UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY: EXAMINATION OF ETHNIC CONFLICT WITHIN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, 1918-1991

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ABSTRACT

This is an examination of the relationship between the multiple ethnic groups within the former Yugoslavia leading up to the Yugoslav Civil Wars that began in 1991. Furthermore, international relations theory will be applied to specific events in the region’s history to provide a better understanding to how and why a violent outbreak in ethnic genocide broke out in 1991. This analysis will prove that Constructivist theory can best explain ethnic conflict because of its emphasis on the individual and the importance of the human relationships.
**Introduction: Discussion of IR Theory**

Theories can provide a theoretical understanding to certain situations, which facts alone cannot provide. Questions like, why do nations engage in conflict? Does an international system of multi-polarity, bipolarity, or uni-polarity provide a more secure or dangerous global atmosphere? How are passive and/or offensive actions interpreted between nation-states? International conflict can be difficult to explain with just facts alone; which is why we need the help from theories. Theories help provide some clarity to determine which facts are important and which are unimportant.\(^1\) The purpose of international relations (IR) theory is to help explain and understand events and phenomena in world politics, as well as provide the analysis of associated policies and practices. An IR theory sets out to help explain, understand, and predict events and phenomena in world politics.\(^2\)

The question is, can IR theories that explain interaction between nations be applied to explain interactions between ethnic groups within nations and can they explain why and how conflict between the groups occurs? The chief aim of this analysis is to go beyond conventional IR theory to explain the relationship and interaction between ethnic groups within a nation. In addition, I will argue that Constructivist theory can best describe why ethnic conflict occurs. I will apply Constructivism to the Yugoslav Civil Wars, to determine if Constructivism can best explain why and how the conflict occurred. Furthermore, the application of Constructivism will attempt to create a better understanding to why the conflict took place.

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\(^1\) Robert Jackson and George Sorenson, *Introduction to International Relations theories and Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2-6

\(^2\) Ibid.
I will begin by explaining Constructivist theory to give the reader an understanding to what I will be focusing on when the theory is applied to ethnic conflict. I decided to apply Constructivist theory to ethnic conflict because of its focus on the human awareness or consciousness.\(^3\) Furthermore, conflicts explained by Constructivists describe conflict as disagreements, disputes, misunderstandings or lack of communication between “conscious agents”.\(^4\) Constructivists further believe that conflict can occur because nations see conflict as inevitable rather than a possibility. With that said, are ethnic groups within nations anticipating conflict or anticipating the possibility of conflict? I will attempt to answer this question by applying Constructivist theory to ethnic disputes leading up to the beginning of Yugoslav Civil Wars.

The focus will be ethnic groups engaging in conflict from post-World War One to the events leading up to Yugoslav Civil Wars. Multiple examples will be used that will to test Constructivist theory and determine if it can explanation why ethnic conflict occurs. This will present an opportunity to determine whether Constructivist can best explain the reasoning of the conflict. I will apply Constructivist arguments to the examples to provide a clearer understanding of the theory, and to establish that Constructivist theory is best suited as an indicator to ethnic conflict. With this level of analysis, I hope to contribute a new understanding to why ethnic conflict occurs by applying IR theory.

**Constructivist Point of View:**

\(^3\) Robert Jackson, George Sorenson, *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2-6

\(^4\) Ibid.
Constructivist theory specifically focuses on the relationships between people on a social level. Furthermore, the theory focuses on human relations and their set of ideas and thoughts. An individual’s set of ideas and beliefs:

“Include a group of people’s notion of themselves as a nation or nationality, their conception of their country as a state, their notion of their state as independent or sovereign, their idea of themselves as different from other peoples in cultural or religious or historical terms, their sense of their history and traditions, their political convictions and prejudices and ideologies, their political institutions, and much else.”\(^5\)

Widely shared beliefs, interests, and ideas, create a common identity to certain groups. Alexander Wendt, a Constructivist theorist, described Constructivism as a structural theory of the international system with core claims that describes the state as the primary actor in the international system, the state system is inter-subjective rather than material, and lastly that the state’s interests and identities are important to a social structure.\(^6\) The identity and culture of the different groups is extremely important and can be difficult to change. In the event if an ethnic dispute turns violent, it can be very difficult to change the identity of the people involved. In Yugoslavia, the people had witnessed a plethora of violence due to their ethnic identity, once the killing starts the people will no longer identify themselves as Yugoslavian, but as a Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, or Albanian.

