THE RISE, DECLINE, SHALLOWNESS, AND BANALITY OF MILITANT NATIONALISM IN EUROPE: HOBBES, THUGS, "ETHNIC CONFLICT," AND THE FUTURE OF WARFARE

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August 11, 1999

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ABSTRACT

Most European nationalism is not of the militant variety, does not necessarily imply violence, and may actually be helpful in the process of development and change.

The apparent rise of militant nationalism in Europe in the early 1990s was not a harbinger, but rather something of a historical blip. Moreover, it was often quite shallow, even in Yugoslavia, and its effects were exaggerated by some peculiarities of early experiments with democracy in the area.

The most destructive expression of militant nationalism in Europe--that which took place in Yugoslavia--was not spawned so much by the convulsive surging of ancient hatreds or by the crafty manipulations of demagogic politicians and the media: indeed, when finally given a chance to express such hatreds in government-sanctioned violence, ordinary soldiers deserted en masse. Rather, the destruction was largely carried out by small bands of opportunistic thugs and criminals operating in a sort of anarchic situation. In this, nationalism was often more of an ordering device than a viscerally motivating force.

Because the violence in Yugoslavia was chiefly carried out by small, opportunistic, and essentially cowardly bands of thugs and bullies, policing the situation would probably have been fairly easy for almost any organized, disciplined, and sizeable army. However, an overestimate of the military difficulties, a misguided assumption that the wars stemmed from ancient and immutable ethnic hatreds, and an extreme aversion to casualties made international military intervention essentially impossible until the violence appeared to have run its course.

In a state of nature people do not descend into the war of all against all Hobbes depicted, and the notion of "ethnic warfare," insofar as it connotes a conflict of all against all and neighbor against neighbor, is similarly misguided. Instead, it is a condition in which a mass of essentially mild, ordinary, and quite normal people can unwillingly and bewilderedly come under the vicious and arbitrary control of a small group of thugs with guns.

The developments in the Balkans are not special to the area, but could come about almost anywhere under appropriate conditions.

Irregular warfare has not become newly invented or invigorated. Rather, because conventional warfare has retreated in frequency and significance, residual irregular war has seemed to rise in prominence.

Teško narodu kad pametni ucute, budale progovore, a fukare se obogate.

It is difficult for the people when the smart keep quiet, fools speak out, and thugs get rich.

--Bosnian expression[1]

After the collapse of Communism in Europe at the end of the 1980s, there were loud and persistent cries of alarm at what appeared to be a surge of murderous militant nationalism in Europe. The most common conclusion was that this elemental force had only temporarily and superficially been kept in check by Communism and that, with the demise of that suppressing force, militant nationalism was in the process of burgeoning in a most destructive manner.

Of central concern were the violent conflicts in Yugoslavia. These have very often been attributed to the widespread and nearly spontaneous eruption of ancient national and ethnic hatreds. This perspective has been developed most famously and influentially by the fashionable travel writer and congenital doomsayer, Robert Kaplan, who portentously described the Balkans as "a region of pure memory" where "each individual sensation and memory affects the grand movement of clashing peoples" and where the processes of history and memory were "kept on hold" by Communism for 45 years "thereby creating a kind of multiplier effect for violence" (1993b).[2] Others extrapolated this perspective to other post-Communist areas in Europe as militant nationalists achieved a degree of electoral success in the region.

This paper takes a different view. It is in six parts.

I argue, first, that most European nationalism is not of the militant variety, that national and ethnic hatreds do not necessarily imply violence, and that, for the most part, nationalism may actually be helpful in the process of development and change in eastern and central Europe.

Second, the apparent rise of militant nationalism in Europe in the early 1990s was not a harbinger of things to come at all. Rather than representing a wave of the future, it seems to have been mainly something of a historical blip.

Third, the militant nationalism that seemed to surge in the early 1990s was often quite shallow and unrepresentative, even in Yugoslavia. Its effects were exaggerated for a while by some electoral distortions and other peculiarities of early experiments with democracy in the area.

Fourth, the most destructive expression of militant nationalism in Europe--that which took place in Yugoslavia--was spawned not so much by the convulsive surging of ancient hatreds or by the crafty manipulations of demagogic politicians and the media as by the vicious ministrations of small bands of opportunistic thugs and criminals operating in a sort of anarchic situation. In Yugoslavia, many of these were specifically released from prison for the purpose because the Yugoslav army, despite years of supposedly influential nationalist propaganda and centuries of supposedly pent-up ethnic hatreds, substantially disintegrated early in the war and refused to fight.

In this process, nationalism was often more of an ordering device than a viscerally motivating

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[1] Cohen 1998, 297.

[2] See also Kaplan 1991 and 1993a, and, for his more recent doomsaying, now focused, with due agility, on Africa, Kaplan 1994. For a devastating critique of the argument, see Malcolm 1993 as well as Gagnon 1994/95, 133-34; Hardin 1995, ch. 6; Sadowski 1998; Hall 1996, 83. Some indication of Kaplan's prescience can be garnered from an early article on the only area of the former Yugoslavia that has <u>not</u> thus far experienced significant violence: "Macedonia is once again poised to erupt. Never in half a century has there been so much anger in Macedonia, as its people wake up from a Communist-imposed sleep...Unable to stand on its own, like its more populous and historically grounded neighbor Serbia, Macedonia could implode under the pressures of Albanian nationalism from the west and Bulgarian nationalism from the east. And this is to say nothing of the pressures of Greek nationalism from the south....The various popular convulsions in the Balkans are inexorably converging on Macedonia...It is a tragic yet fascinating development. Rarely has the very process of history been so transparent and cyclical" (1991, 104). Even later, when war had sprung up not in Macedonia, but in Croatia and Bosnia, Kaplan continued to see Macedonia as "ground zero for the coming century of culture clash" (1993c, 15). Inspired by such wisdom, applications of the now-popular notion of "preventative diplomacy" would have concentrated on exactly the wrong place in the early 1990s.

force. A common mechanism seems to have been the following. A group of well-armed thugs would arrive or become banded together in a community in which civil order had ceased to exist. As the only group willing--indeed, sometimes quite eager--to use force, they would quickly take control. Members of the other ethnic group would be subject to violent intimidation at best, atrocities at worst, and they would quickly leave the area in despair and misery usually to areas protected by their own ethnic thugs and perhaps to join them to seek revenge. Any co-ethnics who might oppose the thugs' behavior would be subject to even more focussed violence and intimidation and would either be forced out, killed, or cowed into subservience.

The thugs in charge often exercised absolute or supreme power in their various fiefdoms, and carnivals of often-drunken looting and destruction would take place, as would orgies of rape and gratuitous violence. Additionally, various adventurers, mercenaries, and revenge-seekers might join and so might some of those who find exhilaration, excitement, comradeship, clarity, material profit, and theatricality in war and in its terrifying, awesome destructiveness.

Gradually, however, many of the people under the thugs' arbitrary and chaotic "protection," especially the more moderate ones and young men unwilling to be impressed, sought to emigrate to safer places. In time, the size of the "protected" group was often substantially reduced--by half or more--with the increasingly impoverished remnants heavily composed of fanatics, economic marauders, militant radicals, monsters, criminals, opportunistic sycophants, embittered revenge-seekers, and murderous drunks. In all this, nationalism is not so much the impelling force as simply the characteristic around which the thugs happen to have arrayed themselves.

Fifth, because the violence in Yugoslavia was chiefly carried out by small, opportunistic, and essentially cowardly bands of thugs and bullies, policing the situation would probably have been fairly easy for almost any organized, disciplined, and sizeable army. However, an overestimate of the military difficulties, a misguided assumption that the wars stemmed from immortal and immutable ancient ethnic hatreds, and an extreme aversion to casualties made international military intervention essentially impossible until the violence appeared to have run its course.

