Araştırma Makalesi ● Research Article

Dismemberment of Yugoslavia: Lessons for the Ethnic Conflict Literature

Yugoslavya'nın Parçalanması: Etnik Çatışma Literatürü İçin Çıkarılacak Dersler

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ÖZ

Etnik çatışma literatürü, insan doğasının ve sosyal davranışlarının bilhassa çeşitlilik gösteren toplumlarda motivasyonlarıyla ilgili bizlere çok önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu makale son dönemlerde yaşanmış en büyük çaplı etnik çatışmalardan Yugoslavya örneğini araştırmaktadır. Makale, ilkin etnisite literatürünü incelemekte, etnik çatışmanın mikro- ve makro-bazlı nedenlerini irdelemektedir. Makale özellikle etnik çatışmaların kültürel, siyasi, yapısal, psikolojik ve ekonomik nedenlerini incelemektedir. Makale bu teorik altyapı ışığında Yugoslavya örneğini ele almakta ve bahsi geçen nedenlerin Yugoslavya örneğindeki karşılaştırmasını yapmaktadır. Buna göre Yugoslavya örneğinde siyasi ve yapısal nedenlerin öne çıktığı gözlemlenmektedir. Makale son olarak Yugoslavya'nın ardıl ülkelerde son dönemlerde insanların çok-etnisiteli toplumlara yaklaşımını inceleyip, konuyla ilgili çıkarımlar yapmaktadır.

ABSTRACT

Ethnic conflict literature offers us great insights regarding the motivations of human behavior, especially in diverse societies. This article explores one of the greatest ethnic conflicts of our times, the Yugoslavian case. The article first investigates the ethnicity literature and then delves into the micro- and macro-level reasons behind the instigation of ethnic conflict. Specifically, it analyzes cultural, political, structural, psychological, and economic reasons behind the outbreak of ethnic conflict. In light of the literature, the article studies the Yugoslavian case and compares the strengths of each explanation covered in the article regarding the initiation of ethnic conflict. The article maintains that political and structural explanations are the strongest ones for the Yugoslavian case. The article finally assesses the current state of people's orientations toward a multi-ethnic society in the successor states of Yugoslavia.

1. Introduction

It has been decades after the outbreak of the ethnic conflict in the successor states of Yugoslavia yet the effects of the conflict still linger. Ethnic conflict literature has been illuminating through various angles about this topic. Yet, there is still a theoretical gap that bridges different approaches on this matter. This study aims to offer a well-rounded theoretical analysis about the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and set forth the repercussions of ethnic conflict in the everyday lives of peoples in the successor states of Yugoslavia today. The article hypothesizes that political and structural explanations are the prime factors that explain the

outbreak of ethnic conflict after the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

The end of the Cold War era has brought about some happy scenes like in the case of the fall of Berlin Wall where many Germans (from "the East" and "the West") enjoyed the reunification of their country. Democratic transitions in many countries such as the (members of the) Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia were relatively peaceful. Yet, the demise of the communist rule in some countries, especially Yugoslavia, opened up the Pandora's Box at the heart of Europe. The dismemberment of Yugoslavia into successor states brought havoc and created devastating events that still

stands as one of the most dramatic pages of the contemporary world history.

As Baskin and Pickering argue:

"Five interconnected armed conflict took place that still cast long shadows on developments in the successor states. It has been difficult to establish precise figures, but estimates of people killed for the entire conflict range from 200,000 to 300,000 people. Over 4.5 million people were displaced at some point in the conflicts. By early 2009, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that well over 800,000 refugees and internally displaced persons were still seeking durable solution by returning home".[1]

The dissolution of Yugoslavian state opened up a new page, not only in the world history, but also in the research of ethnic conflict. Many prominent researchers such as James Fearon, David Laitin, Valerie Bunce, just to name a few, have devoted considerable time and energy to delineate the sources of this ethnic conflict. This paper provides an extensive review of the ethnic conflict literature, particularly the strands of the literature that deal with the Yugoslavian case. The paper aims to contribute to our understanding in the Political Behavior literature in general.

In general, the paper focuses on the initiation of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia, presents the streams of discussions about the outbreak of ethnic conflict, and discusses which one(s) explain(s) the Yugoslavian case the best. The paper also goes over the implications of the research findings, both related to the successor states and in the theory of ethnic conflict.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The first section delves into one of the core terms about the research, namely "ethnicity" and what this term refers to according to different schools of thought. The second section investigates the literature on the ethnic conflict, with a specific focus on the initiation of conflict. Ethnic conflict literature is a vast literature. Therefore, a focused case and topical analysis can only be done by working meticulously. With this aim, this section covers the studies that directly relate the "outbreak" of ethnic conflict and the Yugoslavian case. The third section examines the Yugoslavian case in light of historical records (such as the UN reports) and academic studies. This section discusses the applicability of different theories on ethnic conflict for Yugoslavia. The fourth section concludes, with a brief sketch of the current situation in the successor states of Yugoslavia regarding ethnic issues.