The social identity is important to nations because it determines their identity, which is what separates them from other nations. It is important to note that nations with different and in some cases conflicting identities can come into conflict. It is also important to note that

\(^5\) Ibid.

within ethnic conflict, it is in fact the conflicting identity(s) of ethnic groups that compel ethnic
groups to engage in irrational acts of violence, such as genocide. Within nations there can be
multiple ethnic groups, all wanting what is best for their “identity”. As mentioned before, this
can lead to conflict between ethnic groups.
Conflicting Ideas: Disagreements with a United Yugoslavia prior to World War Two

To fully understand the origin of the ethnic conflict that took place in the former Yugoslavia requires a complete understanding of the region. Tensions between the multiple ethnic groups within the region go back thousands of years. However, this analysis of ethnic conflict can best be conducted by explaining the origin of conflict prior to World War II. However, there must be a brief historical discussion prior to World War II to have some understanding of the history in Yugoslavia. The following explanation of early Yugoslav history will demonstrate that the rift between the ethnic groups is significant and vast. Furthermore, concluding the explanation of early Yugoslav history, it will become evident that the Yugoslav Civil War in 1991 was not a sudden outbreak of violence; it was a conflict that culminated from many years of ethnic disputes.

Foreign rule during the seventh and eight centuries generated religious differences between Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian nationalists. The Croatians are generally Roman Catholic, Serbians are Christian Orthodox, and many Bosnians of either Serbian or Croatian ancestry are Muslim. In late 1300, the Turks invaded the Balkans, and would control the region for over 500 years. In 1912 Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece formed an alliance to drive out the remaining Turkish presence from the region. The other countries in the Balkans formed alliances with other European countries during World War One. Serbia would join the allied forces to fight against Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Bulgarians; following the assassination

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of the Archduke of Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist, this led to Austria Hungry to declare war on Serbia.

On July 20, 1917, Yugoslav Committee members met in Crofu, an island off the west coast of Greece, reached a compromise to how the new Yugoslavia will look. The Corfu Declaration stated that the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were a single “tri-named” people, and the government would operate under a parliament and organized with a constitution.\(^8\) Furthermore, the declaration stated that the government would respect the equality of religions, alphabets and voting rights of the different ethnic groups.\(^9\)

In 1918, the boundaries of Europe were redrawn and “Yugoslavia” was born. Serbia, however, felt a sense of entitlement in the aftermath of World War One. Alexander, the Prince of Serbia, would lead a new country called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slavs.\(^10\) The new Yugoslav country would be divided by religion with the Catholics to the north and west and Orthodox to the east and south, with large Muslim populations in Bosnia and Macedonia.\(^11\) In the wake of World War One, Yugoslavia seemed to be moving in the right direction with the Corfu Declaration and the assertion that the “tri-named” people would be equal and their culture and identity would be unchanged. However, the Corfu Declaration sounded good in theory, but how would it work when practiced?

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\(^8\) David McKenzie, “Stojan Protic’s Final Decade and Serbian Radical Party,” *East European Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 228

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid.

The schism between the ethnic Croatians and the Serbian controlled government in Monarchist Yugoslavia began to increase shortly after 1918 and into the early 1920’s. Both ethnic groups had a different vision to how Yugoslavia should be. The Croatians wished for more autonomy under a federal system unlike the former rule under the Austrian Hungarian crown.\textsuperscript{12} Serbians argued that Yugoslavia should be an extension of a Serbian Kingdom. The two ethnic groups had a hard time accepting unification and the ideas of the other group. The unification of Yugoslavia was welcomed during the Paris Peace Conference to join the world as a nation. However, soon after the unification of Yugoslavia, it became evident that the people were not so quick to accept the idea of a “united” Yugoslavia. \textsuperscript{13} The ideas and identity of the different ethnic groups within Yugoslavia found it difficult to compromise, further deepening the divide between the groups.