The sixth section explores some implications of these arguments. It looks at the 1999 war in Kosovo and finds a number of similarities with the previous conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. It also argues that in a state of nature people do not descend into the war of all against all Hobbes depicted. Moreover, the notion of "ethnic warfare," insofar as it connotes a conflict of all against all and neighbor against neighbor, is, like Hobbes' naive depiction of the state of nature, profoundly misguided. Ethnic warfare is much more like ordinary warfare: a condition in which the actual fighting is carried out by a very small group of people while the vast bulk of the people may variously render at most tacit support and sympathy. That is, the state of nature and ethnic warfare seem substantially to be a condition in which a mass of essentially mild, ordinary, and quite normal people can unwillingly and bewilderedly come under the vicious and arbitrary control of a small group of thugs with guns. The extension of such Hobbesian notions to the international arena is in similar error.

What happened in the Balkans is by no means peculiar to that area, but could happen just about anywhere under the appropriate conditions. And finally, it does not seem that irregular warfare has become newly invented or newly invigorated as some have argued. Rather, because conventional warfare has retreated in frequency and significance, residual irregular war has seemed to rise in prominence.

<u>1. Militant and non-militant nationalism</u>

Nationalism seems still to be quite robust in Europe--east or west. Few national differences are currently being expressed in violence, in threats of violence, or in once-fashionable messianic visions about changing the world to reflect the national perspective (see Howard 1991, chs. 2, 4). However, this does not necessarily mean Europeans are notably less nationalistic than they were in the 1920s or the 1890s.

I doubt that the British (many of whom were distinctly unamused by the prospect of the new Channel tunnel) esteem the French any more or less than in days of yore. Italians, I suspect, do not think of themselves less as Italians. Closer economic relations in Europe seem principally to suggest that it has finally dawned on those countries that there is benefit in economic cooperation, not that Europeans love

each other any more or that they identify themselves more now as Europeans. In the end, German unification was a spectacular (and peaceful) triumph of national desire: if German nationalism had been truly dampened, one might have expected two Germanys to have emerged when the Soviets left, but instead the general conclusion was that an independent East Germany made no sense, and the Germans rushed into each other's arms.

Nationalism can still have its unpleasant side. For example, I have found in Norway that it is remarkably easy to get urbane, well-educated Norwegians to say some really quite nasty things about the Swedes. And the legendarily tolerant Dutch seem to be quite capable of delivering racial slurs against Germans: "They're fat, ugly, and eat too much;" "They're just so full of themselves" (Kinzer 1995a). But that kind of nationalism--indeed, national hatred--does not seem likely to lead to armed conflict.

Because nationalism, or an extreme version of it, was a cause of both World Wars in Europe, a concern about it is certainly reasonable (see, for example, Mearsheimer 1990, Van Evera 1990/91). Nationalism can indeed lead to war and turmoil, but as the recent experience in western Europe suggests, it does not have to be eradicated for peace and progress to prevail. France and Germany today do not by any means agree about everything but, shattering the pattern of the century previous to 1945, they no longer even conceive of using war or the threat of war to resolve their disagreements.[3]

With the possible exception of attitudes toward Gypsies (or Roma), the various ethnic or national groups in Europe probably get along at least as well as whites and blacks do in the United States.[4] Indeed, if intermarriage rates are taken as indicative, they often get along quite a bit better: by 1993 some 12 percent of American blacks married white partners (Steven Holmes 1996), but around 29 percent of the Serbs in pre-breakup Croatia married Croats (Gagnon 1994, 130-31). And in Sarajevo, as Christopher Bennett notes, "it was almost impossible to find someone without relatives from a different ethnic background" (1995, 192): since 1945, 30 to 40 percent of urban marriages in Bosnia were mixed (Donia and Fine 1994, 9).

On balance, in fact, nationalism could well prove to be a constructive force. It has aided the difficult and painful process of unification in Germany, for example, and it has probably helped strengthen Poland's remarkable political and economic development of the 1990s.

Consequently, it is important to distinguish common, ordinary, knee-jerk, and sometimes hateful nationalism--no matter how unpleasant and politically incorrect its expression may often be--from the kind that expresses itself in violence. National hatreds are not the issue: it is the comparatively rare militant nationalism--violent ultra-nationalism or extreme nationalism or hyper-nationalism--that presents the problem.[5]

2. Militant nationalism as a historical blip

As has been shown in Yugoslavia, militant nationalism can endanger peace and tranquility, and, duly impressed by this example, some analysts have come to argue that "conflicts among nations and ethnic groups are escalating" (Huntington 1993a, 71), that such conflicts are "now engulfing the world" (Kober 1993, 82), that "there is a virtual epidemic of armed civil or intranational conflict" (Hamburg 1993), and that the "breakdown of restraints" seen in Yugoslavia is part of "a global trend" (Job 1993, 71; see also Moynihan 1993; Huntington 1993b, 1993c; Brzezinski 1993; Van Evera 1994, 36).

But such wars and conflicts have not increased in number or intensity in the 1990s (Sadowski 1998, ch. 9). Rather, what is impressive is that some of them have shockingly taken place in Europe, an

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[3] On the importance of such developments, see Mueller 1989 and Mueller 1995a, ch. 9.

[4] On the Roma issue, see Barany 1998. The attitude toward Gypsies in Europe often resembles the attitude that once prevailed in the U.S. toward American Indians.

[5] For the argument that ethnic violence is actually exceedingly rare given all the opportunities for it to occur around the world, see Fearon and Laitin 1996, 716-17. On extensive preconditions necessary for ethnic war to come about, see Kaufman 1996.

area that had previously been essentially free from substantial civil warfare for nearly half a century.[6] However, militant nationalism in central and eastern Europe does not seem to be the increasing problem that the alarmist literature envisions. Rather, it may well already have had its day and may now be in remission in most areas.

Hypernationalists (and even some that are not so hyper) who sometimes appeared threateningly formidable at the polls in the early 1990s, have been reduced in many places in elections to the point of extinguishment, particularly in Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary (Karatnycky 1997). In the last presidential election in Poland, for example, the candidate who could most nearly be labelled a militant nationalist garnered four one-hundredths of one percent of the vote; and populist, antiestablishment parties that had achieved some 14 percent in 1990 had been reduced to one percent by 1995. In Russia the Zhirinovsky presence has faded in significance as has that of Funar in Romania.[7] Eventually, a similar development took place even in Serbia where a proposed policy in 1995 of essentially cutting off the Bosnian Serbs found few public opponents (Spolar 1995a). Hypernationalism is dangerous only if it has real demagogic appeal. It may have had some for a while, but not, it seems, any longer.

It is not that Slovaks or whoever have suddenly fallen in love with Hungarians or whomever, but simply that they are being motivated far more by economic and other issues. It may be rather like the "family values" balloon the Republicans tried to launch in the United States in the presidential campaign of 1992: some people may have agreed with their perspective on this issue, but they mainly wanted to hear about jobs and the recession. Thus in the Hungarian election of 1994, politicians found that calls to help Hungarians in other counties were ineffective with a troubled electorate which responded, "What about the Hungarians within Hungary?" While ethnic and national hostility--even hatred--may persist, militant nationalists have lost support because they have little or no coherent answer or program in response to such sensible, if rather mundane, queries. And of course, one reason they have often done so badly at the polls of late is exactly the disastrous Yugoslav example which shows what their policy can lead to.

