slav peoples did provide several items of world news during the 20th century involving wars and spectacular political assassinations: the assassination of the last Serbian king from the royal house of Obrenovic (1903), the Balkan wars (1912-1913), the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the successor to the Habsburg throne, in Sarajevo (1914), the assassination of the Croatian political leader Stjepan Radic in the Yugoslav parliament (1928), that of the Serbian king Aleksandar Karadjordjevic during an official state visit to France (1934), and two civil wars (1941-1945 and 1991-1995).

Not all authors regard South Slav history as particularly violent, however. Janusz Bugajski plays down the long history of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans by pointing out that class conflicts and agrarian disputes were also important.¹⁸¹ Thomas plays down both the intensity and the frequency of violence in the Balkans: “The history of the Balkans is not one of prolonged and enduring conflict among Serbs, Croats and Slav Muslims. Before the creation of the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, there was little conflict among these groups. Certainly, conflict among these groups in the centuries before 1918 was not much greater than in similar regional conditions elsewhere. Oppression of the poor Serb peasants by more privileged Slav Muslims, who tried to be ‘more Turkish than the Turks’, did not lead to extensive bloody conflict. Since the Serbs fell under the Ottoman Empire and the Croats under Austro-Hungarian empires, the two communities were largely separated through much of their recorded history. Even when the Serbs were brought in to settle the Krajina region of the Austro-Hungarian lands, their role was to defend Austrian-controlled territory from encroaching Turks, not to fight Croats.”¹⁸²

The references to violent incidents from the past did however influence international politics, especially through the ‘sarajevo metaphor’. Sarajevo achieved international fame in 1914 as the site of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the successor to the Habsburg throne, by a Serb nationalist which eventually led to the First World War. Since that time, this event in Sarajevo is regarded as a warning that a conflict at the periphery of Europe can have fatal consequences for European security.¹⁸³ Translated into political terms, this fear of escalation of the Yugoslav crisis initially led to a containment policy: the conflict had to be isolated to prevent it from spreading to neighbouring countries.

Though it is generally agreed that a knowledge of history is important for a proper understanding of the background to the Yugoslav conflict, it is very difficult to explain the wars solely on the basis of historical analogies without taking the recent power struggle between the political elites into account. It is clear, however, that the various parties have (mis)used history to justify their aggressive policies towards other ethnic groups and to cloak the real political objectives – which generally involved boundary changes at the expense of their neighbours.

10. Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the disintegration of Yugoslavia

It is paradoxical that the peoples who had nothing to say about the formation of the Yugoslav state in 1918 later came to regard it as the best solution to their own national questions. There is ultimately a feeling of regret that Yugoslavia ceased to exist in 1991.

¹⁸¹ J. Bugajski, *Balkan Myths and Bosnian Massacres* in Thomas and Friman (1996) 121-122.

¹⁸² R. Thomas (1996) 22.

¹⁸³ See e.g. Jacques Rupnik (ed.), *De Sarajevo á Sarajevo: L'échec yugoslave*, (Brussels, 1992). Charles Gati, ‘From Sarajevo to Sarajevo’, *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1992, pp. 64-78. In the Netherlands, the article ‘Europa wentelt zich in zijn Sarajevo-complex’ (Europe wallows in its Sarajevo complex), by Alfred Pijpers led to a heated debate about the utility of repeated references to the image of Sarajevo in European history in connection with the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. See also H.J.A. Hofland ‘Het Sarajevo-complex’ (The Sarajevo complex), *NRC Handelsblad* (22 March 1995) and H.L. Wesseling ‘sarajevo-complex’, *NRC Handelsblad* (30 March 1995).

The *Pax Jugoslavica* had kept a number of ‘explosive’ Balkan conflicts under wraps for half a century. It was clear that little Montenegro would have great difficulty continuing to exist as an independent state after the disintegration of Yugoslavia: it was afraid of being swallowed up by Serbia. Bosnia-Herzegovina was regarded as a miniature Yugoslavia and it was generally believed that the disintegration of Yugoslavia would inevitably cause it to crumble too, with the result that the Bosnians would lose their right to self-determination. It was further feared that making Macedonia independent would revive the old territorial claims of the neighbouring states, which had already gone to war with one another in the past about Macedonian territory.

Since the Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bosnians had not defined their national identity until the 20th century, they lagged a long way behind the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the development of their national awareness. This is reflected in what James Gow calls the ‘uncharted territories’ in their historiography. He puts Slovenia, about which there is still relatively little historical literature, in the same class.¹⁸⁴

Two different, complementary, approaches to the study of the history and politics of these peoples can be distinguished. In the first, the researcher considers the viability of the people or nationality, generally with reference to the historical roots of the ethnic group in question and the development of its national consciousness during the 19th and 20th centuries. The second concentrates on the legitimacy of the region in international law: have Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina a well established history of existence as an independent state? The historian must thus make a choice between studying the history of the people and the history of the region. The British author Hugh Poulton wrote *Who are Macedonians?* in 1995. This deals with the ethnic background of the Macedonians. Two books about Bosnia-Herzegovina have recently appeared. One of these, by the British historian Noel Malcolm, concentrates on the history of the region. The other, by the Bosnian historian Mustafa Imamovic, emphasizes the cultural, ethnic and political roots of the Bosnians.¹⁸⁵

In contrast to the national identity of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, that of the Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bosnians is disputed or even denied by the surrounding peoples.

Montenegro and the Montenegrins

The political, religious and cultural development of Montenegro is so closely interwoven with that of Serbia that Montenegrin history is usually dealt with as part of Serbian national history.¹⁸⁶ An important milestone in the political history of Montenegro was the formation of the independent kingdom of Montenegro 1878. Montenegro and Serbia were both involved in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1875-1878), which started as a peasant revolt but rapidly escalated into a European war. It was one of the few successful peasant revolts in European history, and enabled Montenegro to gain a place on the map of Europe independent from Serbia. European politicians and intellectuals showed a flattering increase in interest in Montenegro in the years after its independence. European historians and other authors worked busily together to create the image of a rebellious, honest, indomitable people of mountaineers who had never been conquered by the Ottomans.

For example, the well-known author and expert on the Balkans referred to the Serbian background and warlike nature of the Montenegrins as follows: “The history of the Black Mountain (Crnagora) is in many respects the most romantic in all chequered annals of the peninsula. Its barren rocks and precipices became a rallying place for the Serb survivors from the fatal carnage of Kosovo; and under Ivo Crnojevic, renouncing in many ancient ballad as Ivo the Black or Ivo Beg, this remnant of a warlike nation defended itself desperately against all comers (...)”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Gow (1997) 469.

¹⁸⁵ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - A Short History* (London, 1993). Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998).

¹⁸⁶ See e.g. Jelavich (1990).

¹⁸⁷ R. Seton-Watson, *Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, (London, 1917) 31.

This myth of the brave, warlike race of mountaineers does not completely agree with historical reality, however, since a large part of present-day Montenegro was conquered by the Ottomans in the 15th century. It is true that the local notables were able to retain their power in the mountainous, forbidding terrain of Montenegro, but they did have to pay tribute to the Ottomans, which did in fact make them subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The Montenegrins only started to develop an awareness of their national identity under the influence of Serbian nationalism in the 19th century. The Montenegrin ruler Petar Petrovic Njegos was a Serbian nationalist, who had no difficulty combining his dual role as sovereign of Montenegro and the most important Serbian author of the 19th century. The last king of Montenegro, Nikola Petrovic Njegos, had excellent connections in many European courts, thanks to the marriages of his numerous children. His oldest daughter was married to the king of Italy, and another daughter to the Serbian king Petar Karadjordjevic. His son and heir Danilo had married a German princess, and two other daughters had married Russian grand dukes. Montenegro's political links with Russia were strong. The Russian Czar Nicholas the Second regarded Montenegro as a Slavic ally in the Balkans, of great importance because of the access it gave to the Adriatic Sea. Russia gave Montenegro a generous annual donation, and king Nikola said enthusiastically of this alliance: "We and the Russians have combined forces of 60 450 000 men!"¹⁸⁸ Nikola proclaimed Montenegro a kingdom in 1910, and became its first king.

Historians point out, however, that the awareness of a separate Montenegrin identity only started to grow during the First World War, as a result of the power struggle between the Montenegrin and Serbian royal houses which preceded the formation of the South Slav kingdom in 1918.¹⁸⁹ King Nikola and his government fled Montenegro in 1916, and the Montenegrin royal family remained in France till 1921. Historical records concerning this period are incomplete, as all important documents and archives were destroyed by the Austrian occupiers after the capitulation of Montenegro in 1916. The main sources for the history of Montenegro during and just after the First World War are to be found in the archives of the French Foreign Ministry and the French secret service. French diplomatic involvement in Montenegro began in 1880. Since that year, almost daily despatches were sent to Paris. King Nikola never made a public statement of the reasons for his abdication in 1918, and there are very few memoirs or other personal reminiscences of his courtiers or others close to the throne. It is known, however, that he had to renounce the throne to make way for the Serbian king when the latter assumed the sovereignty of the new kingdom. This led to political division among the Montenegrins: part of the population was pro-Serbian and supported the Serbian king, while another part remained loyal to the Montenegrin royal house. King Nikola died in exile. His grandson Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, the son of Nikola's daughter (who had died in 1890) and the Serbian king Petar, succeeded his father in 1921. During the interbellum years, Montenegro was not a separate political or administrative entity within the Yugoslav kingdom.