The Croatians, traditional Catholics, peasants by trade, embraced republican ideals, and resented the monarchial government. The Slovenes wanted to establish regional autonomy, under clerical leadership, much like the one under the Habsburg monarchy from the old Holy Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{14} However, Serbia wanted to maintain their status at the top of the food chain. Serbian leadership dominated the political makeup of the region, creating a country that was built almost exclusively through the eyes of a Serbian. The Croatians represented a more democratic society, and were denied almost no representation in parliament due to the Serbian infringement of the Croatian people. Furthermore, the Serbian controlled government unfairly

\textsuperscript{12} Constitution of Union between Croatia-Slovenia and Hungary.


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
taxed the Slovenes and Croats under a fiscal legislation they essential had no say in.\textsuperscript{15} Michael Graham wrote an article in 1928 titled “Democracy in Yugoslavia”, stated “. . . the possibilities of conscious political understanding, particularly between Serbs and Croats, were predestined to be infinitely retarded. So long as the Serbian control of the government, tension between local populace and the Serbian administration was bound to exist.”\textsuperscript{16} The identity and culture of the ethnic groups conflicted with each other. In order for a united Yugoslavia to be possible, there must be equal representation of all the ethnic groups within government in order this unification to be remotely feasible.

The first elections took place in 1920. It was an exciting time for Yugoslavia because the elections were free for the first time in its history. The election resulted with the centralist parties gaining 290 seats and the federalists only gaining 101.\textsuperscript{17} When the Serbian controlled government proposed a new constitution, the opinions of the new structure differed greatly.\textsuperscript{18} The new constitution was voted on during the absence of the Croats and Slovenes, both groups were strongly opposed to the constitution. The Vidovdan Constitution went into effect in 1921 and would retain political control for the Serbian and Muslim parties.\textsuperscript{19} The drafting of the new constitution allowed the Serbian controlled government to increasingly centralize the

\textsuperscript{15} “The Dictatorship in Yugoslavia” pg 450-451

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} “Yugoslav Political Situation” pg. 13

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} “The Dictatorship in Yugoslavia” pg.453
governmental structure. This only added to the mounting tensions of the Croatian people who felt that their identity and culture were being oppressed by the Serbian controlled government.

Like a kettle of boiling water, the steam was beginning to build up to the point where it was going to blow. The steam started to boil over during the elections of 1925. The Serbians were led by a white-haired Nikolai Pashitch. He wanted a Greater Serbia – that is a strong central government for the whole nation. The Croatians, however, wanted a self government, people under the monarchy, and people outside of it as in independent republic. The two ethnic groups had a tough time finding any common ground. The leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Stefan Raditch, pushed for an independent republic of Croatia. Raditch was deeply concerned with the unification of Yugoslavia in 1918. He argued that the unification of Yugoslavia would lead to Serbian centralism. Prior to the 1925 elections, his party held 70 seats and was the proverbial thorn in the side of the Serbian controlled government. Raditch’s fears were realized when the Vidovdan Constitution went into effect in 1921, essentially giving the Serbians total control in government.

Before the 1925 elections, the Serbian party leader Nikolai Pashitch ordered the arrest of the Croatian party leader Stefan Raditch and several other members of the Peasant party. Pashitch would not allow a Croatian party to take over and push for a federative system. Even after a court ordered the release of Raditch, Pashitch was quick to conjure up some evidence to

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20 “The Dictatorship in Yugoslavia” pg.453-454


22 “Stafan Raditch” Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th edition (July 2010): pg.1
throw them back in jail. Pashitch, “who swore to fight rather than to yield to the federative
demands of his political enemies, ordered the dissolution of the Peasants’ Party. His celebrated
iron fist had descended.” Pashitch had descended upon the Croatian people and would stop at
nothing to retain his control in government.