2. "Ethnicity" Explored

In light of Donald Horowitz's typology, "ethnicity" refers to a highly inclusive group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily through kinship and typically manifesting some cultural distinctiveness. Therefore, "ethnicity" embraces groups differentiated by language, religion, races, nationalities, and castes.[2] Similarly, as Bulmer suggests, an "ethnic group" can be

defined as a subgroup within a larger community that has real or putative common ancestry, memories, and a common cultural focus such as language, religion, kinship or physical appearance.[3]

Although there may be ancillary approaches, two contending explanations, by and large, stand as to what accounts for the emergence of ethnic identities and ethnic conflict: primordialist and constructivist approaches.

The primordialists believe that identities are fixed by human nature rather than by social convention and practice. They conceive ethnic and other ascriptive identities as given that are stamped upon a discoverable set of groups in a "primordial", pre-political period of human history. A scholar who is widely regarded as a primordialist is Clifford Geertz. Geertz asserts that primordial sentiments are given and overpowering for political identities. The corollary of primordialism as they emerge from Geertz's account is twofold: 1) individuals have a single fixed identity and 2) the ethnic group to which individual belongs can be taken as fixed in the long term.[4]

Over the last three decades or so, the primordialist approach has been discredited by constructivist approaches. The central contention of constructivism is that identities are fluid and do not exist independent of political processes. These theories assume that ethnic cleavages are not fixed but subject to redefinition through political mechanisms.

There are three variants of constructivism.[5] One variant, developed by Karl Deutsch, Ernst Gellner, and Benedict Anderson, identify modernization process in economic, political and social aspects as the key variable for the emergence of ethnic and national identities. Deutsch advances the idea that social mobilization would foster ethnic competition especially in the modern sector. Deutsch goes on to suggest that ethnic conflict is the product of something analogous to a race between rates of social mobilization and rates of assimilation.[6] Meanwhile, Gellner sees nationalism as unimaginable before the modern era. Nationalism in Gellner's view is beneficial for a modern state because a highly differentiated industrial society requires a unified high culture, which is the cornerstone of nationalism.[7] In the same vein, Anderson argues that nationalism as a manifestation of imagined communities is a by-product of "print- capitalism".[8] In short, these constructivist theorists debunk primordialist arguments and link ethnic and national identities to social and economic processes of modernization.

Another variant of constructivism argues that individuals and groups tend to instrumentalize identities in response to shifting circumstances. This strand of literature is exemplified by David Laitin's Identity in Formation: Russian Speaking Populations in the near Abroad (1998), which addresses the question of whether Russian speaking persons in states that were formerly part of the Soviet-Union will learn the dominant language of those newly independent nations or remain "Russian," at least in

linguistic terms. Taking processes of identity formation and transformation as its subject, Laitin claims that people will opt for a shift in their identities. Laitin conceptualizes such a shift in terms of "tipping" or a "cascade". In this type of theory, people are seen as engaged in strategizing behavior, and their choices are heavily conditioned by their perception of what choices others are making. Laitin explains this by arguing in purely instrumental terms in such a way that a person will make a rational choice as to whether or not to assimilate based on calculations of incentives and expected payoffs.[9]

The third variant of constructivism contends that ethnic identifications arise as rational efforts to secure benefits (jobs, markets, lands) from state. Advocated by scholars like Robert Bates, this variant also emphasizes institutions as the key element determining the salience of a particular ethnic identification and ethnic cleavages.[10] This rational choice institutionalists suggest that ethnic identity can be viewed in terms of the politics of coalition-building, and that ethnic identity choice can be seen in terms of a quest to gain membership in the coalition that will be most politically and economically useful. In this context, institutions matter because they not only shape the repertoire of potentially mobilizable ethnic identities, but also people's incentives to choose one group identity over another.[11]

Taken together, the constructivist approaches assert that there is no such thing as a primordial identity. Rather, ethnic identities are in large part based on construction and choice instead of inheritance and blood.

The distinction between primordialism and constructivism is important for this paper because we will see that those who are more optimistic with regard to the solution of ethnic conflict rely more on the constructivist assumptions. Since they do not take identities as given, constructivists are more easily convinced that conflicts based on ethnic identity can be ameliorated, if not fully resolved. Before going any further, it is appropriate to offer a conceptualization of a "multi-ethnic society" based on Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle's characterization of multi-ethnic societies, which incorporate:

(i) Intracommunal consensus, which is a presumed uniformity of preference within communities;

(ii) Intercommunal conflict, so to say, preferences on collective decisions and hence underlying cultural values among communities are irreconcilable.