Milovan Djilas has written a number of interesting studies of the status of Montenegro in the Communist federation. He was involved as a communist ideologist in the definition of the status of Montenegro in the Communist federation in 1943. While he supported the idea of political and administrative independence of Montenegro, he did not believe that the Montenegrins were a separate nation. He was in no doubt as to their Serbian descent, and he interpreted the Communist decision to make the Montenegrins a separate nation as an attempt to weaken the position of Serbia within Communist Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁰ The population of Montenegro remained divided about their own national identity. About half the inhabitants of Montenegro considered themselves to be Serbs while the other half felt Montenegrin. The arbitrary nature of ethnic identity is well illustrated by the fact that some

¹⁸⁸ See Kim Fancev, 'Pour la France: French Intelligence and the Montenegrin Government -In-Exile, 1916-1921' in R.B. Spence & L.L. Nelson, *Scholar, Patriot, Mentor, Historical Essays in Honor of Dimitrije Djordjevic*, Boulder, 1992: 251. M. Djilas, *Land Without Justice* (New York, 1974).

¹⁹⁰ Djilas (1974).

members of a given family often felt Serbian while others regarded themselves as Montenegrin. The family of the Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic, who was born in Montenegro, provides one of the most interesting examples of this. Milosevic moved to Serbia as a child and regards himself as Serbian, while his older brother calls himself Montenegrin.

The national identity of the inhabitants of Montenegro was (and is) sometimes based on historical insights, and sometimes on practical considerations. The latter were mainly applied in connection with the 'ethnic quota' used for appointments to important political and social functions in the Yugoslav federation. Montenegrin Communists could determine their nationality depending on the moment when an important function had to be filled, and they chose the nationality that gave them the best chance of being appointed. Post-communist Montenegro still shows similar divisions along national lines. The Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic belongs to the faction that claims its own Montenegrin identity, while his political opponent Momir Bulatovic sees Montenegro as part of Serbia and hence follows the political line laid down by Belgrade.

Macedonia and the Macedonians

In 1860, a Serbian priest published a collection of Macedonian folk songs under the title *The Folk Songs of Macedonian Bulgars*. He stated that he had chosen this title because each Slavic Macedonian regarded himself as a Bulgar and called his mother tongue Bulgarian.¹⁹¹ One of the first political movements in Macedonia, the VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization), founded at the start of the 20th century, was also initially supported by Bulgarian nationalists. It is unclear, however, whether the VMRO was an extension of Bulgarian politics, or had its own political agenda with the independence of Macedonia as its main objective. As a result of the rivalry between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece for control of Macedonia, various cultural and political organisations from these three countries maintained contacts with the Macedonian population in an attempt to win their political sympathy: "They were Bulgars in struggle against Serbian and Greek hegemonism, but with the Bulgar world they were increasingly becoming exclusive Macedonians."¹⁹² The British author Hugh Poulton followed the development of the Macedonian national question, which he defined as "the unresolved status of territories with mixed population coveted by a set of bordering states."¹⁹³ The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 led to the division of Macedonian territory between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. In 1918, the Serbian part of Macedonia was incorporated into the new kingdom of Yugoslavia. This part of Macedonia was granted autonomy in 1945, and became the national state of Macedonia in 1991. The kingdom of Yugoslavia never gave the Macedonians any territorial or cultural autonomy, but the Yugoslav Communists recognized them as a separate nationality and Macedonia was made a constitutive republic within the Yugoslav federation. The Yugoslav Communists tried without success to incorporate Greek Macedonia into the new republic.

After the Second World War, the Yugoslav Macedonians began to write their national history and their language was standardized. The process of nation-forming followed by the Macedonians starting in 1945 was characterized by the nationalist tone of their historiography and attempts to substantiate the legitimacy of the nation on the basis of national symbols and heroes from the distant past. Macedonian intellectuals and political elite regarded the Yugoslav state as a good solution for the Macedonian national question. The disintegration of Yugoslavia showed clearly once again why the Macedonian national question poses such a threat to the stability of the Balkans. Poulton pointed out Greece's adverse reaction to the recognition of the Yugoslav part of Macedonia as an independent state, and the unfortunate compromise choice of an alternative name for the new state, which came to be officially called "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". An important study of Greek and Macedonian nationalism was written by Loring Danforth, an anthropologist who became interested in

¹⁹¹ Banac (1983) 310.

¹⁹² Ibid., 327.

¹⁹³ H. Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, London (1994) 47.

the Macedonian question through his investigations in Greece. He confirmed the arbitrary nature of ethnic identity by citing examples of families where one member chooses to be regarded as Greek and another as Macedonian.¹⁹⁴

However, the main message of all authors writing about modern Macedonia is that under the political conditions currently prevailing in the post-Yugoslav Balkans, it has the right to independent statehood – and that if it is not given this right it will be swallowed up by the surrounding countries.

Bosnia-Hercegovina and the Bosnians

As Bosnia-Hercegovina has not existed as an independent political and administrative unit since the 14th century, historians have tended to regard its history as part of that of the Ottoman Empire (1463-1878), the Habsburg Empire (1878-1918) or the Yugoslav state (1918-1941 and 1945-1992). Alternatively, they often describe the history of Bosnia-Hercegovina as part of Serbian or Croatian national history. Despite the fact that Bosnia-Hercegovina has often been the subject of historical studies since the second half of the 19th century, none of the existing studies could give satisfactory answers to the questions posed after the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1992. Many foreign observers, diplomats and commentators appear to have read the work of the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature Ivo Andric as an introduction to Bosnian history. Klaus Kinkel, who was the German minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, mentioned in August 1993 that he intended to read Andric's masterpiece *The Bridge over the Drina* during his holidays – doubtless as a sign that he would not be neglecting the Bosnian crisis even while he was officially taking a break. Similarly, the Croatian diplomat Janko Vraniczany-Dobrinovic stated in August 1994 in an interview published by the Croatian daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* that he had advised the chief prosecutor of the International Tribunal for War Crimes in the former Yugoslavia, Richard Goldstone, to read this same book by Andric as an aid to understanding the current political problems. The Austrian writer Peter Handke likewise said on Serbian television that he understood the Serbs much better after reading "*The Bridge over the Drina*". Although professional historians warned that Andric was not a historian and that his work should not be interpreted as if it were based on reliable historical facts, many readers did use him as a source in their search for the causes of the war. Andric was cited as a prophet who had written a 'psycho-political geography' of Bosnia, showing the Serbs in Bosnia-Hercegovina as the victims of suppression and terror meted out by their Muslim rulers. The current political tensions were also explained from this viewpoint.¹⁹⁵

Bosnia-Hercegovina was certainly not a 'blind spot' in the historical literature: many publications of high quality were devoted to it. It would probably be better to characterize it as a 'grey zone'. The problem was that there was no history of Bosnia-Hercegovina as a whole, that could provide an answer e.g. to the questions concerning its historical legitimacy as an independent state or the national identity of the Bosnians. Even before the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina broke out, it was clear that each ethnic group had its own interpretation of Bosnian history. The Serbs, for example, pointed out the long history of conflicts, mutual intolerance, religious segregation and suppression of the non-Muslim population during the Ottoman rule. The Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, mentioned the long tradition of mutual respect and tolerance between the various confessional groups arising from the Ottoman '*millet*' system, under which the autonomy of the non-Muslim religious communities was guaranteed. Soon after the outbreak of the war, all the parties engaged in the conflict could be observed mobilizing history to justify their political interests. The five most important books on the history of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which appeared after the outbreak of war in 1992, were written in reaction to the contradictory and often arbitrary interpretations of history.¹⁹⁶ The authors Malcolm,

¹⁹⁴ Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict - Ethnic Nationalism in a Transitional World* (Princeton, 1995).

¹⁹⁵ I. Zanic, 'Pisac na osami: upotreba Andricove knjizevnosti u ratu u BiH' in *Erasmvs* 18 (1996) 48-55.

¹⁹⁶ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - A Short History*, (London, 1994). Mark Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina: Their Historic Development from Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, (Cambridge Mass, 1994). R. Donia and J. Fine,

Calic, Donia & Fine, Pinson and Friedman are jointly known as the ‘Bosnian school’ because to a certain extent they all share the view that the Bosnian state has historical legitimacy; that Bosnian history is one of multi-confessional tolerance; and that the use of violence between different ethnic groups is of much more recent date than generally assumed. As the British historian Noel Malcolm puts it in the introduction to his book, “Paradoxically, the most important reason for studying Bosnia’s history is that it enables one to see that the history of Bosnia in itself does not explain the origins of this war.”¹⁹⁷

The members of the Bosnian school see Serb and Croat nationalism as destructive of the peaceful Bosnian society, and argue against the claim put forward in both Serbian and Croatian historiography that Bosnian history can, on grounds of historical and ethno-religious criteria, be regarded as part of Serbian or Croatian national history. These authors ascribe the intra-confessional tensions that have arisen to forces from outside Bosnia-Herzegovina, but they do not give a satisfactory explanation of why the social cohesion they claim was present was so fragile that Bosnian society could become so divided in 1991. Donia and Fine ascribe the polarisation of Bosnian society to the mobilization of vague fears and prejudices by nationalists, which turned the slogan ‘the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians cannot live together’ into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The authors of the Bosnian school claim that the history of violence between the three religious groups does not go back before the Second World War. In their zeal to dispose of the claims of a long history of conflicts, however, they often tend to exaggerate the inter-confessional harmony of the period before the Second World War. Their critics point out that Christians were second-class citizens in Ottoman society, and that violent clashes have in fact been quite common since the 19th century. For example, Ekmečić listed thirteen conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1805 and the war of 1992.¹⁹⁸

Another important approach shared by the members of the Bosnian school was their rejection of the claim that an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina has no legitimacy because it has no tradition of existence as a state. In a book written in 1994 by Bosnian intellectuals in reaction to Serb and Croat crimes against the Bosnian population, the authors used a line of argument concerning the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent entity similar to that deployed by the members of the Bosnian school.¹⁹⁹ Their message was basically that Bosnia-Herzegovina shows a historical continuity going back to the Middle Ages, peaking during the rule of Tvrtko I Kotromanić (1358-1391) when it was proclaimed a kingdom in 1377 with a southern boundary extending far into Dalmatia and including the islands Korčula, Brač and Hvar.