As the elections took place in 1925, the Serbian majority terrorized the countryside forcibly
advising the voters how to vote – for the Serbian Government. The Serbian controlled
government continued to hammer down their oppressive might using military enforcement to
scare voters to maintain Serbian dominance in government. However, with as much
oppression the Serbians were using, there were only minimal results. The Serbian controlled
leadership only gained 30 additional seats; however, it was enough to establish a majority that
majority is therefore virtually 75. Once again Serbian methods have won another election; once
more the Government has scored a great victory; but, as formerly, at least half the electorate
remains hostile to Nikolai Pashitch and all he stands for.” Croatian political leader Stefan
Raditch refused to participate in a national parliament, this decision would allow Nikolai
Pashitch and the Serbian controlled government to implement a structure that would greatly
favor the Serbians.

After the elections in 1925, tensions would become almost insurmountable. In 1928
Croatian political leader Stefan Raditch was assassinated on the Parliamentary floor. Shortly

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24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.
thereafter the assassination, in 1929 King Alexander announced the dissolution of the original constitution that was established in 1921 and proclaimed himself King of Yugoslavia. The Parliament that had been established after the unification of Yugoslavia in 1918 had become completely inadequate due the ethnic divisions that plagued the region.\textsuperscript{26}

The ethnic divisions mainly between the Croatians and Serbians had grown violent and very oppressive by the hands of the Serbian leadership. The differences in identity and culture were partly to blame for the schism between the ethnic groups. However, what made the situation in Yugoslavia more volatile and unstable was the disagreement to how the governmental structure of Yugoslavia was going to adequately represent all the ethnic groups. Each ethnic group, like the Serbians and Croatians, had a different opinion to how the government should operate. The Serbians argued that they were entitled to more control of Yugoslavia and the Croatians felt cheated which fueled a nationalist movement during World War Two where the Croatians violently expressed their displeasure.

\textsuperscript{26} “Dictatorship in Yugoslavia” \textit{Advocate of Peace Through Justice} (1929) 91, No. 2: 77-78
Confliction Identities: Rise in Ethnic Nationalism

Following the assignation of King Alexander by Croatian nationalists, tensions reached a boiling point in the region during World War Two. Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini helped Croatian Nationalist Ante Pavelic establish an independent Croatian State after their joint attack on Yugoslavia in 1941. The Axis Powers had helped Ante Pavelic establish Croatia, who had been in exile in Italy since 1931, due to promises made to Italy for land in the Croatian territory. The Ustasha movement that was lead by Ante Pavelic and their goal was to ethnically cleanse their territory. This is another defining moment in Yugoslav history that led to the horrific 1991-1995 genocide in Yugoslavia.

Ante Pavelic, was a graduate from law school in 1918, and shortly after graduation he became active in the Croatian State Rights Party. In his first political speech in 1927, he called for all Croatian to unite pursue independence. Pavelic fled to Italy after King Alexander proclaimed himself dictator of Yugoslavia in 1929. While in Italy, he worked to convince the Italian government for assistance with Croatian independence by offering territory in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. With the help of the Italians, he founded a nationalist extremist

28 Ibid. 363-364
29 Ibid.363-373
group known as Ustasha. Pavelic implored all Croatians to push for independence, and not to recognize people who were not Croatian by descent.

The Ustasha’s goal was to separate Croatia from Yugoslavia and create its own independent Croatian state and unite all lands that were historically inhabited by Croats. Pavelic refused to accept a united Yugoslavia and stated that it was the right of the Croatians to own all territories that were inhabited by the Croats in the past. The Ustasha directed most of their animosity toward the Serbian people. Once Hitler and Mussolini gave Pavelic a Croatian nation state, formally on April 10, 1941, it was only a matter of time before he would strive to create a true Croatian nation.

With the help of the Axis powers, Croatia was given the wish that they had hoped for, independence. After the Croatian declaration of independence, the Ustasha and the Croatian people led mass executions and deportations of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. “Pavelic’s Ustasha during a four year reign killed over a half a million people.” The victims that were murdered during Ustasha’s reign of terror were mostly ethnic Serbs within Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Ustasha genocide of the Serbs, Jews and Gypsies were deliberate and carried out systematically. The goal of the terrorist organization was to ethnically cleanse the region of everyone other than Croatians and those who opposed Croatian rule.