(iii) Common perceptual frame, in which there is a common view of the ordering of alternatives among the various community elites at the very least.[12]

3. The Outbreak of Ethnic Conflict – Literature Survey

An analysis about the underlying causes of ethnic conflict is critical so as to have a systematic approach toward our case study. In the scholarly literature, there are five camps of thought about the instigation of ethnic conflict, which are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Explanations about the Outbreak of Ethnic Conflict

Cultural/Historical Explanations:	Ancient hatreds Historical aspirations Cultural discrimination Lack of civic interaction
Political Explanations:	Leaders/Elite politics Political system
Structural Explanations:	Ethnic geography
Psychological/Perceptual Explanations:	Commitment problems Physical attacks and their psychological/perceptual repercussions
Economic Explanations:	Economic system Transitions

3.1. Cultural/Historical Explanations

The first category that will be examined is the stream of research that focuses on cultural/historical explanations. Some studies under this group try to explain the outbreak of ethnic conflict due to "ancient hatreds".[13] According to these deep-seated animosities deriving from the histories of the countries, the "Pandora's box" of ethnic conflict opens up with minimal triggers.

Other researchers under this category claim that historical aspirations of different ethnicities may coincide in certain territories and lead to the outbreak of ethnic strife. One of the most vivid examples in the contemporary world is Jerusalem. The city stands as a curious case of ethnic conflict that carries enormous historical meaning, both for the Israelis and the Palestinians as well as Christian, Jews, and Muslims at large. The claimed indispensability of the city for these sides due to its historical significance is one of the major drivers for the ongoing gridlock.[14]

Another point under this category is what researchers call "cultural discrimination". This kind of discrimination can include "assimilationist policies that have been pursued in Bulgaria with respect to ethnic Turks, in Slovakia with respect to ethnic Hungarians, and in Thailand with respect to members of western and northern hill tribes".[15] Cultural discrimination can turn out to be a form of cultural genocide, exemplified by Stalinist policies in the Soviet Union during 1930s and 1940s toward minorities, specifically the ones in the Caucasus.[16]

Lastly, some contemporary researchers such as Ashutosh Varshney claim that an absence of civic interaction among different ethnic groups can also be a cause of ethnic conflict. In his book about Hindus and Muslims in India, Varshney

asserts that civic interaction is the panacea for communal discord and ethnic strife seldom occur where integrated networks of civic engagement exist.[17]

3.2. Political Explanations

Second camp of thought about the outbreak of ethnic conflict refers to political explanations. To begin with, according to some experts, leaders of ethnic groups and the political elite in general can be the source of ethnic conflict. For instance, Rabushka and Shepsle claim that would-be political leaders typically prefer "outbidding" on ethnic issues, by moving towards extremist rhetoric and policies, rather than moderate ones.[18] Thus, as Sisk aptly asserts, the moderate political centre is overwhelmed by extremist standpoints.[19] Other researchers claim that this is especially applicable during transitions and in times of political and economic turmoil.[20] During these times, leaders of ethnic groups can employ the media for partisan and propagandistic rhetoric and apply ethnic bashing and scapegoating as political tools. The actions of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman quite fit into this category,[21] which will be presented in the third section.

Another political explanation about the outbreak of ethnic conflict is the type of political system. Certain political systems can create considerable resentment over time, "especially if the interests of some ethnic groups are served while others are trampled".[22] For instance, authoritarian systems are the prime candidates for such phenomenon. Even under more democratic settings, if members of a certain ethnic group believe that they are underrepresented or unfairly represented, there is a probability for the instigation of ethnic conflict. The federal structure of the Yugoslavian case will be provided in the succeeding section as an appropriate example for such situations.

3.3. Structural Explanations

The third type of explanation that has drawn attention in the literature can be gathered under the heading of structural explanations. One of the most important points about structural explanations is the ethnic geography of a country. Taking the cases of ethnic conflict in politics into consideration, we observe four kinds of settings, which can destabilize the countries. Quoting Rabushka and Shepsle, these are:

> *"(a) the competitive configuration, in which two or three approximately balanced numerical groups appear: Belgium, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, and Surinam; (b) the dominant majority configuration, in which one group is overwhelmingly dominant both politically and demographically: Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Rwanda, Mauritius, and Northern Ireland; (c) the dominant minority configuration, in which a small minority dominates politics: South Africa, Rhodesia, and Burundi; (d) a fragmented configuration, comprising a multiplicity of religious, tribal or linguistic groupings in a common political territory: Lebanon, Sudan, Congo-Kinshasa, and Nigeria".[23]*