In some cases, as in the former Yugoslavia, outsiders sought to enflame nationalist tensions in a nearby country or area (see Gagnon 1994, Gagnon 1994/95). But this does not seem to be the wave of the future. Ellen Gordon and Luan Troxel note that Turkey, concerned about the condition of Turks within Bulgaria, opened its borders to Bulgarian Turks in 1989--but then soon closed them again when the new immigrants caused so many problems. Thus, they find, "Turkey, while being supportive of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, has little interest in inflaming internal ethnic relations in Bulgaria." Poland, they also note, has come to a similar conclusion with respect to the Polish minority in Lithuania (1995; see also Ganev 1997). Similarly, as Stephen Holmes observes, Moscow, contrary to fears prominently expressed only a few years ago, "has done absolutely nothing for extraterritorial Russians" (1996, 42).[8]

The casual notion that each ethnic or national group is united in deep ties of affection is deeply flawed (see also Bowen 1996; Sadowski 1998, 78-80). For example, established, urbanized Serbs in the Vojvodina area of Serbia frequently got along much better with their ethnic Hungarian neighbors than they did with rural Serbs who had recently emigrated there. Indeed, as Christopher Bennett argues, in profound contrast with Kaplan, after World War II the "great divide within Yugoslav society was increasingly that between rural and urban communities, not that between peoples" (1995, 63, 211; see also Woodward 1995, 238, 241; Ignatieff 1993, 4). And, in fact, Serbs in Serbia have often been able to contain their affection for the desperate and often rough rural Serbs who have fled to their country from war-torn Croatia and

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[6] Mueller 1994b; 1995a, 16-18; Sadowski 1998.

[7] For an example of the impassioned gloom once caused by the Zhirinovsky success, see Shabad 1995. See also Gagnon 1994/95, 166.

[8] In this regard, there has also been quite a bit of talk (mostly coming from Serbs and Greeks) about potential dangers arising from a desire in Tirana for a "greater Albania" (an oxymoronic concept if there ever was one). Although the recent violence in Kosovo may have changed things, the Albanian government, while concerned about Albanians elsewhere, is hardly hurting for additional problems, and it likes to point out that most Albanians rather resent the uppity and socially distant Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia and have little desire to combine countries with (and, potentially to be dominated by) them (Economist, 21 May 1994, 56-57; Judah 1997, 307-8).

Bosnia (Spolar 1995b; Woodward 1995, 364; Kinzer 1995c). As Roger Cohen points out, "the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia had scant shared culture with the people of Serbia" who "tended to view the Bosnian and Krajina Serbs as hicks, the refugees pouring in as a tide of flotsam from the boondocks" (1998, 296).[9]

Under the right (or wrong) circumstances trends could reverse, of course, but for now militant nationalism seems distinctly to be losing appeal. As Stephen Holmes has recently observed, "the most underreported event of the past years may be the <u>failed emergence</u> of extremist politics in almost all of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union....[E]xtremist parties have proved to be trees without roots" (1996, 33-34; emphasis in the original).

If this notion is correct, Yugoslavia is doubly tragic. If the Serbs could have held their cool in the face of regimes in Croatia and Bosnia that they had (some) reason to feel would persecute them, the threatening regimes might now have been quite adequately mellowed by the trends of the time.[10] Of less concern, it seems likely that the split of Czechoslovakia might never have happened if the issue had been debated longer.

<div align="center">3. The shallowness of militant nationalism</div>

Actually, the support for militant nationalism may not have been all that deep in Europe even at the time of its maximum notice and effect in the early 1990s.

The rise of some militant nationalists at that time stemmed not so much from their wide appeal as from their ability favorably to manipulate the system and from the disarray of their opposition. Zhirinovsky's surprise success in the 1993 elections in Russia was substantially the result of his party's sophistication in using television. Although not a militant nationalist, the populist and often demagogic Vladimir Meciar succeeded in Slovakia for several years mainly because of his agile ability to manipulate issues and to inspire his ardent, hard-working supporters, and because of the often rather remarkable incompetence of his opposition.

In their key victories in 1990, Franjo Tudjman's nationalists in Croatia massively out-spent the poorly-organized opposition using funds contributed by well-heeled militants in the Croatian diaspora--particularly in North America (Woodward 1995, 119, 229; Bennett 1995, 199; L. Cohen 1995, 95; Cviic 1996, 206; Tanner 1997, 222; Binder 1998). And their electoral success was vastly exaggerated by an electoral system, foolishly designed by the outgoing Communists, that handed Tudjman's party 69 percent of the seats with only 42 percent of the vote (Bennett 1995, 127; Woodward 1995, 117-19; Silber and Little 1997, 90; L. Cohen 1995, 99-100; Cviic 1996, 207). In the same election, less than a quarter of the Serbs in Croatia voted for their nationalist party (Gagnon 1994/95, 155; Bennett 1995, 127).[11] The same sort of distortions, though to a somewhat lesser degree, took place in the elections in Bosnia (Burg and Shoup 1999, 50-51, 57).

In early elections in Serbia itself, Slobodan Miloševic controlled the media and essentially bought the vote by illegally using public funds, hardly a sign of enormous appeal--and an act that was foolhardy as well since it very much accelerated the breakup of the country (Gagnon 1994/95, 154; Bennett 1995, 121; Hall 1994, 48; Woodward 1995, 130, 448-49; Dinkic 1995, 30, 61-66; see also Judah 1997, 260). Moreover, like Tudjman in Croatia, his comparatively well organized and widely based party had an enormous advantage under the election rules. Although it garnered less than half the vote, it gained 78 percent of the seats (L. Cohen 1995, 158). His advantage was further enhanced by the fact that Kosovo

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[9] Interestingly, in his discussion of the Bosnian war, Peter Maass observes that "to a surprising extent, this was a war of poor rural Serbs against wealthier urban Muslims, a <u>Deliverance</u> scenario" (1996, 159). Donia and Fine note that it was the "relatively uneducated armed hillsmen, with a hostility toward urban culture and the state institutions (including taxes) that go with it" who proved "susceptible to Serbian chauvinist propaganda," "allowed themselves to be recruited into Serb paramilitary units," and formed a significant portion of those shelling Bosnia's cities (1994, 28). See also Woodward 1995, 238; Laitin 1995.

[10] On this issue more broadly, see Mueller 1995c, Mueller 1996b, Mueller 1999, ch. 7.

[11] Somewhat similarly, a large portion of those Serbs in Bosnia who lived outside areas controlled by Serb nationalists voted with the Muslims for independence from Serbia in a 1992 referendum (Gagnon 1994/95, 163).

Albanians boycotted the election allowing Milošević's party to win the area (Woodward 1995, 121).

A poll conducted throughout Yugoslavia in the summer and autumn of 1990, even as nationalists were apparently triumphing in elections, may more adequately indicate the state of opinion after centuries of supposed ethnic hatreds and after years of nationalist propaganda (Sekelj 1993, 277):

Do you agree that every (Yugoslav) nation would have a national state of its own?

Completely agree	16%
Agree to some extent	7
Undecided	10
Do not agree in part	6
Do not agree at all	61

The split of Czechoslovakia was sometimes taken to have been the triumph of (a more benign form of) nationalism. However, polls from the period clearly demonstrate that a breakup of the country--even a peaceful one--was not favored by a majority of either of the Czechs or the Slovaks.

At times, particularly in Serbia during the rise of Milošević, militant nationalists have been able to put together huge public demonstrations, and this has often been taken to suggest their popular appeal. But in general it is unwise to take large, noisy crowds--which clearly are heavily self-selected--to represent public opinion more generally. Thus, since anti-Vietnam demonstrators in the 1960s in the United States were predominantly young, most commentators came to hold that young people were more opposed to the war than older people; yet poll data clearly show the opposite to have been the case (Mueller 1973, 136-40).

A vivid example of the disconnection between crowd appeal and general public opinion derives from the experience of Republican orators in the United States in the 1990s. Searching for issues that would turn crowds on, Robert Dole and other Republicans found, in the wake of a peace-keeping disaster in Somalia in which 18 American soldiers were killed in a single day, that they could get a big reaction from faithful Republican crowds when they condemned the United Nations, blamed it for the disaster, and sternly pledged that U.S. troops would nevermore be put under UN command.[12] Subsequently, the notion that no U.S. forces should work directly under UN command became one of the propositions of the "Contract with America" that the Republicans extolled during their successful 1994 campaign. One might have concluded from all this clamorous, crowd-pleasing rhetoric that approval of the UN was in notable decline in the United States. Yet poll data show that there has been virtually no change in American attitudes toward the organization (Murray, Klarevas, and Hartley 1997; Mueller 1996a).[13]

Moreover, much of the crowd behavior in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was substantially manipulated--Milošević's party often rented mobs by supplying free food, transportation, and liquor (Bennett 1995, 98). And if crowd behavior is to be taken as indicative of wider attitudes, it should be pointed out that even the poorly-organized opposition was able to mount massive demonstrations in 1991 and 1992 in Zagreb, Belgrade (Gagnon 1994/95, 157-58; Silber and Little 1997, ch. 9; Judah 1997, 174; Sudetic 1998, 85), and Sarajevo (Judah 1997, 211; Donia and Fine 1994, 1). In the latter two cases, these demonstrations were broken up by armed force.