Ottoman rule was established gradually between 1389 and 1528, but the Ottomans maintained the territorial continuity of the region. In 1580, Bosnia was made a province (*aylet* in Turkish, *beglerberluk* in Serbo-Croat), comprising large parts of present-day Serbia, Croatia (Dalmatia, Slavonia, Banija and Lika) and Montenegro. The Ottoman system of privileges, in which Muslims enjoyed a favoured position, was formally done away with by Sultan Abdulmeccid I (1839-1851) in the *Hatt-i-Şerif* of Gülhane (the “noble signed decree of the rose-garden courtyard”) promising equal rights to all his subjects, irrespective of their religion and class. This formed part of a wider series of reforms known as the *Tanzimat* (Reorganization). Bosnia-Herzegovina got its first written constitution in 1867. During the period of Austro-Hungarian rule (1878-1918), Bosnia-Herzegovina was also regarded as a *corpus separatum*, i.e. as a separate entity within the monarchy: the Ottoman province had become ‘*Reichsland*’.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: a Tradition Betrayed, (London, 1994). J-M. Calic, *Der Krieg in Bosnien-Herzegovina: Ursachen, Konfliktstrukturen, Internationale Lösungsversuche*, (Frankfurt, 1995). Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation*, (Boulder, Col. and Oxford), (1996).

¹⁹⁷ Malcolm (1994) Introduction.

¹⁹⁸ Gremaux and A. de Vries, ‘Het omstreden verleden van een verloren land: historiografie en nationaal bewustzijn in Bosnië-Herzegovina [The disputed past of a lost country: historiography and national awareness in Bosnia-Herzegovina; in Dutch], *Groniek-Historisch Tijdschrift*, Oct-Nov (1995) 109.

¹⁹⁹ See the reaction of the Bosnian intellectuals in Safet Halilović (ed.), *Vrijeme bescasca - genocid nad Bosnjacima dvadesetog stoljeca*, (Zenica, 1994).

In 1918, Bosnia-Herzegovina was incorporated into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. The Yugoslav Muslim Organization demanded that the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be respected, but when the kingdom was divided into four provinces in 1919 the historical boundaries of Bosnia-Herzegovina were not taken into account and it was divided between these four provinces. The Serbo-Croatian *Sporazum* (Agreement) of 1939 did not take the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina into account either: the region was again divided between Serbia and Croatia, to the great discontent of the Bosnian politicians and intelligentsia. In Communist Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina was made one of the six constitutive republics, implying recognition of its territorial sovereignty.

The members of the Bosnian school have made a substantial contribution to the discussion of the legitimacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina by placing a new emphasis on certain interpretations of Bosnian history.

In his review of the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Robert Donia wrote: "Most Bosniaks subscribe to an origin myth that traces their ethnogenesis to the Middle Ages. The popular legend is simple, attractive, and unambiguous. After migrating to the Balkan Peninsula in the sixth and seventh centuries, the story goes, Slav speaking inhabitants of Bosnia were proselytised by Christian missionaries from Rome to the West and from Constantinople from the east. Unwilling to succumb to either Catholic or Orthodox overlordship, the Bosnians formed their own church, and many church members adopted the dualist heresy known as 'Bogomilism'. (...) Following the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia (completed in 1463), the Bogomils and nobility of medieval Bosnia converted *en masse* to Islam and became Bosnian Muslims, member of the group known today as the Bosniaks."²⁰⁰ The historian Imamovic mentions that the first use of the term 'Bosnian language' in a written document occurred in a notarial deed dating from 1436. Before that time, the term Slavic or Illyrian language was generally used.²⁰¹ The historians Vera Krzisnik-Bukic and Mustafa Imamovic²⁰² tried to demonstrate that the national identity of the Bosnians has a long historical continuity and was also recognized by the Ottomans who called them the "Bosnian people". The South Slav Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina did not want to be called Turks, preferring a term emphasizing their regional identity such as 'Muslims from Bosnia'.²⁰³ A controversial aspect of the identity of the South Slav Muslims was however that they never denied their cultural background and continued to speak the same language as their South Slav neighbours, the Orthodox and Catholic South Slavs. This often caused Serbian and Croatian national ideologues to regard them as renegade Serbs or Croats, who would really do best to return to their old faith. Bosnian historians and intellectuals, however, see a relationship between the heretical Bogumil sect from the Middle Ages and modern Bosnian national identity. This theory was introduced in the 19th century by Franjo Racki, who suggested a connection between the Bogumil sect (which he called *Paterani*) and the mediaeval Bosnian church. According to this theory, the Bosnian population converted *en masse* to Islam to protect themselves against the hostile attitude of Rome towards the members of the Bosnian Church. This theory became very popular among Bosnian intellectuals, who regarded it as a proof that the Bosnians already had a separate identity from their neighbours before the Ottomans captured the Balkans. Although this theory is no longer taken seriously by most historians, it is still popular in the former Yugoslavia and in particular among Bosnians. Malcolm (1994) put forward the theory that the Bosnian Church was originally a Catholic monistic order with religious elements from the Orthodox faith. The Bosnian bishopric was moved to Hungarian soil, and no longer had any control over the Bosnian Catholics. The long isolation of the Bosnian Church made it *de facto* autonomous with respect to Rome, and members of the Bosnian Church were regarded as heretics there. In order to root out Bosnian heresy, Rome started to send Franciscan monks to Bosnia in the

²⁰⁰ Robert Donia, 'The New Bosniak History', Nationalities Papers (Vol.28, No. 2) 2000; 352.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰² Vera Krzisnik-Bukic, *Bosanski identitet između prošlosti i budućnosti* (Sarajevo 1997). Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998).

²⁰³ Imamovic (1998) 14.

14th century. These monks were respected by the peasants for their practical attitude and knowledge of such matters as agriculture and medicine. Little is known about the number of members of the Bosnian Church, but it is assumed that the Bosnian nobility also belonged to it. It appears from the new historical interpretations of this period that there is no real evidence to back up the theory of mass conversions of the members of the Bosnian Church to Islam. The Ottoman registers show that the conversions were very local in nature and that most converts gave their former religion as Orthodox or Catholic, with only a small minority coming from the Bosnian Church. Malcolm concludes on this basis that there were no mass conversions in the period immediately following the Ottoman conquest. He believes that social and economic considerations, and not religious ones, were decisive for conversion. Muslims enjoyed many privileges in Ottoman society, from which non-Muslims were excluded. Muslims could make a career in the army or the civil service, the latter in the administrative centres that were set up in every town. The legal system was also a source of systematic discrimination: Christians were not allowed to take a Muslim to court, or to act as a witness against Muslims. However, none of the authors of the Bosnian school gives a satisfactory answer to the question of why so many people from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania converted to Islam while the Serbs and Montenegrins did not. If practical social and economic considerations were decisive, surely they would apply equally to the Serbs and the Montenegrins. Imamovic regards the year 1737 as decisive for the formation of the Bosnian national identity. In that year, the Habsburg Emperor called on the Bosnians to surrender before his army attacked the town of Banja Luka. He promised that all who renounced Islam would be allowed to keep their possessions and would be left in peace. But according to Imamovic this threat only strengthened the Bosnians in the defence of their religious identity - and they won the battle.²⁰⁴

The Bosnian historian Ahmed Alicic²⁰⁵ minimalizes the contribution of religion to Bosnian ethnic identity. In his opinion, the Bosnians have had a national identity of their own since the Middle Ages, and were regarded as a separate ethnic group by the Ottomans. Like Imamovic, Alicic regards the revolt against central Ottoman authority in the 19th century under the leadership of Husein Gradasevic as a milestone in the development of Bosnian identity. Under Gradasevic's leadership (1831-1832), the Bosnians demanded autonomy for Bosnia within the Ottoman Empire. This demand was based on the economic interests of the Bosnian landowners, and had nothing to do with western ideas of nationalism that were popular at the time.²⁰⁶ European nationalism came to Bosnia under the influence of the Croatian Illyrian movement. The eminent Bosnian historian and Franciscan Ivan Frano Jukic argued that the three main religious communities in Bosnia shared a common ethnic identity. The Habsburg politician and expert on Balkan affairs Benjamin Kallay, who was ambassador in Belgrade between 1868 and 1875, wrote an important book on Serbian history in 1877, that was also translated into Serbian.²⁰⁷ In this book he defended the viewpoint that Bosnia-Herzegovina was Serbian territory; when he was made governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1883-1903), however, he was forced to give up this view and ban his own book. From 1883, Kallay's policy was aimed at creating a common identity for all inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina irrespective of their confessional background, whom he called *Bosnjaci* (the singular form of which is *Bosnjak*). Kallay took the concept from the Ottoman ruler Topal Pasha, who had tried to introduce a Bosnian identity for all inhabitants of Bosnia in the 1860s. Even then, the Serbs and Croats had refused to go along with the idea: the Orthodox and Catholic inhabitants of Bosnia preferred to associate themselves with the Serbian and Croatian national movements respectively. Kallay could not even rely on the support of the Muslim upper classes, who did not wish to form a single people with their former subjects. After 1878, the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia were called *Mubamedanci* or *Mubamedovci*, the German translation of which was *Mubammedaner*. According to Imamovic, the term *musliman* was also increasingly used. This comes from the Arabic word *muslim* ('devote oneself to God'); the plural form of the Persian equivalent of this, *musliman*, came

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 301.

²⁰⁵ A. Alicic, *Pokret za autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1831. Godine* (Sarajevo 1996).