Most states, particularly those carved out of former empires, have complex ethnic demographics and face serious ethnic problems.[24] For instance, many African nations still face this problem, with many ethnic groups dispersed in multiple countries.[25] Likewise, as Evangelista argues, "the states of the former Soviet Union inherited borders that were purposefully designed to maximize ethnic complications and cripple the political effectiveness of local leaders with respect to what used to be the center".[26]

3.4. Psychological/Perceptual Explanations

The fourth category in the literature that examines the initiation of ethnic conflict is psychological/perceptual explanations. The first subcategory under this heading can be labeled as the issues linked to commitment problems. According to some experts, surge of ethnic violence is triggered by commitment problems that arise when two political communities lack an institutional structure that enables the fair representation of both parties. In this context, ethnic conflict might be profitably understood as a species of preventive war, and that the real problem of preventive war is the inability to make commitments in an unstable environment.[27] Such kind of preventive war occurs despite the parties' agreement/anticipation about their relative power. Moreover, weaker party (generally minorities) may have an incentive to provoke conflict now, not because it fears being attacked in the future, but because it fears the peace it will have to accept after its counterparty (i.e. majority) has grown stronger. The commitment problem arises due to the conditions at hand that give one party an incentive to renege.[28]

Researchers focusing on this topic avow that the existence or the potential of an ethnic conflict in many countries is mainly driven by the commitment problem among parties. As we already know, the interactions among different parties in a society take place within the context of institutions.[29] Thus, one can aver that the commitment problem is born as a result of the lack of political institutions and rights that gives minority groups political power that is at least proportional to their numbers[30] and defines the limits of the state.[31]

Moreover, the citizens should also have a shared set of beliefs that those limits are appropriate and worth defending.[32] "If there is no consensus within [societal groups], there can be little potentiality for the peaceful resolution of political differences",[33] which may lead to ethnic conflict.

An additional subcategory under psychological/perceptual explanations is physical attacks toward a certain ethnicity and their psychological/perceptual repercussions. Fearon believes that ostensibly irrational attacks toward an ethnicity, exemplified by black pages of the Balkan conflict during the 1990s such as the desecration of graves, systematic rapes and so on, give a psychological/perceptual message not only to other ethnicity, but also to one's own.[34] This kind of physical attacks produces a visceral feeling of

hatred on part of the attacked ethnicity and make it more difficult for the other ethnic members of the "attackers" to live with the attacked ethnicity, due to fear of reprisal. This phenomenon will be recapped in more detail under my case study, with several anecdotes from the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia.

3.5. Economic Explanations

Last category of ethnic conflict literature covers economic explanations. Some experts believe that certain economic systems discriminate particular groups. If the line of discrimination is based on ethnicity, members of the discriminated ethnic group can revolt against the discriminating ethnic group and this can trigger ethnic conflict. This has certainly been the case in Sri Lanka, where Tamils have been discriminated by the Sinhalese majority in recent decades.[35]

Another intriguing analysis under economic explanations is done by Fearon and Laitin. These researchers maintain that the odds of a civil war are most strongly correlated with economic forces (instrumentalized by "log per capita income" in their framework). In light of their large-N analysis, the authors believe that the impact of economic conditions can surpass the ones related to ethnic, religious, and political grievances and be a major driver for conflicts.[36]

Lastly, some researchers argue that economic transitions that take place in developing nations can be a source of ethnic conflict. They state that the economic changes bring about profound social changes. These scholars maintain that socioeconomic mobilization characterized by migration and urbanization alters social and family systems considerably.[37] For instance, Susan L. Woodward suggests that transitions from certain economic system to another in an unplanned, uncontrolled, and speedy fashion can result in disorientation among many members of the society and be a source of ethnic conflict.[38]

We should note that it is impossible to fully isolate the five streams of the literature and listed factors under each literature completely one from another as these forces are intertwined on many grounds and can work together on the instigation of ethnic conflict. The aim here is to set out the different approaches about ethnic conflict in a more systematic way to better understand the intricate realities of ethnic conflict. The next section focuses on the Yugoslavian case based on the literature covered up until now.

4. Case Study: Yugoslavia

The dismemberment process of the Yugoslavian state with the end of the Cold War would be incomplete without a brief historical analysis of the country. Therefore, this section starts with a short summary of the Yugoslavian history.

The lands of the former Yugoslavia display an extraordinarily heterogeneous cultural, social, and political picture since these lands were at the crossroads of divergent rules and rulers such as the western and eastern portions of the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Republic of Venice; various religions such as eastern Orthodoxy, western Catholicism, and Islam.