4. Armed thugs and the banality of "ethnic warfare" in Yugoslavia

It is commonly proposed, following Robert Kaplan, that the main brutalities in Yugoslavia

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[12] See Dole 1995, 37. This is a considerable distortion of what happened in Somalia. U.S. troops were under their own command and merely coordinated their actions with the UN--and when they did so, they reported to an American officer at the UN (see Gordon and Friedman 1993).

[13] Indeed, although it was taken by Republicans to have been what the 1994 election was all about, the Contract itself does not seem to have arrested the attention of the American people: a month after the election a national poll found that 72 percent of the public claimed never to have heard or read anything about the highly-touted Contract (CBS News/New York Times Poll release, 14 December 1994), and even four months later, after endless publicity over its varying political fortunes, that number had not changed (Toner 1995).

stemmed from the eruption of previously-suppressed ancient ethnic hatreds or from "a toxic brew of distrust and suspicion that can explode into murderous violence" (Lake and Rothchild 1996, 42). Or, relatedly, it is frequently argued that the violence sprang from reaction to continuous nationalist propaganda spewed out by politicians and the media, particularly on Serbian television, that played on old fears and hatreds: as a Belgrade journalist put it to an American audience, "You must imagine a United States with every little TV station everywhere taking exactly the same editorial line--a line dictated by David Duke. You too would have war in five years" (quoted, Malcolm 1994, 252; on this argument, see, for example, Bennett 1995, viii, 10, 242; Zimmermann 1996, 120-22; Cviic 1993, 82; Snyder and Ballentine 1996, 25-30; Ignatieff 1993, 3; Bakic 1994; Malcolm 1998b; Judah 1997, 285, 309; Maass 1996, 227).

Tim Judah tries to put these two explanations together (199, 309):

Was the war about 'ancient hatreds' or was it simply the manipulation of whole populations whipped up into a frenzy of nationalism by evil politicians for whom standing your ground was more important than the fate of millions? The answer is that the politicians could not have succeeded if there had been no ember to fan.

It seems, however, that the violence--if not necessarily the hatred--principally emerged from the actions of newly-empowered and unpoliced thugs. Politicians may have started the wars, and they may have been able to whip up a fair amount of hatred. But, to a substantial degree, thugs carried the wars out. They comprised the effective murderous core of the wars, not hordes of ordinary citizens ripped loose from their repressions or incited into violence against their neighbors by devious politicians and television propagandists.

It is a fact of very considerable significance that the Serbian (or Yugoslav) army rather substantially disintegrated early in the hostilities. That is, despite years of supposedly influential media propaganda and despite centuries of supposedly pent-up, ethnic hatreds, ordinary Serb soldiers, when finally given an opportunity to express these presumed proclivities, to relieve these presumed ethnic tensions, and/or to act in response to the ingenious televised imprecations in government-sanctioned violence, professed they did not know why they were fighting and often mutinied or deserted en masse (Cigar 1993, 317-19; Woodward 1995, 238; Bennett 1995, 167; Vulliamy 1994, 19; Vasic 1996, 128; Burg and Shoup 1999, 51; Gagnon 1994/95, 162; Silber and Little 1997, 177; Tanner 1997, 269; Judah 1997, 185, 189). Meanwhile, back in Serbia itself, young men mainly reacted by determined draft-dodging. Some 150,000 or more quickly emigrated or went underground (Udovicki and Cerovic 1995; Sikavica 1995, 138). In one city, only two of the 2,000-3,000 "volunteers" expected in a call up showed up (Cigar 1993, 315), and in several towns there were virtual mutinies against conscription (Tanner 1997, 270; Judah 1997, 185). Overall, only 50 percent of Serbian reservists and only 15 percent in Belgrade obeyed orders to report for duty (Burg and Shoup 1999, 51; see also Silber and Little 1997, 177; Gagnon 1994/95, 162).

Particularly after hostilities stabilized in Bosnia, remnants of the Yugoslav army would sometimes occupy themselves by lobbing shells from a safe distance at targets like Sarajevo (Vulliamy 1994, 45-46; Bennett 1995, 167, 190; Vasic 1996, 128-29), and with such tactics they could, at low cost to themselves, sometimes hold territory against their lightly-armed Croatian and Bosnian opponents and facilitate the work of the paramilitaries (Cigar 1993, 317; UN Experts 1994, para. 105).

However, as Steven Burg and Paul Shoup observe, "the fact that Serbs from Serbia proper were unwilling to fight outside their own republic became a major factor shaping Belgrade's strategy and goals in the war in Croatia and, later, Bosnia" (1999, 84). Or, as a Serbian General put it, modification of the military plans was made necessary by "the lack of success in mobilisation and the desertion rate" (Tanner 1997, 269; see also UN Experts 1994, para. 29).

Part of the solution involved arming the locals, particularly in Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia (Burg and Shoup 1999, 130; Judah 1997, 170-72, 192-95). But in general the fighting quality of the militaries, especially initially, was very poor: there was a lack of discipline, ineffective command and control, and, especially in the case of the Serbs, a reluctance to take casualties. These deficiencies, as Burg and Shoup observe, "led all sides to rely on irregulars and special units" (1999, 137). There were at least

83 of these groups operating in Croatia and Bosnia, 56 Serb, 13 Croat, and 14 Muslim, comprising some 36,000 to 66,000 members (UN Experts 1994, para. 14).

The most dynamic (and murderous) Serbian units, then, were notably composed not of committed nationalists or ideologues, nor of locals out to get their neighbors, nor of ordinary people whipped into a frenzy by demagogues and the media, but of criminals--plain, ordinary, common criminals, most of them imported. Because the army could not be relied upon, underworld groups were urged to get into the action, and it appears that thousands of prisoners were released for the war effort; they were promised their sentences would be cut and that they could "take whatever booty you can" (Borger 1997b; Cohen 1998, 192, 410-411; UN Experts 1994, para. 3, 30; Firestone 1993; see also Woodward 1995, 238, 249, 265; Vasic 1996, 128; Udovicki and Cerovic 1995; Ignatieff 1997, 132). Thus, to a substantial degree the collapse of the army led to a privatization of the war, with loot comprising the chief form of payment.

These releasees, together with other criminals and like-minded recruits, were armed and variously trained, and then sent to wars in Croatia and Bosnia. They generally seem to have worked independently, and they usually improvised their tactics as they went along, but there seems to have been a fair amount of coordination in Serb areas mainly by Miloševic's secret police (Vasic 1996, 134; Borger 1997b; Silber and Little 1997, 177-78; Tanner 1997, 245; Judah 1997, ch. 9; UN Experts 1994, para. 18, 24). But combat itself was, as J. P. Mackley observes, "mostly spontaneous, more resembling heavily armed anarchy than organized warfare" (1993).

The appearance in the wars of the paramilitaries was in part caused by the collapse of army morale, but that presence may also have helped to aggravate the collapse. An internal army memo from early in the conflict identified them as dangerous to "military morale" because their "primary motive was not fighting against the enemy but robbery of private property and inhuman treatment of Croatian civilians" (UN Experts 1994, para. 100).

Some of the thugs and criminals joined, and importantly bolstered, what was left of the Yugoslav army. According to Miloš Vasic, a leading Serb journalist, however, "they behaved in a wholly unsoldierly way, wearing all sorts of Serb chauvinist insignia, beards and knives, were often drunk (like many of the regular solders, too), looted, and killed or harassed civilians. Officers rarely dared discipline them, given the overwhelmingly Serb-nationalist political atmosphere in Serbia and the 'patriotic' jingoism and wild chauvinist propaganda of the state-controlled media" (1996, 128).