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 333-337

²⁰⁷ B. Kallay, *Geschichte der Serben*, (Leipzig, 1877). See also Gremaux and de Vries (1995) 105.

to be used for members of the Islamite faith. The term *Bosnjak* was initially used to denote any inhabitant of Bosnia-Hercegovina.²⁰⁸

The period of Habsburg rule of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which lasted some forty years, has been interpreted differently by different authors. Imamovic regards it as unfavourable for the Bosnian Muslims, who lost their privileged social position compared with non-Muslims. Part of the Muslim elite adapted quickly to the new conditions and accepted Habsburg rule, but many Bosnian Muslims decided to leave the country.²⁰⁹ Krzisnik-Bukic notes that about 100 000 Bosnians emigrated to Turkey during the forty years of Habsburg rule, the largest waves of emigration occurring after the introduction of general conscription in 1881 and the annexation in 1908. On the other hand, the Habsburg authorities encouraged the immigration of Croats, Slovenians, Germans and other Christian population groups from the monarchy²¹⁰

The concept of *bosnjastvo* (Bosnian identity) was revived at the end of the 19th century in the movement for raising national awareness among the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The periodical *Bosnjak*, which according to its founder Mehmed Kapetanovic was intended to protect the patriotic sentiments of all inhabitants of Bosnia-Hercegovina against Serb and Croat nationalist propaganda, first appeared in 1891. The editorial policy was aimed at removing the prejudices against Bosnians and bringing Bosnian society closer to European civilization.²¹¹ The founders of *Bosnjak* worked closely together with the Austro-Hungarian authorities, and their interpretation of Bosnian identity agreed with that of Kallay. But then it was found that the Serbs and Croats were not prepared to accept this idea, and the term *Bosnjak* remained associated with Bosnian Muslims. This interconfessional element has not played a role of any significance since 1900.

Seen from a historical perspective, however, *Bosnjak* did play an important role in the process of stimulating the national (self-)identification of the Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which was continued in various 20th-century nationalist concepts. The first Bosnian Muslim political movement was set up in 1906. This was the Muslim National Organization (MNO), whose aim was to promote the political interests of Muslims in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Bosnians did not find 'Yugoslav ideology' very attractive, and as late as 1917 plans were being made to make Bosnia-Hercegovina an administrative part of Hungary. The older generation of Bosnian politicians supported this idea, while the younger generation preferred some form of South Slav political union. The disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy accelerated the process of political co-operation between Bosnian politicians and their counterparts in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, and in 1918 Bosnia-Hercegovina was incorporated into the new South Slav kingdom. The first important Bosnian political party in the new state, the Yugoslav Muslim organization (JMO), was founded in 1919 and was a force to be reckoned with in the Yugoslav parliament. The kingdom of Yugoslavia was not a success from a Bosnian point of view, however. Immediately after the First World War, the Bosnians became the target of Serbian intimidation. The Bosnian *Reis ul-ulema* (head of the Muslim religious community) Dzermaludin Causevic told the French press in 1919 that 1000 Bosnian Muslim men had been killed shortly after the end of the war, 76 women had been burned and 270 villages plundered by Serbian bands.²¹² It was expected of the Muslim population of Bosnia-Hercegovina at the time that they identified themselves from an ethnic and national point of view either as 'Muslim Serbs' or as 'Muslim Croats'. The best known Muslim politician of that period, Mehmed Spaho, regarded himself however as a Yugoslav, while one of his brothers considered himself to be Croatian and another to be Serbian.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Imamovic (1998)

²⁰⁹ Nusret Sehic, *Autonomni pokret Muslimana za vrijeme austrougarske uprave u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo 1980). Robert Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle - The Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina 1878-1914* (New York 1981).

²¹⁰ Krzisnik-Bukic (1998) 29-30.

²¹¹ Imamovic (1998) 377.

²¹² Malcolm (1994) 162.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 166.

According to the Bosnian historian Sacir Filandra,²¹⁴ the Bosnians had lagged far behind the Serbs and Croats from a social and political point of view during the 20th century, and only started developing an active policy aimed at achieving recognition of their national identity in the 1960s. Communist recognition of the Bosnians as a separate nation in 1968 was largely thanks to the backing of influential Communists of Muslim descent. During the Communist era, the Islamic inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina were generally called *Muslimani*, the capital 'M' being used to denote nationally while a *musliman* with a lower-case 'm' was someone of the Islamic faith. During this phase, the concept of *bosnjastvo* lost something of its significance. However, it was picked up again by the Bosnian émigré Adil Zulfikarpasic who was one of the co-founders of the periodical *Bosanski pogledi*, and who subsequently founded the Bosnian Institute in Zurich.²¹⁵ Zulfikarpasic advocated defining Bosnian national identity on a regional basis instead of the usual religious one, and replacing the term *Musliman* by *Bosnjak* (Bosnian). His approach was criticized not only by Serb and Croat nationalists but also by his co-religionists who felt that this strictly regional identity was not in line with pan-Islamic concepts. He returned to Bosnia to take an active part in the political manoeuvring leading up to the election there in 1990. However, his secular approach was not to the taste of the convinced Muslim Alija Izetbegovic and led to a split between the two.²¹⁶

11. Ethnic conflict

The definition of the Yugoslav crisis as an ethnic conflict resulting from a history of hate and intolerance between the ethnic groups of the region going back many centuries has been categorized by sociologists and anthropologists as one of the products of the 'primordial hatred school'. According to the American sociologist and Yugoslavia expert Leonard J. Cohen, this model assumed "the cyclical role of 'ancient enmities' and atavistic impulses in the Balkans"²¹⁷ as a given in its attempts to explain the conflict. In this approach, the identity of an ethnic group was determined with the aid of a classification system making use of certain criteria such as language, religion and myths about ethnic descent, thus allowing this group to be clearly distinguished from others.²¹⁸ Links based on language, religion and myths were regarded as very old and thus stronger and more important than those relating e.g. to the state. This approach to ethnic identity is also a starting point for the post-communist nationalist movements in Yugoslavia. For example, Croatian nationalist academics have tried to demonstrate that the Croatian people is one of the oldest of Europe. The *History of Medieval Croatia* by Stanko Goldescu cites an old Croatian theory according to which the Croats are descended from the Persian *Harahvat* tribe. This name may be found in one of the inscriptions of the Iranian ruler Darius dating from the 5th century B.C. This genealogical fantasy was not taken seriously by Communist historians, but survived in Croatian émigré circles. Dominik Mandic, a Croatian Catholic priest and historian from the United States, mentioned this theory in his book *Srbi i Hrvati dva različita naroda*²¹⁹ ('serbs and Croats, two different peoples'), which appeared in 1971. It was subsequently further developed by various other Croatian authors.²²⁰ Such a search for the ethnic origins is indeed very important because the South Slav peoples do share many linguistic, ethnographic and folkloristic characteristics. It was precisely these similarities which led some people to look for striking differences

²¹⁴ S. Filandra, *Bosnjačka politika u XX stoljeću* (Sarajevo, 1998).

²¹⁵ See M. Imamovic, *Bosnjaci u emigraciji 1955-1967* (Sarajevo, 1996).

²¹⁶ Malcolm (1994) 219.

²¹⁷ Leonard Cohen, 'Bosnia's 'Tribal Gods': The Role of Religion in Nationalist Politics' in P. Mojzes (1997) 43.

²¹⁸ See C. F. Keyes, 'The Dialectics of Ethnic Change' in C. F. Keyes (ed.) *Ethnic Change* (London, 1982) 5.

²¹⁹ Dominik Mandic, *Srbi i Hrvati dva različita naroda* (München-Barcelona, 1971).

²²⁰ Mandic's book was first published abroad, and did not appear in a Croatian edition until 1990. Other important works dealing with the postulated Iranian descent of the Croats include B. Vidov, *Povijest Hrvata* (Toronto, 1975). Vinko Grubisic, *Od domovine do pradomovine* (Chicago, 1979). Alemko Gluhak 'Porijeklo imena Hrvat' in *Jezik* 37 (June 1990). Tomislav Heres 'Podrijetlo i značenje imena Zagreb u svjetlu nekih zagonetaka najstarije hrvatske povijesti' *Marulic* 3 (April 1983) and Mirko Vidovic, 'Hrvatski Iranski korijeni' (Zagreb, 1991).

between the various Balkan peoples. For example, the Croatian nationalists feel it very important to be able to prove that the Croats have a different origin from the Serbs, and that the differences between these two ethnic groups existed even before they arrived in the Balkans. In order to demonstrate the Persian-Croatian link, some authors have even compiled long lists of Persian and Croatian words which are intended to reveal many etymological similarities between the Croatian and Persian languages. Despite all such 'scientific' proofs, the Croats have never managed to produce hard evidence of their Persian descent: many of the words given as Croatian lists could equally well be Serbian or Bosnian.²²¹

There is however another approach to ethnicity, more or less opposed to that described above, which is known as Instrumentalism.²²² This regards the ethnic identity in terms of group loyalty rather than of common origin. In the case of the South Slavs, this group loyalty arose in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Instrumentalists regard ethnic conflicts as the result of the conscious manipulation of history and ethnic symbols, aimed at mobilizing great masses in an attempt to achieve political objectives defined by national elites.

Yet another approach has been described by Donald Horowitz, who defines three causes of all ethnic wars: (1) an external affinity problem, i.e. the difficult relationship between an ethnic minority and the state to which this minority is subject; (2) differences in views about emotional symbolism and stereotypes; and finally (3) concrete historical experience of domination and violence between ethnic groups. According to Horowitz, these factors lead to fear of extermination and feelings of hate against other groups.²²³ He distinguishes between 'elite-driven' and 'mass-driven' conflicts. Kaufman²²⁴ has described how an elite-driven ethnic conflict begins: first of all, the elite gains control of the media, which it then uses to propagate its hyper-nationalist ideas. It claims that it wants to 'protect' the members of its own ethnic group against other ethnic groups – but this of course automatically makes it a threat to the other groups. However, the angst psychosis which it creates among its own ethnic group strengthens its hold on power, and it can use each incident that arises between its own group and the others as a pretext for escalation of the conflict. According to Kaufman, if a political elite creates the conditions required to spark off ethnic conflicts after it comes to power the resulting violence may be called 'elite-driven'. If on the other hand extreme nationalist ideas were already popular when the political leader (or elite) came to power, the ensuing violence may be called 'mass-driven'. This analysis indicates that the Serbian nationalism is 'mass-driven'. Milosevic changed from a Communist apparatchik into a Serbian nationalist after addressing a heated Serb demonstration in Kosovo demanding protection against 'Albanian terror'. His promise to stick up for their interests in Belgrade made him one of the most popular Serbian politicians. It is striking how little trouble he had combining his Communist convictions with nationalism: as a result, he is often called an 'opportunist nationalist'. Franjo Tudjman, on the other hand, was a convinced nationalist before he came to power, who only had to convince the Croatian population of the correctness of his ideas. His conviction that Bosnia-Herzegovina was 'historical' Croatian territory was common knowledge as early as the 1970s, but was rejected even by nationalist circles in Croatia. According to the theory developed by Horowitz and Kaufman, Slovenian nationalism was also 'mass-driven': the social movements in Slovenia which opposed the federal government in Belgrade and Slobodan Milosevic in the 1980s managed to convince the Slovenian Communist leaders that radical solutions were called for, but it was the Communist elite that led Slovenia to independence. Slovenian 'constitutional nationalism' was the least explosive, because Slovenia was ethnically homogeneous. It had not experienced any ethnic conflicts in the past, and had no 'hereditary' or 'traditional' enemies among the other Yugoslav nationalities.