This motley cultural, social, and religious structure continued after the Communist-led Partisans' seizure of power during World War II. The new regime after the war was led by Josip Broz Tito, during the leadership of whom the country turned into a unique example that neither associated itself with the Warsaw Pact and the NATO. Socialist (but distinctively non-Soviet) economic development policies were accompanied by the idea of "brotherhood and unity," which was central to the Yugoslav experiment. The political system during the socialist regime was relatively loose federation of six republics: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, with two autonomous provinces within Serbia, namely Vojvodina and Kosovo.[39]

The ethnic composition of the Yugoslavian states reflected the historical heterogeneity of its lands. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of ethnic communities within the boundaries of Yugoslavia. As can be seen, there are relatively more homogeneous regions such as Slovenia whereas many regions in the member republics did not have ethnic majority of any kind. Specifically, Bosnia-Herzegovina shows great ethnic diversity within its boundaries, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia following the suit. During the socialist rule, federal institutions were operated vis-à-vis the ethnic structure of the country. As Baskin and Pickering states, "the presidency, parliamentary delegations, and cabinets included representatives of all republics and autonomous provinces".[40]

Tito's death in 1980 and subsequent political impasse between Slovenian and Croat elites who favored a much looser, asymmetrical federation versus Serbian leaders led by Slobodan Milošević who supported the idea of recentralization was the first step of dissolution of the socialist Yugoslavia. The leaders of the republics failed to reach a consensus after the 1990 elections and this failure paved the way for ethnic strife that led to war in mid-1991.[41] The ethnic conflict took place specifically in six countries, namely Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and affected many lives.
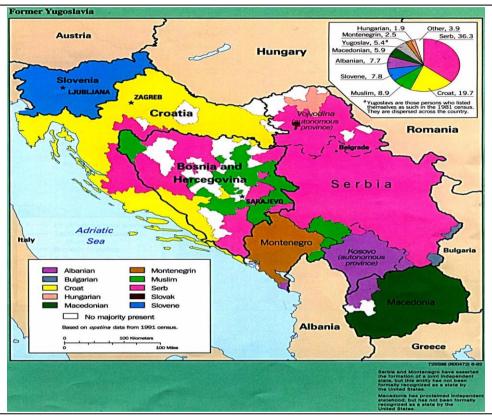
What explains the outbreak of the ethnic conflict the best? Which theories that have been examined in the previous section delineate the instigation of the ethnic strife in Yugoslavia more aptly? This section goes over these theoretical explanations and try to understand the accuracy of each one with giving particular references to historical events and academic studies.

4.1. Cultural-Historical Explanations

Can cultural-historical factors account for the outbreak of the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia? Analyzing the ongoing ethnic conflict during his term, U.S. President George H. W.

Bush maintained that the war in Bosnia between the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims grew out of "age-old animosities".42 Some researchers share the conviction of President Bush and highlight the importance of these explanations. For instance, in his book, Robert Kaplan, talking over the atrocities between the Croatian Ustashe and the Serbs during World War II, maintains that "history has not moved in Zagreb, the late 1930s and 1940s still seem like the present".43

Figure 1. Ethnic Distribution of the Yugoslavian state according to the 1981 census (Perry-Casteñada Library Map Collection)

According to some experts such as Lampe, modern claims for "Greater Serbia" and/or "Greater Croatia" that transcended the boundaries of these states and reached to Bosnian lands and that were emphasized heavily during the ethnic conflict have their roots in medieval histories.44 Furthermore, scholars like Rogers Brubaker state that the historical legacies of nationhood can persevere in a way that "nations could survive as solidary groups, as foci of identity and loyalty and bases of collective action, despite the efforts of the Yugoslav state to crush them".45

However, these assertions raise some questions in analytical thinkers' minds. How can we explain relatively peaceful period of socialist regime that spanned more than forty-five years where we observe interethnic marriages and a growing "Yugoslav" identity above "national ones?46 The period prior to 1991 shows long periods of quite peaceful interactions among the citizens of the member nations.47

Another question that grows out of comparison is how we can explain the variation between the relatively peaceful dismemberment procedure of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia versus the ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia.48 If cultural-historical explanations were to trump the analysis of the outbreak of the ethnic conflict, should not we expect to see a similar kind of ethnic cauldron in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia too? The cultural-historical explanations about the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia and the instigation of the ethnic conflict seem to be unable to answer these questions.