Others joined semi-coherent paramilitary groups like Vojislav Šešelj's Chetniks and Arkan's Tigers, organizations already heavily comprised of criminals, adventurers, mercenary thugs, and, in the case of Arkan, well-armed soccer hooligans. Arkan had been the leader of Delije, the official fan club of Belgrade's Red Star soccer team, which, not unlike other soccer clubs, had become a magnet for hoodlums and unemployable young men, and the Tigers seem to have been built from that membership (UN Experts 1994, para. 129; Judah 1997, 186; Sudetic 1998, 98).[14]

Still others seem to have gone off on their own, serving as warlords in the areas of turf they came to dominate. These independent or semi-independent paramilitary and warlord units, estimates Vasic, "consisted on average of 80 per cent common criminals and 20 per cent fanatical nationalists. The latter did not usually last long (fanaticism is bad for business)" (1996, 134).

And there were also many "weekend warriors," men who entered the war areas from Serbia and elsewhere only intermittently and then mainly to rob and pillage, many becoming quite rich in the process

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[14] The overlap between soccer hooligans and criminals seems to be very high. In Among the Thugs, a lively discussion of English soccer hooligans, Bill Bufford observes that just about all of them had been in jail, were facing a criminal charge, or had recently been tried for one (1991, 28). Also associated are racist attitudes, a proclivity for extreme right wing politics, a capacity to imbibe huge amounts of liquor, a strident and vicious boorishness, a deep need for camaraderie and for being accepted by the "lads," and an affinity for, even a lusting after, the thrill, exhilaration, and euphoria of violence. On the sensual high of the criminal act, see Katz 1988, especially ch. 2. On the war-anticipating pitched battle that took place between supporters of the Zagreb and Belgrade soccer clubs in 1990, see Tanner 1997, 228.

(Sikavica 1995, 137).[15]

Similarly, the initial fighting forces of Bosnia and of Croatia were also substantially made up of small bands of criminals and violent opportunists often self-recruited from street gangs and organized mobs.[16] As Robert Block observes, "Gangsters, outlaws, and criminals have had a special place in the war in the former Yugoslavia. Their skills in organizing people and their ruthlessness made them natural choices for Balkan rabble-rousers looking for men to defend cities or serve as nationalist shock troops" (1993, 9).

The Serb, Arkan, began as a juvenile delinquent and later developed into a skilled bank robber, plying his trade mostly in northern Europe (dashingly, he often left the tellers bouquets of roses). He also became a prison breakout artist, escaping from jails in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Back in Belgrade, the fugitive became a respected member of the underground, enjoyed a special relationship with the police and with the Internal Affairs ministry, and ran a successful ice cream and pastry shop (UN Experts 1994, para. 125-128; see also Sudetic 1998, 97-98). Another Serb paramilitary leader, who called himself "Captain Dragan," had reportedly been a pimp in the Sydney underworld (working in the Knin area, his men were known as "Knindjas" after the cartoon characters) (UN Experts 1994, para. 206; Tanner 1997, 245).[17] The Muslims were protected by Celo, a convicted rapist (Cohen 1998, 280; Block 1993, 9), and also by Juka, a former mob boss, racketeer, and underworld thug (UN Experts 1994, para. 74; Maass 1996, 31; Block 1993, 9). And the Croats had Tuta, a former protection racketeer, the mere mention of whose name could "cause an entire village to panic" (Block 1993, 9).[18]

Thus, as Susan Woodward notes, "paramilitary gangs, foreign mercenaries, and convicted criminals roamed the territory under ever less civil control," and "the conditions of anarchy and territorial contest favored the armed radicals" (1995, 254, also 356, 485; see also Glenny 1993, 185; Sudetic 1992; Benard 1993; Vulliamy 1993, 307-16; Stewart 1994, 318-19). And "war crimes," observes Norman Cigar, were their "primary military mission" (1993, 323; see also Rieff 1995, 83). In both Bosnia and Croatia, notes Bennett, "the principal instigators of violence belonged to Serb extremist organisations" (1995, 187). Michael Ignatieff points out that many of the worst atrocities and war crimes "were carried out by paramilitary bands under the command of Serbian warlords and criminal operators with connections in politics, business and the Belgrade underworld" (1997, 131; see also Sikavica 1995, 138). Vladan Vasilijec, an expert on organized crime, says that most of the well-documented atrocities in Bosnia were committed by men with long criminal records (Firestone 1993). And a UN commission notes a "strong correlation" between paramilitary activity and reports of killing of civilians, rape, torture, destruction of property, looting, detention facilities, and mass graves (UN Experts 1994, para. 21).

Vulliamy quotes Reuters reporter Andrej Gustincic: "Gangs of gun-toting Serbs rule Foca, turning the once quiet town into a nightmare landscape of burning streets and houses. The motley assortment of fierce-looking bearded men carry Kalashnikovs and bandoliers or have hand guns tucked into their belts. Some are members of paramilitary groups from Serbia, self-proclaimed crusaders against Islam and defenders of the Serbian nation, others are wild-eyed local men, hostile towards strangers and happy to

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[15] There was one paramilitary group specifically identified as "The Weekenders" who ventured from Bijeljina to Brcko each weekend over a three year period to plunder and vandalize (UN Experts 1994, para. 317).

[16] Particularly in the case of Croatia, as Bennett (1995, 165) notes, many of the most extreme fighters were emigre adventurers from abroad. See also Hall 1994, 11; Rieff 1995, 66. Tony Horwitz met German skinheads in Zagreb who had come "for a bit of graduate training" (1993, 41). Shortly after taking control in Croatia, nationalists in some places replaced Serbs on the police force with Croats who were petty criminals from rural areas; when these new officials began to harass local Serbs, even local Croats became fearful and support by Serbs for their nationalist party soared (Gagnon 1994/95, 157n).

[17] There was also a group identified as the "Knindža Turtles," but it is not clear whether this is the same band as the one led by Captain Dragan (UN Experts 1994, note 493). For completeness, it should be reported that a paramilitary unit in Bosnia was led by a man calling himself "Commander Turtle" (UN Experts 1994, para. 311).

[18] On these issues, see also Husarska 1995; Tanner 1997, 245; Rieff 1995, 131-32; Vulliamy 1994, 314-16; Ignatieff 1997, 131; Burg and Shoup 1999, 137-39; Sadowski 1998, 163.

have driven out their Muslim neighbours. No one seems to be in command, and ill-disciplined and bad-tempered gunmen stop and detain people at will" (1993, 90-91). Many of the "wild-eyed local men," according to another report, were local criminals who "donned uniforms and took part enthusiastically in the subsequent looting" (Borger 1997a).[19] Similarly, the town of Bosanski Novi was ruled by five roaming Serbian armed groups, the most brutal of which was a well-known local mafia known as the "Spare Ribs" that had donned uniforms (Judah 1997, 227).

Thus, observes Warren Zimmermann, "the dregs of society--embezzlers, thugs, even professional killers--rose from the slime to become freedom fighters and national heroes" (1996, 152). David Rieff notes, "One of the earliest, deepest, and most pervasive effects of the fighting" was "to turn the social pyramid on its head....Simple boys from the countryside and tough kids from the towns found that their guns made them the ones who could start amassing the Deutschemarks and the privileges, sexual and otherwise" (1995, 130). Reportage by Peter Maass is peppered by such phrases as "drunken hillbillies," "death and thuggery," "they don't wear normal uniforms, they don't have many teeth," "the trigger fingers belonged to drunks," "the Bosnians might be the underdogs, but most of their frontline soldiers were crooks," "bullies," "a massive oaf," "a foul-smelling warlord," "mouthing the words, 'Bang, you're dead,' through rotten teeth," "an unshaven soldier would point his gun at a desired item and grunt," "only drunks and bandits ventured outside," "goons with guns," "Serb soldiers or thugs--and the difference is hard to tell" (1996, 6, 7, 16, 30, 42, 48, 61, 69, 77, 79, 80, 85). Reporter Ed Vulliamy describes them as "boozy at their best, wild and sadistic at their worst" or as "toothless goons" with "inflammable breath" (1993, 19, 46). Rohde reports that some people in the Muslim refuge of Srebrenica regarded Naser Oric and his Muslim gang, their protectors, as "dangerous primitives" (1997, 109).