²²¹ E.g. *sukkar-secer*. The word *secer* (sugar) is used not only in Serbian but also in Bosnian. In fact, there is no synonym for this word either in the Serbian or the Bosnian language. See Vidovic (1991) 68.

²²² See A. Cohen, 'Variables in Ethnicity' in C.F. Keyes (ed.), *Ethnic Change* (London, 1982). F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences* (London, 1969).

²²³ D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985).

²²⁴ S. Kaufman, 'The Irresistible Force and the Imperfect Object' in *Security Studies* 4 (2) (1994) 281-329.

Ethnic conflicts are closely connected with nationalism and nationalist ideologies. While there are great similarities between the concept of an ethnic group and that of a nation, not every ethnic group constitutes a nation. The criteria for it to do so are that it should be reasonably large, have its own territory and should have enough resources to be reasonably self-supporting.²²⁵ Nations claim the right of self-determination and form their own states, but not every nation consists of a single ethnic group. Hugh Seton-Watson makes a distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ nations. The old ones had developed their national identity before 1789, when nationalism became the norm in Europe, while the new ones did not begin this process until the 19th century or even later, under the influence of national movements. The processes of development of national awareness were initiated by small, well-educated elites.²²⁶ The South Slav peoples had drawn another distinction since the 19th century, viz. that between ‘historical’ and ‘non-historical’ nations. The South Slav peoples who had had their own kingdom in the Middle Ages regarded themselves as ‘historical peoples’, or ‘old nations’ in Seton-Watson’s typology. The Dutch historian Raymond Detrez has the following to say on this topic: “The distinction that is sometimes drawn between ‘historical peoples’ and others can also be highly relevant: historical peoples are those that can prove with reference to old texts, maps and the like that they had their own state and wrote history as long ago as the Middle Ages.”²²⁷

The historical peoples claim that even after centuries of foreign rule, they have still kept their own nature. Detrez regards this belief in the preservation of the Balkan peoples’ own nature as one of the most persistent Balkan myths: “The myth that the Balkan peoples managed to preserve their own nature during the five centuries when they were under the Turkish yoke is particularly persistent. It remains unclear, however, what precisely a people’s ‘own nature’ is, what it looked like at the end of the 14th century and how it is possible that, while literally everything changed, the ‘own nature’ of these peoples could remain unchanged from the 14th to the 19th century (and even up to the present day)”²²⁸

Serb and Croat nationalists claim the status of ‘historical peoples’ for their own nations, which implies that they have the right to a national state of their own in contrast to the Muslim inhabitants of Kosovo and Bosnia, and the Macedonians. They accorded this same right grudgingly, if at all, to such ‘non-historical’ peoples: “The ‘non-historical’ peoples who developed a national awareness in the 19th century had just as much right to be called nations as the ‘historical’ ones: the only difference was that they had fewer trumps in their hand when they tried to substantiate their national identity, to find a historical justification for their territorial claims and the like.”²²⁹

‘Historical peoples’ want ‘historical frontiers’ corresponding to those of their medieval kingdom at its most successful. The 19th-century Serb nationalist ideologists, inspired and supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church, argued for restoration of the frontiers of the Serbian kingdom as they were at the time of Dusan the Mighty (1331-1355), who was crowned ‘czar of the Serbians and the Greeks’ in 1346 in Skopje, the capital of present-day Macedonia, and who wanted to conquer the whole Byzantine Empire. Croat nationalist ideologists talk of the ‘historical frontiers’ of Croatia from the 11th century, when Bosnia still formed part of the Croatian kingdom: “Politicians in the post-communist Croatian society tend to glorify this period of the early Croatian kingdom. In this case we can mention Branimir, Zvonimir and especially Tomislav. However, the idea of a national unified state could better be seen as a product of the romantic and nationalistic ideology of the middle of the nineteenth century. The Croatian national kingdom was based on a feudal system, where personalized and decentralized relationships were the rule, rather than a strong centralized administration. For example, a king or a ruler always bore the title of several regions that could easily change owners.”²³⁰

²²⁵ Thomas (1996) 13.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ R. Detrez, ‘De Macedonische kwestie’ *Kleio* (June 1994) 8.

²²⁸ R. Detrez, *De sloop van Joegoslavië: het relaas van een boedelscheiding* (Antwerpen-Baarn, 1996) 28.

²²⁹ Detrez (1994) 9.

²³⁰ R. Stallaerts and J. Laurens, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Croatia*, (New York-London, 1995) 9.

The definition of nationalism, which is usually described as a political principle, doctrine or ideology, is based on the definition of the nation state. Gellner defines nationalism as a “political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.”²³¹ But the precise content of nationalism depends on the definition of the nation. Gellner distinguishes two types of nations. The nation in a stricter sense comprises people with the same cultural background. This definition of the nation forms the basis for ‘ethnic nationalism’ – also known as ethno-tribalism or tribalism²³² - which excludes ‘the others’. The formation of national states on the basis of this principle leads to the drawing of new boundaries intended to keep out ‘the others’ or to (re-)unite the country’s ‘own people’.

The definition of the nation in a wider sense according to Gellner is related to the convictions, loyalty and solidarity of the members of a group whose members need not have the same cultural background, which form the basis for ‘revolutionary-democratic nationalism’.²³³ Gellner mentions 19th-century German and Italian nationalism as examples of ethnic nationalism, and France and America as examples of revolutionary-democratic nationalism’. According to him, ethnic nationalism creates exclusive states while revolutionary-democratic nationalism creates inclusive ones. Thomas regards the former Yugoslavia as an inclusive state, formed by combination of the various ethnic groups. The 19th-century concept of South Slav unity, that regarded the Slovenians, Croats and Serbs as three tribes of the same nation, was however radically modified by the developments in the kingdom of Yugoslavia and Communist Yugoslavia.²³⁴ He regarded the disintegration of Yugoslavia as the result of the ‘exclusive concept’ of the nation: “Different perspectives of each group’s historical experience, renewed awareness of one’s religious origins, exaggerated beliefs about different cultures surely played an important part in the transition from South Slav unity to disunity.”²³⁵

National myths

According to the typology of Anthony Smith (1991), the following characteristics are important for the definition of national identity: (1) a historical territory or ‘fatherland’; (2) shared myths and historical memories; (3) a shared popular culture (mass public culture); (4) common legal rights and duties for all subjects; and (5) a shared economy and territorial mobility for all.²³⁶

This typology may be clarified by comparing the Yugoslav national identity with that of the individual South Slav peoples. It will be found that the individual South Slav peoples all score higher on Anthony Smith’s scale than Yugoslavia, which in fact only meets the last two criteria. This is hardly surprising, however, since the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians have done all they could during the past decade to manifest themselves as separate nations, e.g. by linguistic renovation aimed at creating a new standard language and by the revival of old myths or the invention of new ones: “Time worn myth and an ideological vulgarization of history are all too frequently encountered in the Balkans: a partisan historical memory, political amnesia, concealed defeats, the glorification of past tragedies, are all topped-off by an unreasonable pride in times gone by. Current occurrences are, as a rule, mixed with and mistaken for mythical elaboration of past events. It was during the period of national awakening, which itself began in the nineteenth century and, to an even greater degree over past few years, that actual events were manipulated in such a way that they were made to adopt or absorb mythological elements. The bloody Balkan conflict, unfolding before a bewildered world audience, is a sinister

²³¹ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford, 1983) 1.

²³² See Michael Walzer, ‘The New Tribalism’, *Dissent* (Spring, 1992). Slavenka Drakulic, *The Balkan Express*, (New York, 1993).

²³³ Gellner (1983) 7.

²³⁴ Thomas (1996) 14.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

²³⁶ A. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991) 14.

example of where and how far an ideologized abuse of historical fact and ancient mythology can lead”.²³⁷

The medieval rulers of the Nemanjic dynasty play an important part in Serbian national mythology, though the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was the cornerstone of modern Serbian national mythology. A pivotal role in Croatian national mythology is played by two medieval kings. King Tomislav is supposed to have founded the first Croatian kingdom in 924. The historian Ivan Kukuljevic who is thought to be responsible for the creation of the ‘myth’ about this king based himself on an old chronicle in which an eyewitness gave details of the coronation of the Croatian ruler Svatopluk. There is no evidence that Tomislav and Svatopluk were one and the same person, and this free interpretation on the part of Kukuljevic is challenged by many historians. The Croatian nationalists, on the other hand, have adopted Kukuljevic’s version which is now to be found in Croatian history books.²³⁸ Little is known about Tomislav, however. He is not named as ruler of Croatia by the 10th-century Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in his *Administrando Imperium*, the main source of information about the region at the time. This source does however describe Croatia as an important military power in the region.