4.2.   Political Explanations

There are political explanations about the outbreak of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia too. First, many analysts refer to the impact of political leaders. Vojislav Stanovčić frankly argues that "Yugoslavia was destroyed by its political leaders".49 In this regard, Slobodan Milošević played a vital role. As explained before, Milošević rejected the idea of reform that might have persuaded Croatian and Slovenian leaders to remain in Yugoslavia and insisted on further recentralization of the Yugoslavian federal structure that would have benefited his leadership. He also prepared for the expansion of his republic's borders in case of dismemberment.50 Like Milošević, Franjo Tudjman in Croatia pursued expansionist policies against Bosnia-Herzegovina, discussed the partition of the country with Serbian leader Milošević by March 1991, and took a central role in the ethnic conflict within Bosnia.51

Another political factor that should be taken into consideration is the loose federal structure of the socialist Yugoslavia. Political center of the federal body weakened even after 1970s in face of the republics and their leadership, which in total took charge of the day-to-day operations of the governmental activities and establish connections with the citizens of the republics.[52] 1980s brought about a structure where this decentralization resulted in a way that the republics had gathered economic and political resources to act independently from the federal structure.[53] Scholars such as Bunce argues that the horizontal, inter-republican form of government pitted the republican leaders that were in search of the support of their own constituencies against each other and resulted in quite divergent policies within the federal body.[54]

In general, I state that political factors played quite an important role in the outbreak and the continuation of the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. The repercussions of the political legacies haunt the future of the peace among the successor states even today. Specifically, ethnic-based political parties are still the central elements of the political structure in some countries.

A short contemporary analysis of Bosnia-Herzegovina can be informative for our purposes. The current state of Bosnia-Herzegovina emphasizes the representation of ethnic communities, namely Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs. In this regard, the country has a three-person presidency, a bicameral national legislature, and two governing sub-structures, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska.[55] This overall structure has led to the polarization of ethnic communities, as illustrated in nationwide elections. In these elections, hard-line nationalists have often triumphed over moderates. The main ethnic parties have little incentive to act accommodatively to have electoral success, which in turn result in elections like the ethnic census of the country.[56]

As we see in the Bosnian example, political structure shaped around the ethnic cleavages has been quite influential throughout the successor states of Yugoslavia. After giving specific references to the dismemberment process of former Yugoslavia, we can confidently state that political factors were critical in the outbreak of the ethnic conflict during the 1990s.

4.3.　Structural Explanations

Another angle that one should bear in mind is the structural factors in former Yugoslavia. First, ethnic geography of the federal structure should be taken into consideration. It may be appropriate to refer back to Figure 1, which shows the ethnic distribution of the federal Yugoslavia before the dismemberment process started. As can be seen, there are many Serbs within the boundaries of non-Serbian republics in the socialist Yugoslavia, which constituted majority status in some cases such as some parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. In total, the Serbs were also the dominant ethnicity within the socialist Yugoslavia, having more than 35 percent

of the overall population. However, as stated before, especially after the second half of the 1970s, Yugoslavia featured equality among the republics. Therefore, the Serbs were denied the political power, which other dominant ethnicities in similar federal structures (e.g. the Russians in the Soviet Union and the Czechs in the Czechoslovakia) enjoyed.[57] The gap between the political representation of the Serbs and the Serbian presumption of their right to be the first among equals created resentment among the Serbs.[58]

This disgruntlement worsened after the well-off portion of the federal structure, namely the Croatians and the Slovenians demanded further decentralization during the 1980s and early 1990s. The first option for the Serbian leaders was to push for a reform that recentralizes the federal body. Failing this option, they started to resort to the second option, which is creating a new and "Greater Serbia" from the debris of the socialist Yugoslavia. To achieve this, the Serbian leadership utilized another structural factor, namely the Serbian majority within the Yugoslav National Army (henceforth JNA). The top officials of the JNA were ethnically heterogeneous. Yet, the Serbs were overrepresented in the officer corps of the army. In general, the JNA was a powerful domestic player throughout the socialist era in Yugoslavia that acted as a counterweight to the decentralized structure within the federation during the 1980s.[59] It continued to be an influential player when the socialist regime started to dissolve. The Serbs expropriated the military inventory of the JNA during the dissolution process and supported the Serbian minorities within the borders of non-Serbian states. For instance, the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina led by Radovan Karadžić fought for multiple Serb Autonomous Regions with direct support of the JNA.[60]

In general, structural factors, specifically the ethnic geography of the socialist Yugoslavia and the overrepresentation of the Serbs in the working bodies of the Yugoslav army deteriorated the situation about the ethnic strife and acted as important inflection points toward the instigation of the ethnic conflict.