There was also Rambo-like affectation: each dressed as if "he had been cast as a thug by a movie director," observes Block (1993). "The atrocities in Bosnia," concludes Noel Malcolm, were committed by "young urban gangsters in expensive sunglasses" (1994, 252). Oric, a muscular and charismatic former bodyguard who became the Muslim warlord of Srebrenica, and, until 1995, its protector, often liked to wear leather jackets, designer sunglasses, and thick gold chains. The degree to which these men styled themselves on characters they had seen in films like Rambo and Road Warrior led a Sarajevan theatre director ironically to call for a war crimes trial for Sylvester Stallone: "He's responsible for a lot that has gone on here!" (Rieff 1995, 130; see also Husarska 1995). Indeed, one Serbian paramilitary unit actually called itself "The Rambos" and went around in webbed masks and black gloves with black ribbons fetchingly tied around their foreheads (UN Experts 1994, para. 291; Cohen 1998, 126).[20] Tuta's gangsters are distinguished not only by their designer sunglasses, but by their shaved heads (Hedges 1996b). And Juka's troops, called the "Wolves," reportedly sported crew cuts, black jump suits, sunglasses, basketball shoes, and sometimes masks (UN Experts 1994, para. 76). The Muslim paramilitary group, the "Black Swans" which sometimes served as the bodyguard for Bosnia's president when he ventured outside Sarajevo (Burg and Shoup 1999, 137), wore a round patch depicting a black swan having intercourse with a supine woman (UN Experts 1994, at para. 142).

The substantial unwillingness of those in the army to fight for, or even to understand, nationalist goals, the massive draft dodging, and the huge anti-Milošević demonstrations that took place in Belgrade in 1991 certainly suggest there were limits to the motivational effects of ancient hatreds and of televised propaganda. Hatreds there may well have been, and propaganda there surely was. But neither was enough to inspire the kind of determined ethnic violence that was called for.[21] In all Communist countries, certainly

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[19] In time, even Mirjana Markovic, Milošević's influential, hard-line wife had had enough, calling the Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia "a bunch of louts addicted to the bottle preaching a crude nationalism" (Hartmann 1995). In many respects the war in Bosnia ended as it began as gangs of Serbs roamed the suburbs of Sarajevo to force Serbs to leave, only then to be replaced by Muslim thugs who beat and robbed those few Serbs who still remained (Wilkinson 1996a, 1996b).

[20] Maass also applies the "Rambo" image: 1996, 111, 155.

[21] As Benard puts it, "Even under present circumstances, where the media are totally controlled by those in power, and Serb public opinion is exposed to massive propaganda and misinformation, there is opposition" (1993,

including Yugoslavia, people were determinedly subject to decades of Communist propaganda in the media; yet, as history has shown, many--probably most--failed in the end to be convinced by it. If media promotion could guarantee lasting impact, all Yugoslavs would today be worshiping Tito and all Americans would be driving Edsels.[22]

Because of this, thugs had to be called in, and even they had to be enticed with the mundane and distinctly non-ideological prospect of loot. Indeed, many of the fighters, including those lead by Arkan, seem to have functioned essentially as mercenaries: as one Bosnian Serb government spokesman put it, "He is very expensive, but also very efficient" (UN Experts 1994, para. 23, 26). Vasilejevic argues that nationalism was only a pretext for many of the paramilitary groups; instead, they viewed the war as an opportunity for extremely lucrative plunder (Firestone 1993). What passed for "ethic warfare" in Bosnia and Croatia seems more nearly to have been something far more banal: the creation of communities of criminal violence and pillage.[23]

The stages of war and ethnic cleansing

For the most part, then, the fundamental process of the wars in the former Yugoslavia did not consist of the spontaneous eruption of pent-up hatreds as neighbor murdered neighbor. It was in fact difficult to organize coherent armies because volunteers failed to show up, and therefore criminals and fanatics were recruited to fill their places. In the end, the wars rather resembled the movie images of the American wild west or of gangland Chicago and often had much more to do with criminal opportunism and sadistic cruelty, very often enhanced with liquor (liquid courage) rather than with nationalism.[24]

1. Takeover. A group of well-armed thugs--or skin-head or redneck or soccer-hooligan or Hell's

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23). Or Warren Zimmermann: "My most difficult task has been to convey the conviction that all Yugoslavs weren't the bloodthirsty extremists so ubiquitously visible in Western news accounts. Most of the people my wife and I met in six years of living in Yugoslavia were peaceful and decent, without a trace of the hostility on which nationalism feeds. It's true that nationalist leaders were able to turn many normal people toward extremism by playing on their historic fears through the baleful medium of television....What amazed me was how many Yugoslavs resisted the incessant racist propaganda" (1996, xi; also 209-10). Indeed, after the war NATO forcefully took over the television transmission in the Serb section of Bosnia and allowed candidates it favored to saturate the airwaves before an election there in 1997; it had little effect on the outcome (Hedges 1997e).

[22] For a discussion, see Mueller 1994a, 129-36.

[23] A partial exception to this pattern concerns the slaughter of thousands of Muslim men by Serbs after they successfully invaded the "safe area" of Srebrenica in 1995, a seemingly calculated and rather orderly massacre that was carried out by what appears to have been the regular army (on this issue, see Sadowski 1998, 133). Since the army had become increasingly thuggish by this time as noted earlier, a formal distinction with less organized bands of thugs may be somewhat strained. Nevertheless, this murderous episode does seem to show more method and less madness than the more capricious and improvisatory killings that had taken place during the main period of ethnic cleansing in 1992--although, as was so typical in this war, the killing squads at Srebrenica often shored up their courage with generous quantities of liquor (Judah 1997, 241).

Although in no way excusing the massacre, it may be relevant to point out that the Serbs were deeply bitter about the situation because they had allowed the city to become a UN safe area in 1993 under the agreement that it would not be used for attacks against Serbs (Silber and Little 1997, 345; Sudetic 1998, 207). Nonetheless, over the two ensuing years, the forces of Srebrenica defender Oric had repeatedly forayed out from the city to attack Serbs. The Serbs claimed that these attacks had resulted in the deaths of 2,000 including hundreds of civilians, in the mutilation of corpses, in the burnings of over 50 villages including houses in which civilians were trapped, and in the desecration of dozens of graves. Confirmation of these numbers is impossible, but Oric did play a videotape to foreign journalists in 1994 proudly showing headless corpses and a burned out Serb village. In addition, reporter David Rohde says he interviewed a Serb who gave a credible account of how his elderly parents were burned alive in their house, and he notes that Muslims he interviewed confirm that Oric did adopt a tit-for-tat strategy, that there are burned out Serb villages in the area, and that Serb gravestones had been toppled (1997, 215-16, 409; see also Kinzer 1995b).

[24] Halina Grzymala-Moszczcynska, a Polish sociologist working with Muslim refugees in Poland, reports that the refugees she has interviewed about their experiences never refer to their persecutors as "Serbs," but always as "criminals" (personal conversation).