The last king of medieval Croatia was Zvonimir (1075-1089). After his death, the Hungarian king Kalman (the brother of Zvonimir’s widow Jelena) persuaded the main noble families of Croatia to conclude an agreement with Hungary, leading to a political union that lasted until 1918. As a result, the rule of king Zvonimir became the theme of a series of historical myths. An important 13th-century chronicle, for example, describes how Zvonimir cursed his land and his people after being murdered by his own nobles: “He cursed the unfaithful Croats and their descendants before God and all saints for his violent death, saying the Croats should never again have a ruler of their own tongue but should always be under foreign rule.”²³⁹ The Croatian anthropologist Ivo Zanic has described how the myth of king Zvonimir was used to ‘throw light’ on current political events. He cited an article that appeared in the Croatian weekly *Globus* in 1991: “Murdered in 1089, the first King of Croatia to be recognized by the Papacy called down upon his killers, according to Nostrodamus and serious astrological experts, a nine-hundred year curse. Moreover, for these nine centuries the Croats have not been able to restore their state. When the curse is finally lifted, what will those years bring?”²⁴⁰

Another example of the bizarre proportions a ‘sense of history’ can assume, and of the poor grasp of historical facts by the Croats themselves, is described by the historian Ivo Goldstein. Goldstein is one of the few Croatian historians specialized in medieval Croatian history. He reacted to a 1998 report from the Croatian press bureau HINA, stating that 18 September would be chosen as ‘Croatian Navy Day’, in memory of the victory by Prince Branimir in a naval battle in Central Dalmatia in 887.²⁴¹ Goldstein managed to trace sources referring to a battle that had taken place on 18 September – but it had not been a naval battle. Moreover, Goldstein discovered that the Slavic prince in question could not be Branimir, because the description of the site of the battle indicates that this must have been the city of Makarska which belonged to the principality of Neretva at the time. This principality was not incorporated into the kingdom of Croatia until the 12th century: it was only after this event that the *Neretljani* were also called Croats.²⁴²

²³⁷ Velikonja (1997) 20.

²³⁸ See N. Budak and V. Posavac (1997).

²³⁹ Z. Crnja, *Cultural History of Croatia* (Zagreb, 1962): 134, cited in Marcus Tanner’s *Croatia, a Nation Forged to War* (New Haven, 1997) 1.

²⁴⁰ I. Zanic, ‘The Legend of King Zvonimir and Political Discourse in Embattled Croatia’, in *East European Politics and Societies* (1995) 88-122.

²⁴¹ Ivo Goldstein, ‘sluzbeno falsificiranje povijesti: Dan Hrvatske ratne mornarice slavi se u spomen na veliku pomorsku pobjedu kneza Branimira iz 887 koje uopce nije bilo!’ *Globus* (25 September 1998).

²⁴² *Ibid.*

12. Religious conflict

The reaction of the sociologist of religion Esad Cimić to the question as to whether the war in the former Yugoslavia could be characterized as a religious conflict is typical of the debate that has been carried out on this topic. His answer is 'yes and no'. In his opinion, "neither the motive nor the impulses for this war resulted from religions or faiths respectively and, even less, can the religious communities be accused of waging the war." But at the same time, Cimić believes that religion has been used intentionally to mask the real motives for the war and to make it appear that it really was a religious conflict: "Politicians are certainly trying to present it in these terms, and regretfully, a part of the hierarchy of religious communities are doing likewise, especially those of the Serbian Orthodox Church. These are allegedly God-fearing people who with their attitudes, behaviour, and actions offer excuses to the "masters of war," supplying them with acceptable justification and reason for the conflict."²⁴³

The impression that the war was a religious one was reinforced by the fact that the hostile armies started off by destroying one another's churches and mosques. This was certainly true of the Serbian and Croatian armies in Bosnia-Herzegovina who were engaged in a systematic attempt to get rid of all traces of the region's oriental and Islamic legacy (mosques, cemeteries and cultural monument).²⁴⁴ The Serbian soldiers were told that they were fighting against the 'Muslim peril', and were surprised that Europe was not grateful for their efforts.

A number of publications that appeared after the disintegration of Yugoslavia threw light on various aspects of the role of religion in the conflict.²⁴⁵ Michael Sells describes the Serb anti-Muslim attitude as an ideology, which he calls Christoslavism. He compares it with anti-Semitism, which is based on the accusation that the Jews are guilty of the death of Christ. Christoslavism, on the other hand, finds its roots in the medieval Serbian history and the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The Islamic Ottomans are blamed for the death of the Serb Prince Lazar. According to this interpretation, his death also meant the end of the Serbian Orthodox Christian kingdom. These ideas formed the basis for 19th-century Serbian national ideology, and played an important role in inspiring the struggle against the Ottomans, liberation from whom would, it was hoped, allow the frontiers of the old Serbian kingdom to be restored.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first UN human rights rapporteur in the Balkans, denied in his report that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was religious in nature, but he stressed the importance of religion in determining the national identity of the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians.²⁴⁶ This was confirmed by various empirical studies. Tone Bringa, a Norwegian anthropologist, who was engaged in a study of Bosnian identity before the outbreak of the war, concluded: "Islam is the main distinguishing factor between the Muslims and their Bosnian-Herzegovinian compatriots and the main constitutive factor, either as practical religion or as cultural heritage, in self-ascription of collective *nacija* identities. As such, Islam is the key to understanding Muslim identity in Bosnia. Yet, Bosnian Muslim identity cannot fully be understood with reference to Islam only, but has to be considered in terms of a specific Bosnian dimension which for Bosnian Muslims has implied sharing history and a locality with Bosnians of other non-Islamic religious traditions."²⁴⁷

The sociologist of religion Paul Mojzes considers that the religious character of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is often exaggerated, because that war cannot be defined as a 'crusade' or *jihad*. The link between the religious and the ethnic identity had been weakened because the Communists

²⁴³ E. Cimić, 'The Bosnian Crossroads' in Mojzes (1997) 133.

²⁴⁴ L. Cohen, 'Bosnian Tribal Gods' in Mojzes (1997) 65.

²⁴⁵ See e.g. Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (Atlanta 1996). M. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley 1996).

²⁴⁶ See T. Mazowiecki (1994).

²⁴⁷ Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim in a Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (New York 1995) 230-131.

regarded religious feelings as an individual, private matter. Marriages between people of different religions were quite common until the 1990s, when mixed marriages were no longer tolerated. Mojzes uses the term 'ethnoreligiosity' to denote the link between the ethnic and the religious identity. If someone converts from Islam to Orthodoxy, this automatically involves a change in ethnic identity: such a person immediately becomes Serbian, and *vice versa*. In Mojzes' opinion, however, the ethnoreligious identity of the Muslims is stronger than that of the Serbs and Croats. At the end of the 1960s, the Bosnians were proclaimed a nationality, purely on the basis of their religion.

The religious groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina used to live in a social environment often called *komsiluk*. This term literally means 'neighbourhood', but was used in Bosnia-Herzegovina to denote the tolerance and respect for others that had become a matter of course between followers of different religions there.²⁴⁸

Mazowiecki emphasizes the negative influence of the churches on interconfessional relationships. In particular the Serbian Orthodox Church was active in the persuading the Serbian population that they were the victims of a conspiracy between Catholics and Muslims. The leaders of the Catholic Church in Croatia remained politically neutral, but in Herzegovina Catholic priests were very active in stirring up nationalist rhetoric against both the Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims. The latter have complained regularly since the start of the war in 1992 that 'Christian' Europe was prejudiced against them because of their religious background. They saw this as the reason why the West hesitated so long about military intervention to save the Bosnians from genocide.²⁴⁹ The Serbian sociologist Milan Tripkovic goes so far as to accuse the religious organisations themselves of responsibility for starting the war,²⁵⁰ while Mojzes comments that in any case the religious authorities did not do much to improve interconfessional relationships during the war. The Serbian Patriarch Pavle openly supported the radical policies of the Bosnian Serbs. The notorious war criminal Arkan boasted that Patriarch Pavle was his commander-in-chief.²⁵¹ The Serbian Orthodox Church was in favour of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁵² According to Norman Cigar, Serbian intellectuals and clergy played a sinister role in providing the motivation for and justification of the genocidal crimes committed against the Muslim population in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One of the most extreme anti-Muslim ideologists is the Serb academic Miroslav Jevtic, who has been writing texts demonizing the Muslims for years. The following is a typical specimen of his prose: "the hands of the Muslims who are with us are stained and polluted with the blood of their ancestors from among inhabitants of Bosnia at that time, namely those who did not embrace Islam."²⁵³

Sells concluded after a three-year study of genocide that there is no evidence that the Bosnians were also guilty of a genocidal policy aimed at destroying Serb and Croat communities in Bosnia. He did observe individual atrocities committed against Serb and Croat civilians, but concluded that the Bosnian political leadership was not aware of these activities.²⁵⁴ Cigar likewise stated that the Bosnians were the main victims of the genocidal crimes.

There is not such a clear picture of the role of the Croatian Catholic Church in inciting and justifying hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina as there is for the Serbian Orthodox Church. Mojzes ascribes this difference to the brutal openness of the Serb nationalists about their intentions. The Croat nationalists, on the other hand, often concealed their intentions. The Croatian Catholic Church welcomed the advent of the non-Communist Croatian government in 1990 because this political change raised the prestige of the Church and because the new Croatian nationalist elite embraced

²⁴⁸ See e.g. Tindemans (1996) 32.

²⁴⁹ See Jonathan Luxmore, 'Former UN envoy accuses churches of blocking cooperation', *Ecumenical News International* 14 (September, 1995).

²⁵⁰ Milan Tripkovic, *Samoniklice* (Novi Sad.,1993).

²⁵¹ Mojzes (1997) 172.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁵³ N. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, (Texas, 1995) 29.

²⁵⁴ M. Sells, 'serbian Religious Nationalism, Christoslavism, and the Genocide in Bosnia, 1992-1995' in Mojzes (1997) 203.