4.4.　Psychological/Perceptual Explanations

The ethnic conflict may arise under commitment problems and other psychological/perceptual factors and calculations. To quote Fearon, "inability to make credible commitments under anarchy can make it impossible for disputants to locate a bargain that would avoid a costly fight".[61] In light of Fearon's analysis, a lack of a third party which would play an arbitrator role may be applied to the Yugoslavian case. As experienced at the outbreak of the ethnic conflict, there was neither a strong central federal body that could guarantee agreement between the disputants, nor an international agency that could substitute the place of a central government. The intervention of the international bodies such as the UN came too late to be able to lower the catastrophe of the ethnic conflict in many places.[62]

Other psychological/perceptual factors can also be added to this discussion. Just to name a few examples, during the strife between the Croats and the Serbs, Serbian gunmen desecrated the graves of Croatian ancestors. More specifically, the Serbs pulled the covers off tombs, and machine gunned whatever remains lay inside.[63] The Serbian attacks toward the Bosnian Muslims included the Serbian policy of systematic rape.[64] A United Nations war crimes commission has found evidence and confirmed that "rape was used by the Serbs as a weapon of terror in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina".[65] Furthermore, both the Serb and Croat forces destroyed Islamic cultural monuments such as the bombing of Mostar Bridge by the Croats and demolition of Ferhadija Mosque by the Serbs, then the largest mosque in Europe.[66] On the other hand, in March 1992, a Serb woman interviewed in Foča in Eastern Bosnia was convinced that "there were lists of Serbs who were marked for death. My two sons were down on the list to be slaughtered like pigs. I was listed under rape". The fact that neither she nor other townspeople had seen any such lists did not prevent them from believing such tales without question.[67]

What are the inferences of these acts and their perceptions? The attacks toward objects, things, or human beings that members of a society perceive as sacred/indispensable/invaluable is a signal by the aggressor, which strives to "make ethnic cohabitation impossible by spreading and deepening hatred across the groups".[68]

 Psychological/perceptual explanations, overall, can be applied to different stages of the ethnic conflict. However, what is weight of these explanations during the outbreak of the ethnic strife? At this point, we should refer to our comparison to the Czechoslovakian case and question the applicability of Fearon's first point (i.e. the lack of a third party that would work as an arbitrator, which enforces the existence of commitment problems among disputants). If Fearon was right, how come both nations without a direct intervention of a third party agreed upon the "Velvet Divorce", the formal dissolution process of Czechoslovakia in January 1993 in quite a peaceful fashion and honored their commitments?[69] It is true that psychological/perceptual explanations can affect the direction of an ongoing ethnic conflict and heighten the negative feelings (such as hatred) across the groups, which may have snowballing effect that would be transmitted to future generations. Furthermore, the incidents reported here (like the systematic rapes, the destruction of monumental and sacred buildings) have surely had terrorizing effects on the memories of many people in the Yugoslavian case. However, one cannot conclude that such explanations played a central role in the instigation of the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia, but rather on the escalation of the ethnic cauldron.

4.5.   Economic explanations

The last group of explanations about the outbreak of ethnic conflict is the factors linked to economic phenomena. First, the economic system of a country can be source of resentment and frustration for one or more ethnicities. As underlined before, the socialist Yugoslavia experienced a decentralization process after 1970s, not only in the political arena, but also in the economic realm.[70] Republics within the federal structure started to gather revenues and use these revenues on their discretions. This economic structure led to disturbance, especially on the Serbian part of the socialist Yugoslavia.

Referring to the reports of the most important research institution in Serbia only years before the dissolution of Yugoslavia can be illuminating for our purposes. The excerpts of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts were published in Večernje Novosti, a mass-circulation daily newspaper in Serbia on September 24, 1986 and created a political bombshell. The document argued that the Serbs were the victims of economic discrimination by their Croat and Slovene countrymen. It continued that the Serbs had made the greatest military contributions and sacrifices over the last century and were punished during the peacetime.[71]

Second, explanations about the economic transitions can also be considered under this section. The demise of the socialist rule brought about an alteration from centrally-planned economies to market-based economies. In her book, Susan L. Woodward goes even back to the end of the Cold War and states that the liberal economic policies urged on the Yugoslavs by the international community during the 1980s utterly backfired and produced outcomes almost perfectly opposite the ones intended. She maintains that the first signs of break-up within the regime can also be attributed to these forceful efforts by the international organizations about economic reforms.[72]

Can these economic explanations suffice to explain the outbreak of the ethnic conflict? After a thorough analysis, one can argue that the "discrimination" feeling of the Serbs can be ascribed to cultural/historical, political, and structural accounts examined before. In other words, it cannot be confined to the economic realm only. Moreover, there are many multiethnic countries in the world that have experienced economic transitions yet have not had ethnic conflict at all. Even if the countries that go through civil strife during economic transitions coupled with unemployment and inflation, it is hard to form a bridge between ethnic identities and economic factors so strong to delineate the outbreak of ethnic conflict due to these economic motives. Yugoslavian case seems to fit to such category. Economic factors might have affected the growing ethnic tensions among different republics within the federal structure yet it is hard to conclude that these factors played a central role in the outbreak of the ethnic conflict, in light of historical and academic evidence.