Angels types--would arrive, be formed, or emerge in an area where civil order had ceased to exist or where the police actually or effectively were in alliance. As the only group willing--indeed, sometimes quite eager--to use force, and they would quickly take control. Members of the other ethnic group would be subject to violent intimidation at best, atrocities at worst, and they would leave the area in despair and misery. Since there was no coherent or unbiased police force to protect them, their best recourse was to flee, and it would not take much persuasion to get them to do so--indeed, rumors or vague and implied threats could often be fully sufficient.[25] As one Muslim put it, "You know, the majority of Serbs who have lived here for years are completely polite and we are used to living together. But they cannot help us. There is really only one answer. We must leave. If we don't we will die" (Maass 1996, 76). Once the forces of Arkan and Šešelj had established their murderous reputations, the mere warning that they were on the way was often enough to empty a village of its non-Serb residents (UN Experts 1994, para. 104).[26]

Any co-ethnics who might oppose the thugs' behavior would be subject to even more focussed violence and intimidation and would either be forced out, killed, or cowed into subservience. One unusually candid Croatian ex-militiaman recalled that his unit had mostly killed Serb civilians but also unsympathetic Croats (Hedges 1997c), and a UN report notes, "In places where the local Serb population was initially fairly friendly, once Arkan's thugs arrived the situation changed, and they were intimidated into ostracizing the Muslims and behaving toward them with hostility" (quoted, Husarska 1995, 16; see also Bennett 1995, 191; O'Connor 1996a; Rieff 1995, 110; Judah 1997, 195; Maass 1992).

In many cases, the actual size of the dominating forces could be remarkably small. The Bosnian town of Višegrad on the Drina River, for example, was substantially controlled for years by a returned hometown boy, Milan Lukic, and some 15 well-armed companions including his brother, his cousin, and a waiter who often went barefoot. Using violent and often sadistic intimidation (Peter Maass refers to Lukic as a psychopathic killer), this tiny band was able to force the 14,500 Muslims in the town to leave and to suppress any expressions of dissent from local Serbs--many of whom took advantage of the situation opportunistically to profit from the Muslim exodus (Hedges 1996a; Vulliamy 1996a; Maass 1996, 12-14, 157; UN Experts 1994, para. 246-250, 540-556; Sudetic 1998, 120-25). Or there is the town of Teslic, controlled, it is estimated, by "five or six men, well placed and willing to use violence" (O'Connor 1996b; see also Glenny 1993, 169-70; Bennett 1995, 249). The violence that in 1992 tore apart Srebrenica, a town of 37,000 people, was perpetrated by no more than 30 Serb and Muslim extremists, and Oric, the Muslim warlord who controlled it for several years (and who was mysteriously absent with his gang when the town was overrun by Serb forces in 1995), led an armed band with a nucleus of only fifteen men (Rohde 1997, xiv, 60, 354, 355). Arkan's much-feared forces consisted of a core of only some 200 men (Vasic 1996, 134), and perhaps totalled 500-1000 overall (UN Experts 1994, para. 92, 138).[27]

The most common emotion among ordinary people caught up in this cyclone of violence and pillage seems to have been bewilderment rather than rage. Working with Muslim refugees early in the Bosnia war, Cheryl Benard found them "to be totally at a loss to explain how the hostility of the Serbs was possible. All of them, without exception, say they lived and worked with and were close friends with Serbs. They claimed never to have felt any discrimination, exclusion, or tension, and were articulate in their shock and sense of betrayal. Many found excuses for their Serb neighbors..." Far from seeing the violence as the

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[25] A Hungarian from the Vojvodina area in Serbia tells the story of a Vojvodinan Croat who, although he loathed the regime of Tudjman, finally moved to Croatia when he got word that local Serb thugs were threatening--perhaps only idly--to harm his children.

[26] A somewhat similar phenomenon took place in the first Arab-Israeli war. On April 9, 1948 Israeli paramilitary and terrorist forces captured the strategically-located village of Deir Yassin, slew more than 200 Arab men, women, and children, and then mutilated the bodies and threw them into a well. Although this atrocity was immediately repudiated by the Israeli leadership, descriptions of it, sometimes exaggerated, were avidly spread by Arab leaders with the strategically important result that entire Arab communities--hundreds of thousands of people--were sent into panicky flight even before Jewish forces arrived. Sacher 1976, 333-34.

[27] One paramilitary "group" consisted of a single man called "Adolf" who reportedly lined up 150 unarmed Muslim and Croat civilians in Brcko and then killed them individually with an automatic pistol fitted with a silencer (UN Experts 1994, para. 196).

delayed eruption of ancient hatreds and as evidence of the strength of ethnic ties, Benard suggests "one could argue that Bosnia shows how weak and how fluid political identity really is" (1993, 24; see also Malcolm 1998b).[28]

2. Carnival. Lord Acton's famous observation that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" can be embellished with one by Plato: "No human nature invested with supreme power is able to order human affairs and not overflow with insolence and wrong."[29] The dominating, swaggeringly arrogant thugs in charge often exercised absolute or supreme power in their various small fiefdoms and lorded it over their new subjects. Carnivals of looting and destruction would take place, as would orgies of rape, arbitrary and gratuitous violence and murder, and roaring drunkenness--pay often came in the form of alcohol and cigarettes (Woodward 1995, 249).

Sadists may be a small portion in any population, but in these circumstances, they rose to the occasion and reveled in it. In a number of places, notes Tim Judah, "real psychopaths were rampaging across the countryside indulging in cruel, bizarre, and sadistic killings" (1997, 233). Maass reports "an odd enthusiasm on the part of the torturers, who laughed, sang and got drunk while inflicting their crimes. They weren't just doing a job, they were doing something they enjoyed" and "There were plenty of Serbs who enjoyed killing civilians and eagerly sought the opportunity to do so....These killers never had so much fun" (1996, 52, 111; see also Borger 1997c).

In this unrestrained new world run, in the words of a UN official, by "gunslingers, thugs, and essentially criminals" (Sudetic 1992), others might opportunistically join the carnivals and orgies.[30] After all, if the property of a local Muslim is going to be looted and set afire (like the store of a local Korean during the Los Angeles riots of 1992), it may come to seem sensible--even rational--to join the thieves: no high-minded moral restraint about such vulture-like behavior will do the departed owner any good. Additionally, various adventurers, mercenaries, and revenge-seekers, might join--some of these often came from the police. And so might some of those (particularly teen-agers) who find exhilaration, excitement, comradeship, clarity, and theatricality--not to mention material profit--in war and in its terrifying, awesome destructiveness (Woodward 1995, 249).[31] In the process, many ordinary residents might become compromised, sometimes quite willingly: for example, a Bosnian Serb policeman used his position, Schindler-like, to save the lives of several Muslims, but under the extraordinary conditions of the time he also probably raped two or more of them--in at least one instance after proposing marriage (Borger 1997a).

3. Revenge. Some among the brutalized might wish to fight--and to seek revenge--against their persecutors. In general, they found that they were best advised not to try to improvise local resistance, but rather to flee with their fellow ethnics and then to join like-minded armed bands in more hospitable parts of the country. Thus the special unit, Black Swans, was supposedly made up of volunteers aged 20-22 who had been orphaned by the war. And the Muslim's "elite" Seventeenth Krajina brigade was labelled "the angry army of the dispossessed," though questions have been raised about how adequately it actually fought (Burg and Shoup 1999, 137).

Members of the ethnically-cleansing group would quickly find, sometimes to their helpless disgust, that their thugs, while perhaps reprehensible in their actions, at least were willing to fight to protect them from the murderous thugs on the other side. Often the choice was essentially one of being dominated by

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[28] The amount of death that came out of this process was considerable, but it seems likely that the numbers given out continually by the Bosnian government and various sympathetic journalists and activists, often accepted uncritically in the West, are greatly exaggerated. For example, international humanitarian agencies estimate there were 3,000 to 5,000 detainees at the most notorious Serbian camp, while the Bosnian government insists the number was 11,000 (Glenny 1993, 203; see also Brock 1993-94; Boyd 1995, 27.) And the commonly accepted figure of 200,000 casualties for the war in Bosnia is probably overstated (Burg and Shoup 1999, 169-70).

[29] Acton 1948, 364; Plato, Laws, 4.713.

[30] In the town of Brcko it was reported that a new group would be in charge every two weeks (UN Experts 1994, note 167).

[31] On this phenomenon, see Mueller 1995a, ch. 8. See also Gray 1959; Broyles 1984; Grossman 1995.

vicious racists of one's own ethnic group or by vicious racists of another ethnic group: given that range of alternatives, the choice was an easy one to make.