Catholicism as an important symbol of Croatian national identity. The link between the Catholic Church and Croatian nationalist ideology was even more explicit in neighbouring Hercegovina, where many Croats lived. During the Second World War, Hercegovina was already known as a breeding-ground for the Ustase movement, and Catholic priests in Hercegovina also showed open support for the extreme nationalist Ustase ideology. The Communist regime suppressed local feuds. In 1980, however, the Catholic faith in Bosnia was given an enormous boost by the 'Medjugorje phenomenon'. It was reported that the Virgin Mary had appeared to a number of children in the little village of Medjugorje. The local Franciscans used this 'miracle' to reinforce their own position in the region in relation to the diocesan hierarchy and the authority of the Bishop of Mostar.²⁵⁵ In connection with this, the Franciscans were held responsible for the development of a 'militant Maria ideology' which strengthened ethno-religious nationalism and had ideological links with the views of the nationalist and extreme nationalist (neo-Ustase) Croatian parties. Medjugorje became part of the *Herceg Bosna* proclaimed by the Croats in 1992. Since various other ethnic groups were seen as an obstacle to an ethnically 'clean' *Herceg Bosna*, crimes of genocide were committed. The political and military leadership of the region maintained close links with Catholic priests. The American sociologist of Croatian descent Stjepan Mestrovic (1993) considered, however, that the central message of the appearance of the Virgin Mary was peace. He also denied that the Croats had been guilty of genocide: in his opinion, Croatian violence since 1991 was a reaction to the expansionist policies of the Serbs.²⁵⁶

The 'Medjugorje phenomenon' reflected a power struggle within the Croatian Catholic Church. The Franciscans had lost much of their influence and power since the introduction of the diocesan hierarchy in the 1960s, and they used the appearance of the Virgin Mary to reinforce their prestige and position among the rural population of Hercegovina. The head of the diocesan hierarchy in Croatia, Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, has never confirmed these visions of Mary, and the Vatican has never recognized Medjugorje as an official Catholic pilgrimage site. The tensions between the Franciscans and the diocesan hierarchy were exacerbated by the fact that Kuharic opposed the division of Bosnia-Hercegovina, in line with the official Vatican standpoint.

The relative freedom of religion in Yugoslavia in the 1970s made it possible for many Muslim clergy to study in centres of Islamic learning abroad. The social prestige of the *imams* and *bodjas* rose, and they began to make open pleas for improvement of the position of the Bosnian Muslims. The contacts with other Islamic countries also led to radicalization of part of the clergy.

The Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic had been seen as an important exponent of Muslim fundamentalism since the early 1970s, when he wrote a political pamphlet entitled *Islamska deklaracija* (Islamic declaration) in which he advocated a worldwide Muslim commonwealth. This had led to his being accused of Muslim nationalism by the Communists and sentenced to a period in prison. The *islamska deklaracija* was regarded as a political manifesto in which Izetbegovic advocated a political system that differed significantly from the known democratic systems. Izetbegovic was not an admirer of the secular Turkish state: in his opinion, the old Islamic Ottoman Empire was one of the most important empires in the world, while modern secular Turkey had become an unimportant Balkan state without any role of significance in European politics.

Mojzes points out that Izetbegovic was certainly no fundamentalist as his political opponents claim. In Mojzes' opinion, the war actually increased the influence of Islam among the Bosnian Muslims. Initially, the vast majority of Bosnians had been fighting for a multicultural, multi-confessional Bosnia, but part of the Bosnian army consisted of fundamentalist units who believed in pan-Muslim ideas. The 3000 members of the Seventh Muslim Brigade wore Islamic symbols and used Arabic as their language of communication.²⁵⁷ The picture of a radicalization of Muslim politics during the war was reinforced by the presence of hundreds of Muslim volunteers from the Arabic world and

²⁵⁵ The Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax described how the Franciscans had been actively preparing children for the visions months before they happened. See M. Bax, *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics and Violence in Rural Bosnia*, (Amsterdam, 1995).

²⁵⁶ S. Mestrovic, *Habits of the Balkan Heart*, (Texas, 1993) 128-129.

²⁵⁷ P. Mojzes, (1997) 5

the military and humanitarian aid Izetbegovic received from Islamic countries. The growing influence of Islam was reflected in the choice of material in the periodicals of the various Muslim organisations, which aired ideas about the unity of the political and religious systems, with Islam being portrayed as superior to all other religions.

Signs of radicalization could also be observed in the politicians. Some Bosnian politicians started to talk about the formation of an Islamic state: they suggested that if the proportion of Muslims in the population of Bosnia could be boosted from the pre-war value of 44% to 51%, this majority would form the basis for the formation of a Muslim state with Islamic laws.²⁵⁸ The ideological foundation for an ethno-national Bosnian state was laid down in a number of manifestos. In 1993, a group of Bosnian intellectuals advocated the formation of a Muslim state within the boundaries controlled by the Bosnian army. While based on Islamic ideology, this state should still possess a system of norms and values that were compatible with European civilization.²⁵⁹ One of Izetbegovic's close collaborators at the time, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic,²⁶⁰ expressed resistance to the idea of the formation of a Muslim republic, however, because this would lead to ghettoization and would make this mini-state a 'closed society' surrounded by suspicious non-Muslim countries. Mahmutcehajic followed the 'cosmopolitan' direction, whose adherents advocated keeping Bosnia multicultural and multi-confessional. Izetbegovic himself vacillated for years between the 'fundamentalist' and 'cosmopolitan' directions, whose followers criticized him in turn for being too 'Islamic' or too 'secular'. In 1993, he stated that the Bosnians had become a political nation, capable of forming their own state. When the Bosnians were at war with the Serbs and the Croats later the same year, however, he was almost prepared to give up the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Acceptance of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would inevitably have led to the formation of an Islamic mini-state in central Bosnia. However, American pressure led to an end of the war between the Bosnians and the Croats, and the chance of maintaining Bosnian territorial sovereignty rose steadily. This was confirmed in the Dayton Agreement of 1995. According to Cimic (1997), the motives for the war were not religious but political, despite the use of religious symbols during the war and the significant role played by religious organisations and churches in justifying it.

13. Ideological conflict

Authors who regarded the Yugoslav war as an ideological conflict saw the ideological polarization between the integrative ideology (which held a joint South Slav state to be the ultimate objective) and the nationalist ideology (aiming at separate national states) as the essential feature of the political struggle in the late 1980s and early 1990s.²⁶¹ The history of the South Slav peoples in the 20th century is clearly marked by this polarization: the formation of a joint state in 1918 was followed by the formation of an independent Croatian Nazi satellite and a smaller Serbian state. In 1945, the Communists again founded a unitary state, which in its turn was replaced by five smaller states in the 1990s.

The first phase of the ideological polarization began in the 1980s, and concerned the contrast between communism and nationalism. The Croatian nationalist ideologists regarded the Yugoslav state as a-historical because it conflicted with the historical right of the various peoples involved – and in particular the Croats – to a state of their own. In their eyes, the Yugoslav state was a failure, and they identified Yugoslavia with Serbian hegemony or Communist totalitarianism. Conversely, the Communists regarded Croatian nationalism as dangerous because of the separatist tendencies it encouraged. They therefore suppressed it forcefully. Post-Communist Croatian nationalist ideology was aimed at the formation of an independent Croatian state.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 96.

²⁵⁹ See the manifestos of A. Jahic, *Krjeposna muslimanska drzava* (1993) and M. Ajanovic, *Manifest bosnjacke republike*, (Tuzla, 1995).

²⁶⁰ See R. Majmutcehajic, *Citanje historije i povjerenje u Bosni: kriva politika* (Sarajevo, 1998).

²⁶¹ See I. Banac, 'Fearful Asymmetry of War', *Daedalus* (Spring 1993).

Slovenian nationalism, which was not a significant movement till the 1980s, also tended towards separatism on the basis of the argument that Slovenia would be able to develop much faster, both economically and politically, if it were not slowed down by the other republics, in particular by Serbia. One of the few authors who regarded Slovenia as an essential part of the history of the Yugoslav state was the historian of Slovenian descent Joze Pirjavec.²⁶² Ever since 1918, Slovenia has been the main source of resistance to Serbian policies of domination; and in the 1980s Slovenia was the first Yugoslav republic to declare open opposition to the rise of Serbian nationalism.

The main characteristic of Serb nationalism is usually regarded as a pursuit of 'hegemony'. Milosevic's nationalist policies were initially aimed not at the disintegration of the Yugoslav state but at its centralization under Serbian leadership. In 1990, he annexed Vojvodina and Kosovo. The leadership in Montenegro was also loyal to him, so Serbia could count on four of the eight votes in the federal presidium. Milosevic had never been against Communism, and he made skilful use of the Communist institutions to reinforce his power. As a result, he was the only political leader in the former Yugoslavia on whom the Yugoslav army (JNA) - that had always set itself the task of keeping Yugoslavia intact - could call. After the fall of Communism in 1990 and the victory of the nationalist parties in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a new kind of ideological polarization arose: nationalism versus nationalism. This conflict first manifested itself in Croatia. The Serb population there, who did not wish to be a minority in a Croatian ethno-national state, rebelled in 1990 and closed off areas which they regarded as Serbian on the basis of ethnic, economic and historical criteria. They did not object to Croatia becoming independent, as long as these regions were excluded. Serbian and Croatian nationalist ideologies were also opposed to one another in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where they made overlapping territorial claims.²⁶³

Nationalist ideologies divide people into 'us' and 'them', 'our nation' and 'the others'. Serb and Croat nationalists saw 'the others' as an obstacle to the formation of their ethno-national states. The violence against 'the others' was used functionally and well-planned, so that the regions which according to the nationalist ideology had to be taken over could be effectively 'cleansed' of 'others'. An important step in the preparation of genocide against the other groups is the dehumanization process, defined as denial of the idea that the members of the other group possess human characteristics. This process is prepared and guided by the political elites, who often mount an intensive media campaign to demonize 'the others'. The media in the former Yugoslavia bear a heavy responsibility for the dehumanization of ethnic and religious groups. Memories of crimes from the Second World War were revived; the Serbs were called "Cetniks", the Croats "Ustase" and the Bosnians "Islamic fundamentalists".