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid 226-234.
The rise in ethnic nationalism on part of Croatians, culminated from early 1920 elections to the proclamation of King Alexander’s dictatorship. The leaders of the Ustasha movement, like Ante Pavelic, convinced the Croatian people to rid their countryside of the “godlessness” of the Serbian people and rid them of their rule. Furthermore, the Ustasha convinced the people that their movement was just because the Serbians were immoral and nonbelievers. Ante Pavelic promised a Croatian army that would cleanse their territory of the Serbian impurity. The provocation of ethnic cleansing by Ante Pavelic, led most of the established Croatian politicians to refuse the Pavelic leadership. Furthermore, it fueled the Serbian Nationalists, known as the Checkniks, to perpetrate ethnic cleansing against the Croats. The two groups engaged in a “holy war” with the hope of exterminated the other from the region.

The deep seeded hatred between the Croatians and the Serbians was enough to cripple the region that was in a constant state of violence. The conflicting identity of the people may have played a significant role in the violent history of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, people like Ante Pavelic rallied his ethnic Croatians around their identity to dispel the Serbian culture, and all who opposed Croatian rule. The schism between the two ethnic groups was deep and dark. This hatred was the driving force behind the ethnic violence that resulted in genocide. However, one man would attempt to unite all the ethnic groups under the banner of a united Yugoslavia. His

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
hopes would be to maintain the identity and culture of the different ethnic groups in order to keep Yugoslavia from coming apart at the seams.
Tito’s Rise to Power: The Creation of the Yugoslavian Identity

The rise of Josef Tito to leadership in a united Yugoslavia after World War Two, marked a time period where ethnic conflict between the groups who inhabited the Balkan region was nearly non-existence. Tito had faced the ethnic question during his reign. The religious and cultural differences within Yugoslavia were not widely shared. Constructivists would argue that beliefs must be widely shared to matter; the existential reality of a nation is marked by evidence of a widely held belief among a population that they collectively compose. It was clear that the beliefs were not widely shared and accepted, which created a volatile mix among ethnic groups leaving the potential for conflict likely. However, that didn’t stop Tito from trying to create the belief of a united Yugoslavia and a Yugoslavian identity.

Josef Tito was able to create a “united” belief for all of the inhabitants in Yugoslavia. Is it possible for an individual to create a new identity for a people that had a significantly violent past, and build a united population under a common banner of Yugoslavia? In this case, Josef Tito was able to establish a united Yugoslavia in a region where ethnic disputes had plagued the countryside. Constructivist theory will attempt to explain how an individual can influence the identity of the people by establishing a common direction for the all parties involved (ethnic groups).

Josip Broz was an ethnic Croatian who had fought with the Austria-Hungarians during World War One, and was captured by the Russia. Broz was forced to serve in the Red Army during the...
Russian Civil War from 1918 to 1920. Several years later, Josip Broz returned to Croatia and quickly established himself as a prominent political activist. In 1941, Broz emerged as the leader of the Yugoslav partisan resistance after the Axis powers had defeated and occupied Yugoslavia. Following the fall of Yugoslavia to the Axis Powers, Josip Broz changed his name to Josip Tito, and continued his campaign against the Axis aggression and the Serbian Resistance led by Draža Mihajlović. Tito had put together a large fighting force that would have the support of the Soviet Union and then later the United States and Great Britain.

In 1945, he defeated the Axis threat, as well as the Serbian resistance group, and in March of the same year was named leader of the Yugoslav Federal government. In order to preserve his presence as the sole leader of Yugoslavia, Tito executed Draža Mihajlović the leader of the Serbian resistance group, which gave him total control over the region with the absence a rising challenger to his control. With the absence of an opposition, Marshal Tito essentially ran unopposed in the November 1945 elections to which he received almost 80% of the vote; which gave him a major electoral victory and established himself as the new Communist leader of Yugoslavia. Like in 1918, the Yugoslav idea was encouraged and “reinvented” by Marshal Tito in 1945.