5. Conclusion: The Aftermath of the Conflicts or Potential for the New Ones?

After covering the main drivers of the ethnic conflict and going into detail about the Yugoslavian case, we can sum up that political and structural explanations trump the other explanations highlighted here. These two factors played important roles in the instigation of the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. Of course, it would be illogical to assert that cultural/historical, psychological/perceptual, and economic explanations did not affect the outbreak of the ethnic cauldron. One should mention that the initiation of ethnic conflict is an outcome of intertwined elements, factors, forces, and incidents in the history of a country (or countries) under examination. Thus, we should note that our attempt is not to offer a reductionist argument. Instead, this paper has strived to cover the academic literature on the subject meticulously and tried to gather main camps of thought that may explain the outburst of ethnic conflict. Historical records and focused academic studies about Yugoslavia have helped us to come up with the assertion that political and structural explanations are the primary ones to explain the Yugoslavian case.

This paper has gone over the literature on ethnic conflict and delved into the specifics of Yugoslavian case. After covering these topics, what can we conclude about the future of the successor states of socialist Yugoslavia? Can we say that the gloomy days of ethnic strife are now over?

The current political situation in the successor states of socialist Yugoslavia displays "weak party systems, a rather amorphous ideological spectrum, and party fragmentation… and intensive international involvement in domestic politics, as well as… entrenched ethnic party systems."[73] Yet, multiethnic forms of cooperation have been successful in some instances (such as the electoral victory of VMRO-DPMNE's multiethnic coalition in Macedonia). Overall, one can say that political progress and the development of all-encompassing party systems has been uneven throughout the successor states of former Yugoslavia.[74]

The picture about civil society is not so different. There are currently many mono-ethnic civil society organizations in the region. However, some local, multiethnic organizations (such as Medica Zenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina) that grew out after the war produce social capital that bridges ethnic divisions.[75] But, one should note that the legacies of the one-party regime and subsequent elite-level political competition have mostly alienated the societies of the successor states where citizens in general have low confidence about political institutions.

The current sketch of the successor states about ethnicity is also intriguing. The data compiled from different waves of the World Values Survey illustrate the fluctuation about the attitudes of the citizens of five successor states of Yugoslavia. The numbers below in Table 2 shows the percentage of people who are intolerant toward neighbors of different races (i.e. the higher the figure, the more intolerant people are toward their neighbors).

Table 2. Intolerance toward Neighbors of Different Races

	1992	1995-1996	1998-1999	2001	2005-2006	2010-2014
Bosnia-Herzegovina			0.245	0.132		
Croatia		0.084	0.195			
Slovenia	0.404	0.171	0.120		0.175	0.109
Macedonia			0.264	0.190		
Serbia-Montenegro*		0.153		0.122	0.191	

*2005-2006 figures refer to Serbia only.
Source: The data compiled by the author from the World Values Surveys (2018)

As can be seen from Table 2, people's intolerance toward different races in the same neighborhood shows ups-and-downs throughout years for the countries included in the dataset. The Bosnians and the Macedonians have diminishing rates of intolerance whereas the Croatians have increasing rates. The Serbians and Montenegrins together have decreasing rates from 1995-1996 to 2001. Yet, we observe a bigger value for the separate study about the Serbians in 2005-2006. The Slovenes have the richest time series data (5 out of 6 waves of surveys), in which a big intolerance rate of 0.404 in 1992 lowered down to values between 0.120 and 0.175, with a recent surge to 0.175 in the 2005-2006 wave and a later decrease in the latest wave. In sum, based on the latest figures for each country, Croats, Macedonians, and Serbs have the highest percentages of intolerance toward people of different races within their close vicinities such as their neighborhoods. In all of these 3 nations, approximately 19 percent of the people have mentioned that they do not want a neighbor of a different race.

In light of this table, we can conclude that there are still some people who are reluctant to live with a person of different race in the successor states of Yugoslavia. Yet, it would not be logical to infer that such intolerance will definitely turn out to be a new wave of ethnic conflict. Quite the contrary, inter-ethnic civic relations have made greater progress in recent years, especially at the grass roots than at the elite level.[76] Maybe, this bottom-up dialogue can be the glimmer of hope for the citizens of the successor states of Yugoslavia.

What does the Yugoslavian case tell us? What are the inferences to be drawn for the Political Behavior literature? It is evident that, with multiple factors at the fore, it is hard to fully disentangle the specific factors to explain political

phenomena such as the outbreak of ethnic conflict. At this point, micro-level analysis of ethnic conflict can help us further our understanding about ethnic conflicts throughout the world. Recent studies such as Humphreys and Weinstein[77] have proved illuminating with this regard. Yet, there is still room for improvement in ethnic conflict literature. There should be more scholarly works that bridge the micro-level motivations with macro-political structures. This paper should be seen as a further step toward fully understanding the motives behind ethnic conflict in diverse societies.

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