Borislav Herak, a normal Bosnian boy who became a war criminal, recounted a typical example of how the dehumanization process worked. Herak told journalists from the New York Times how he and two companions had shot dead ten members of a Muslim family one sunny morning in late June and mentioned that he could still clearly remember how a young girl, aged about ten, had tried to hide behind her grandmother. The fact that he noticed her illustrates how dehumanisation works. He had not really paid any attention to the other nine members of the family, had not noticed whether they were young or old, male or female: they were simply 'the enemy'. He also told how he had been ordered "to cleanse our whole people of Muslims." He fought on the side of the Bosnian Serbs, though his mother was a Croat and his sister had married a Muslim²⁶⁴.

The initial confusion about the nature of the crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina was cleared up by journalists. The first book describing the crimes against the Bosnian Muslims as genocide was written

²⁶² See J. Pirjavec, *Jugoslavija 1918-1992: nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadordeviceve in Titove Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana, 1995).

²⁶³ R. Hayden, 'The Use of National Stereotypes in the Wars in Yugoslavia' in *Vampires Unstaked: National Images, Stereotypes and Myths in East Central Europe*, A. Gerrits and N. Adler (eds.) (Amsterdam 1995) 207-223.

²⁶⁴ *New York Times*, (24. 11. 1992).

by an American journalist, Roy Gutman.²⁶⁵ On the basis of the investigation of genocide in the 20th century, the various authors who dealt with this topic concluded that genocidal crimes are always the result of an intentional, well planned policy: “Indeed, the crimes seem more horrifying when the extermination is carried out, not in blind hatred, but in pursuance of some further purpose, the victims being cast in a purely instrumental role”.²⁶⁶ Several studies identifying nationalist ideology and nationalist political elites as responsible for the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina appeared after 1993.

The Bosnian historian Husein Serdarevic placed the Serbian and Croatian acts of genocide on Bosnian Muslims in a historical perspective.²⁶⁷ The first genocidal crimes against Muslims were committed after the Peace of Karlovci in 1699, which returned large parts of Croatia to Habsburg rule. About 100,000 Muslims in these regions were murdered, forcibly converted to Christianity or driven out. There was a long history of great intolerance to Muslims in Serbia, and after the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 the Serbs undertook a ‘general clean-up of the Turks’. This was continued after the Second Serbian Uprising in 1815. The measures for expulsion of the Muslim population were intensified during the reign of Milos Obrenovic (1858-1868). The Montenegrins also showed great long-term hostility to the Muslims. The first ‘pogrom’ dated from the early 18th century: 800-1000 Muslims were killed, forcibly converted or driven out from Montenegro in 1711. Mass conversions of the Vasojevic Muslims in various villages took place in 1852, under state supervision. Serdarevic also described the treatment of the Muslim population after the creation of the joint Yugoslav state in 1918, and the land reforms occurring between 1918 and 1941 which were highly unfavourable for the Muslim population. The Bosnian Muslims owned about 62% of the land in Bosnia-Herzegovina privately, but their land was confiscated after 1918 on the basis of the argument that the Ottomans had taken the land away from the Christians in the first place. The Serbs received large tracts of the confiscated land; this brought about major changes in the ethnic and social map of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Radovan Karadzic stated in 1991 that 64% of Bosnian land was in Serb hands. During the Second World War, the Serb extremist forces (Cetniks) carried out four great extermination campaigns in Bosnia, killing about 50 000 Muslims.

It is however striking that the Bosnian Muslims were much milder in their judgement of Croatian crimes on the Muslim population in Central-Bosnia. Atrocities in Ahmici, Busovaca, Vitez, Jelinka and Nadeonik were described, but they were not placed in a historical and sociological context and the word ‘genocide’ was avoided.²⁶⁸

Who actually carried out the acts of genocide in the former Yugoslavia? The Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) was deployed by the Yugoslav Federal government in June 1991 to guarantee the territorial sovereignty of the federation. However, after the short-lived war with the Slovenian Territorial Defence forces – called a ‘phony war’ by some authors²⁶⁹ – the JNA left Slovenia. Samary (1996) states that, by defending the Yugoslav federation, the JNA was also defending its own status and privileges. The JNA was a pro-Communist, pro-Yugoslav military organization²⁷⁰, which initially wanted to have nothing to do with Milosevic’s nationalist populism. The rise of Croatian nationalism made Milosevic increasingly acceptable to the JNA top brass, however: while Croatia wanted to secede, Milosevic wanted to keep Yugoslavia intact. During the war in Croatia, which began in 1991, it became clear that many individual officers of Serb descent were supporting the Croatian Serbs. After Croatia declared independence, the JNA combined forces with Serb paramilitaries to keep Serb regions outside the Croatian state. The great military superiority of the JNA determined the face of the war. Croatian cities like Vukovar and Dubrovnik were bombarded from a safe distance with heavy artillery in 1991. During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was hardly any difference between professional soldiers

²⁶⁵ Roy Gutman, *Witness to a Genocide*, (New York, 1993).

²⁶⁶ L. Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1981) 87.

²⁶⁷ Husein Serdarevic, ‘Het ontstaan van de Zuid-Slavische nationale staten en de Bosniaken’ in Halilovic (1996) 156.

²⁶⁸ See Halilovic (1996). 156.

²⁶⁹ See Samary (1996) 76-77.

²⁷⁰ See J. Gow, *Legitimacy and Military: the Yugoslav Crisis* (London, 1992).

and paramilitary groups; and when the JNA was formally disbanded in 1992, the former JNA officers went over to the Bosnian Serb Army that had been set up. This army was led by officers who had switched allegiance from Yugoslavia to Serbia. The supreme commander of the army, Ratko Mladic, worked together with paramilitary groups such as 'Arkan's Tigers', the force led by Zeljko Raznjatovic (Arkan). These small bands often consisted of criminals who were not interested in politics and ideology but made use of the war to murder, plunder and get rich. They were accepted in political circles, and their social status rose from criminal to war hero. The local population called them 'special soldiers'.

The paramilitary forces played a vital role in the genocide activities. They were used in particular to commit acts of 'exemplary' violence: intimidation and torture, as savage as possible, to 'encourage' the 'undesired' ethnic group to flee *en masse* from the whole area in question. The usual scenario was that one village was attacked and plundered, women were raped and inhabitants slaughtered, after which the population of the surrounding villages would flee spontaneously. The official army could now occupy the area without any trouble. The Serb paramilitary organisations fought alongside the official army in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but did not fall under the command structure of the army; instead, they answered directly to the Serbian ministry of Internal Affairs.²⁷¹

Another type of violence was committed by the victims' former neighbours and acquaintances. The Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax coined the term 'private violence' for this. According to Bax, it results from the local religious, economic and social conditions, often involving blood feuds and vendettas continuing from generation to generation. Bax states that the Medjugorje region (where he had been carrying out his studies), had been plagued by a 'little war' that had been going on at local level for centuries. From time to time in the past, this 'little war' had merged in ideological harmony with a greater war (e.g. the Second World War): each ethnic group that possessed political power suppressed the other. Under the Ustase regime, the local Croats were guilty of genocide against the Serbian population; during the Communist era, the Serbs were more powerful and they persecuted the Croats because of their Ustase past. In 1991, Medjugorje formed part of the Croat-dominated region of *Herzeg-Bosna* and the Serb population was intimidated and forced to leave. The motives for the conflicts were usually of a social or economic nature: the biggest house, the most fertile soil. Once more, the context of the 'great war' in Bosnia-Herzegovina was used to serve the purposes of the local 'little war'.²⁷²

Another Dutch anthropologist, Mattijs van de Port, has described the power of memories of crimes from the Second World War, in the case of the inhabitants of the multi-ethnic city of Novi Sad. These memories were revived in 1991, and influenced the attitude of the various ethnic groups in the city.²⁷³

14. Political conflict

Yugoslav society was subject to major economic, ethnic, religious and ideological tensions during the various wars it has been subjected to in the course of the 20th century. The economic and the political crisis in Communist Yugoslavia laid the foundation for the rise of radical ideological movements. In the opinion of Cimic (1997), the main factor uniting all aspects of the crisis is the absence of democracy. He believes further that despite all the problems involved, war would never have been invoked as the means of resolving all the conflicts without the fatal principle "all citizens of a nation have to live in a single state". This principle provided the motive, the objective and the means for the war.²⁷⁴

Looking back on the above detailed discussion of the nature of the Yugoslav conflict, it may be concluded that while all aspects are important, the best way of describing the conflict is as a political

²⁷¹ See Cigar (1996).

²⁷² See Bax (1995).

²⁷³ See M. van de Port, Gypsies (1998).

²⁷⁴ Cimic (1997) 133.

one – a conflict about power and control between political elites who resort to violence when the political struggle involving other means does not yield the desired resolution. The struggle was carried out by political parties who had come to power in free elections and who could thus conceal themselves behind the façade of democratic legitimacy. The populist character of the power struggle between various ethno-religious groups was largely the result of manipulation by political and intellectual elites whose objective was to set the different ethno-religious groups against one another. The use of violence to continue the political struggle had a single objective: victory, so that the victorious party can determine who gets what. Gow spoke of a ‘clash of state projects’ in this connection: one state has ceased to exist, and its successors are competing for the best possible boundaries within the space that has become vacant.

The Dayton Agreement brought peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina after more than three years of war. It was a compromise that was accepted by all parties to the conflict under pressure from the international community. But five years post-Dayton, the Bosnian state is still not functioning as a political entity and polarization into three opposing political camps is still present despite the efforts of the international community. It would seem that the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat political elites have still not given up all hope of realizing their territorial objectives.