41 “Marshal Tito” Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th edition; 7/1/2010, p 1-2, pg. 2
42 Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2
43 Ibid.
44 “Living under the gun” Bosnia: The Struggle for Peace pg. 4
45 “Marshal Tito: Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, pg. 2
46 “Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds”, pg 7-13
Marshall Tito, “set up the government of Yugoslavia that existed until 1991 as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It was made up of six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.”47 Each of the republics had its own government that contributed to the federal government of Yugoslavia.48 Tito understood that the region contained multiple ethnic groups that contained immense hatred for each other, but he would have none of it. Tito saw Yugoslavia as one nation, and would not tolerate any animosity between one another. “His goal was to create one nation that was indivisible, at any cost.”49

One could argue that Marshall Tito, as a dictator, held Yugoslavia together. Marshal Tito did what the past leaders could not, and that was to create and establish a united Yugoslavia. Without Tito, Yugoslavia most likely would have fallen into a deep divide long before he took control. Even if Tito held the country together by “force”, he was determined to have a united Yugoslavia. During his rule, Tito sought to weaken the Serbian majority within the country. Tito turned Southern Serbia into the Republic of Macedonia, and transformed the tiny Serbian Kingdom of Montenegro into a separate “nation”, and created Kosovo and Vojvodina into separate federal units within Serbia.50 However, a large, mixed population of Croatians and Serbians inhabited the region between Serbia and Croatia; which created a difficult problem to solve for Tito.

47 “Living under the Gun” Bosnia: The Struggle for Peace.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 “Yugoslavia: Old War, New Hatred” 7-13
The problem lied within Bosnia. Tito recognized that both Croatians and Serbians had deep, historic claim to Bosnia. As a result, Tito stated that the future of a united Yugoslavia could be attained through cooperation with each ethnic group not in opposition.\(^\text{51}\) Tito’s vision was to create a multinational Yugoslavia, and through his efforts to divide up the country into separate regions is evident to his vision.\(^\text{52}\) Tito’s reasoning for splitting the country up into regions was to uphold the identity of the multiple ethnic groups and to maintain these identities by creating separate regions.\(^\text{53}\) Tito named himself dictator for life and held the country together until he died in 1980.\(^\text{54}\) With Tito’s forceful style of governance while keeping the ethnic groups within Yugoslavia “civil”, the country grew quite dependent on Tito. Furthermore, Tito allowed enough political and economical freedom within an independent Yugoslavia to be incredibly prosperous; and would become the most prosperous country in the Eastern Bloc Countries in Europe.\(^\text{55}\)

Tito had kept Yugoslavia in check with itself for many years, but after his death private enterprises were allowed to enter the country, which provided a power increase to the regions and its ethnic groups.\(^\text{56}\) This was the beginning of the end for Yugoslavia, once the republics had the taste for power; their appetite grew stronger for it. Ethnic groups particularly in Croatia and Slovenia started to quarrel over Serbian dominance in the federal government,

\(^\text{51}\) “Yugoslavia” New Worlds, Old Hatreds”, 12-13

\(^\text{52}\) Ibid. 13

\(^\text{53}\) Sil Narasingha, “Civil War Rages in Yugoslavia” Chronology of European History.

\(^\text{54}\) “Living under the gun” Bosnia: the Struggle for Peace

\(^\text{55}\) Sil Narasingha, “Civil War Rages in Yugoslavia”

\(^\text{56}\) Ibid.
which led to anti-Serbian protests. Yugoslavia not only had problems trying to keep the country together, economic problems also plagued the country, which led to the demise of the Communist Party and the encouragement of other political parties. Slovenia and Croatia took advantage of the uncertainty in Yugoslavia and declared their independence for Croatia in 1990 and Slovenia in 1991. Bosnia and Macedonia soon joined the independence movement.57

57 Ibid.
Culmination of Hatred: The Violent Result of Ethnic Dispute

The history of “Yugoslavia” has seen its fair share of conflict. It struggled to stay afloat amidst the hatred and the violence between the ethnic groups within the region. In 1918, when Yugoslavia was born, the ethnic groups, in particular the Croatians and the Serbians, found it difficult to agree upon the “right” direction of the newly founded country. To make matters worse, the Serbian dominated government abused its power to maintain atop the food chain. The Croatians took offense to the Serbian oppression and the Vidovdan Constitution, and were further “backed” into a corner when Prince Alexander, an ethnic Serb, declared himself King and dictator of Yugoslavia. During World War Two, the Croatians struck back violently through the Ustasha. After a genocide fueled by hatred by the hands of Croatian Nationalists, a man emerged from the rubble and united a country that had lost all hope for the future as Yugoslavia. However, after Tito’s death, ethnic disputes were renewed and reinvigorated. A little over thirty years of peace in Yugoslavia would quickly be erased and would soon turn dreadfully violent.

Immediately following the death of Marshal Tito in May 1980, a large cry among the population began to grow louder for fundamental change in the political and economic structure. In March of 1989 the newly elected Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Marković, implemented a series of reforms in economics and politics that seemed to have some success. By 1990, Yugoslavia seemed to be on the right track and a prime candidate to join the European

59 Ibid.
Community. It would only be a year later where a country that appeared to have re-stabilized and regained control, would fall into a passionately violent ethnic conflict. Ethnic groups within Yugoslavia like the Croatians and the Serbians, had such a deep seeded hatred for one another, it began to tear the country apart.

The Serbians viewed the Croatians as murderers and traitors because of their alliance with Nazi Germany in hopes of creating an independent Croatia, and the brutality the Ustasha enacted by killing thousands of Serbs. Furthermore, the Serbians had a growing discontent for the Albanians in Kosovo who outnumbered them almost nine to one.60 In addition to the Serbian hatred for the Croatians and Albanians, in turn the Croatians, Albanians, and Slovenes resented the Serbs and were fearful of the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. The Croats, Albans, and Slavs feared that Milosevic wanted to dominate all of Yugoslavia and create a Serbian dominated country.61

Furthermore, the religious differences within Yugoslavia only added to the rising tension. The Croatians and Slovenes were predominantly Roman Catholic, and the Serbians were Eastern Orthodox and despised the Muslim faith. The Albanians were Muslims and were calling for independence from Serbia before 1987. This created a dilemma for Milosevic and the Serbians because if they granted Kosovo’s independence and Albanians independence, they

61 Ibid.
would lose their most sacred Orthodox monasteries. This would not be tolerated by Milosevic and would make sure this would never happen.

The collapse of Communism only fueled the want of independence from the centralized government of Yugoslavia. In July 25, 1991 Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence. However, the President of Croatia Tudjman failed to recognize the amount of Serbs within Croatia. Thus, after the Croatia declaration of independence many Serbs within Croatia began to arm themselves and terrorize Croatia through terrorist acts. Furthermore, the Yugoslav People’s Army and Serbs responded to Croatia and Slovenia’s declaration by sending troops into Slovenia in July 1991. However, after a spirited fight, the Yugoslav People’s Army decided to pull back and concentrate its efforts solely on Croatia. Chief of Staff General Blagoje Adzic, a Serb whose family was murdered during the Ustasha genocide during World War Two, declared total war against the rebellious republics. Several attempts were made by the European Community and the United States to negotiate a cease-fire. However, the ethnic hatred had gone well past the point of return. All the world could do at this point is watch a country rip itself apart and witness terrible the atrocities of thousands of innocent people.

The hatred of one another had grown so strong and deep that the world would see the worst ethnic genocide since World War Two. Years before the outbreak of conflict, Tito’s most feared region was Bosnia because of the mixture of ethnic groups within the region. And

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62 Ibid.
63 “Civil War rages in Yugoslavia”
64 Ibid.
65 “Living Under the Gun”
years later, Tito’s fears would be fully realized through massacres and violence against children. The violence between 1991 and 1995 were terrible and brutal. During the ethnic conflict there was evidence to suggest that snipers were actually targeting children, particularly in Sarajevo. By December 1995, over 1500 children were killed in Sarajevo.\textsuperscript{66} To kill a child during a conflict can strike the heart of a society and attempt to breakdown the opposition.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
Conclusion: Application of Constructivist Arguments

Alexander Wendt described in his constructivist conception of social structures that there are three elements: shared knowledge, material sources, and practices. Social structures are defined, in part, by shared understandings, expectations, or knowledge. Marsh Tito sought to unit all backgrounds into one shared understanding, shared expectation, and shared knowledge, to form one nation-state regardless of the multiple ethnic groups because that’s in the best interest of the people of Yugoslavia. With the immense fragmentation between the regions, relationships soon became cloudy and uncertain, and tensions grew and no longer could be contained. This intense fragmentation between ethnic groups eventually sparked into a passionate conflict between the groups. The region contained ten different ethnic groups the three most notable and largest ethnic groups within Yugoslavia are the Serbians that hold the majority in the region with 63%, Albainians 14%, and Montenegrins 6%. The seer number of ethnic groups within the region is enough to set off a dispute.

Constructivists view the human element within an international system as an important element, and one that should not be ignored. This is where constructivists separate themselves from other IR theories like realism, because of their focus on the human element. “It is the ideas and beliefs behind physical entities which are most important.” The ideas and beliefs of the people that concieve physical elements such as alliances, territories, and armed forces are all put together by the ideas and beliefs of the people who inhabit the region. For

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example, the United States believes in democracy and organizes its government on the basis of that belief. Furthermore, the major alliances the United States has are in fact democracies, such as the UK, France, Germany, and the list goes on.

“The core ideational element up which constructivists focus on inter-subjective beliefs (and ideas, conceptions, and assumptions) that are widely shared among people. In IR such beliefs include a group of people’s notion of themselves as a nation or nationality. . . .” 69

Constructivists also explain that if these beliefs must be widely shared to be relevant. In the example with Yugoslavia, Marshal Tito implemented his belief of one nation that is indivisible and united. Even with the presence of multiple ethnic groups, Tito was able to maintain that belief and hold the country together. After his death, the status quo had changed and a cry for independence became widely shared causing a fracture within the country. The ethnic groups were turning to their own beliefs, such as religion, territory, and representation, and the united Yugoslavia that Tito built was destroyed because of the differing beliefs.

Constructivists argue that inter-subjectivity only goes so far. “Shared beliefs constitute and express the interests and identities of certain people. . . like what it means to be Serbian, Croatian, or Slovenian, national identities are constituted by distinctive inter-subjective beliefs. . . .” 70 Back to the Yugoslavia example, while under the banner of unity the identities of the individuals were overlapped with a “Yugoslavian” identity, but once the country fell the ethnic groups began to rally around their own beliefs and ideas which created the conflict.

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Constructivism examines and incorporates the human element within the theory. Based upon the research of the ethnic situation in Yugoslavia I would argue that collectivism is the best fit for ethnic conflict because of the theory’s incorporation of the human element and the ideas and beliefs of human nature. Alexander Wendt argued, “anarchy is what you make”, and in this case, I believe that to be true.71 Because in Yugoslavia, anarchy was what the people made, they remained a united Yugoslavia for a number of years, but when the system started to collapse, the ethnic groups brought the system down and dissolved Yugoslavia and fell into ethnic conflict.

The violence between the ethnic groups within the former Yugoslavia was due to their inability to cooperate and acknowledge the identity and the culture of the other groups. Furthermore, an individual like Marshal Tito was able to maintain the multiple cultures and identities and create a peaceful environment. However, when he died in 1980, Yugoslavia lacked the leadership and the direction that Marshal Tito had done for many years led to the outbreak of the Yugoslav Civil Wars in 1991. Constructivist theory explains how important the culture, identity, and the individual is to the explanation of conflict. And within the former Yugoslavia, an individual like Ante Pavelic was able to rouse the Croatians to engage in an ethnic cleansing. Conversely, Marshal Tito was able to create an environment that enabled the multiple cultures and identities to live under a united culture without changing the culture of the individual. Constructivist Theory is the best international relations theory to explain ethnic conflict, because of its emphasis on the importance of the culture and identity of people and how significant that is to the reasons to the outbreak of an ethnic conflict.

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