There would be ethnic hatred in all this of course, but it would be more the result than the cause of the violent conflict (see Kaufmann 1996).[32]

4. Occupation and desertion. Life in areas controlled by the thugs could become pretty miserable as the masters argued among themselves and looked for further prey among those remaining, whatever their ethnic background.[33] A Croat priest, still living after the war in an area dominated by Croat thugs, observed, "The war let primitive people gain power everywhere in Bosnia. Before the war they were poor and primitive, now they are rich, they have complete power, but are still primitive" (O'Connor 1997).

Rieff observes that "the involvement of gangsters on all sides meant not only that the fighting took on a more and more lawless, brutal character, but also that the political aims of the war became hopelessly intertwined on a day-to-day level with profiteering and black market activities" (1995, 132). Corruption and nepotism in the Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia, including the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale, was so endemic that it substantially harmed the war effort (Judah 1997, 221-23, 252-55). Judah notes that "local industrial and agricultural assets that would have helped sustain Serb-held areas both during and after the war were simply stripped and sold off" (1997, 254).[34]

In the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica men loyal to Oric controlled the few jobs in town, lived in the larger homes, had more food than others, and prospered by exaggerating the population size in order to get excess humanitarian aid, and then hoarding it to drive up prices and selling it on the black market at a killing. When three opponents to this feudal arrangement arose, they were ambushed and, in at least one case, killed (Rohde 1997, 107-9; Sudetic 1998, 223). Since the refugees were essentially being used as human shields to protect the property and income of Oric and his men, Muslims were not allowed to leave, yet little effort was made to improve the lives of the people, especially the refugees, unless it brought personal profit to the ruling gang (Sudetic 1998, 223, 244). Oric himself was rumored to be profiting greatly on the black market and to be running a prostitution business (pimping, it's usually called). But he denied that, claiming to be "just a small businessman" who somehow managed to clear enough to be able to tear around the fuel-starved enclave in an Audi or a Mercedes and to find enough diesel oil to run his private electricity generator during the war and to open a floating restaurant after it was over (Rohde 1997, 63, 354-5, 381; Pomfret 1994).

In wartorn Sarajevo, Juka's men, who had defended the city in 1992, soon began plaguing the defended without regard to ethnicity. They stole automobiles, extorted money and valuables, abducted, abused, and raped civilians, and looted the city's warehouses and shops, making off with 20,000 pairs of

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[32] And sometimes not even then. As one Serbian sniper in the hills around Sarajevo reflected, "I don't fight for nationalism--I sleep with girls of all nations. I don't fight for religion--God is no place. I fight because I want to be back down there with my books and my CD player and my Gitane cigarettes" (Horwitz 1993, 36). Or as a Croatian thug, a former photographer's model, put it philosophically, "I don't really hate Muslims, but because of the situation I want to kill them all" (Block 1993, 10).

[33] Some of this behavior surfaced early--in the fighting in Croatia in 1991. As one Serb from the area recalled, "I don't deny that I myself did some shooting, but the worst crimes were committed by the irregulars who came in from Serbia. First they looted the homes of Croats. When they came back a second time they started looting Serb houses, because the Croat houses had already been robbed clean." Another Serb from the same village reports that after defending their homes for six months (and never seeing a single regular army officer or soldier), they were ordered, together with some of their Croat neighbors who had joined them in home defense, to evacuate for resettlement in Bosnia. On the way, they were all robbed by the Serbian forces of Šešelj. Later the Croats were separated from the group. "I only know for sure that they didn't dare return to Croatia because they would be shot for fighting for their village on our side," the Serb suggests (Štitkovac 1995, 160).

[34] In 1993, Michael Ignatieff visited the war-ruined city of Vukovar that had been wrested from the hastily-armed Croat defenders by the Serbs two years earlier. He found it run by Šešelj's White Eagles whom he describes as "large, long-haired, snub-nosed men--part warrior, part thug." They threatened his translator, a local journalist, with death if he told "lies" and later fired warning shots at Ignatieff's car (1997, 132).

shoes in one venture (UN Experts 1994, para. 84, 86). As Peter Maass notes, they "weren't the kind of soldiers who snapped to attention for the commander of the U.N. forces, and they broke their promises quite easily, like the bones of their prisoners (1996, 31). Gangs of gunmen engaged in campaigns of murder, robbery, and rape, and they monopolized the black market that made up the city's only trade, earning fortunes in the process in a city where many people spent their days scavenging for water and bread (Burns 1993a).

Gradually, many of the people under the thugs' arbitrary and chaotic "protection," especially the more moderate ones and young men unwilling to be impressed, would manage to emigrate to a safer place (Vasic 1996, 133). As one draft-threatened Serb from Croatia put it, "I would be placed in a position of shooting at people on the other side with whom I had grown up and lived with peacefully. The war will not last forever, and then we will again have to live together. What else could I do but run away?" One exacerbated Serb official accused such men of "not behaving like people who are threatened" (Cigar 1993, 319).

In time, the size of the "protected" group would be substantially reduced--by half or more (Woodward 1995, 246; Boyd 1995, 29; Malcolm 1995, 9; Judah 1997, 223, 237, 296; Sudetic 1994; Maass 1992).[35] By September 1992, only nine months after their brief war for independence had ended, the number of Serbs from the Krajina section of Croatia who had moved to Serbia was reaching "disastrous proportions," according to a Belgrade daily, a situation it blamed on the endemic corruption of Krajina officials (Tanner 1997, 283). The increasingly impoverished remnants left behind in this exodus ever more disproportionately consisted of fanatics, economic marauders, militant radicals, monsters, common criminals, die-hards, opportunistic sycophants, embittered revenge-seekers, and murderous drunks.[36]

Something similar often happened to active combatants as the thrill wore stale and as boredom took over. Tony Horwitz chronicles such a detachment essentially living on liquor, cigarettes, bad coffee, and well-worn pornographic magazines (1993). "Front-line soldiers were the most dangerous of all," observes Maass, "because they were tired, angry, poor and, often in this war, drunk. They hated everyone, not just the enemy but their commanders and even the civilians they were protecting, because all those people were living so much better and taking fewer risks" (1996, 120).

One reason for this discontent, observes Judah, "was that it was extremely difficult for ordinary soldiers, who lacked political protection, to make much money trading with the enemy." However, those in the right positions quickly discovered a lucrative opportunity as "hundreds of millions of Deutschemarks' worth of weaponry, ammunition, fuel and goods were traded across the frontlines and even more was looted by Serbs, not just from their enemies but from their own people too" (1997, 242, 252). The Serbs in Bosnia, after all, enjoyed a major military advantage in that, because of the deft manipulations of Milošević and crew early in the war, they inherited masses of weaponry from the Yugoslav national army. Once the war settled down a bit, many of the Serb leaders in Bosnia went looking for buyers and found them quite

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[35] The once thoroughly integrated city of Mostar was contested by Muslims and Croats during the war and devolved into two ethnically-cleansed areas. In the process, its population declined from 130,000 to 60,000 (Hedges 1996b). Similarly, the population of Sarajevo declined during the war from 450,000 to something like 280,000, including some 100,000 refugees from ethnically cleansed areas of the country (Hedges 1995).

[36] For a portrait of the clearly deranged Branko Grujic, a Serb who reigned as the mayor of Zvornik after the Muslim majority had been driven from the city, see Cohen 1998, 296-98. In one Serb area in Croatia, it was reported that only 8 percent of the population of 430,000 was employed, less than half the arable land was being cultivated, livestock had almost completely been destroyed, business activity and industrial production had essentially ceased, and, none too surprisingly, tourism had become nonexistent (Udovicki and Ridgeway 1995, 230). In Serb areas of Bosnia, industry worked at 10 percent of capacity (Judah 1997, 222). The payroll of the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, which was the scene of the 1995 talks on Bosnia, had a payroll that was larger than Bosnia's entire output by that time (R. Cohen 1995). And many areas remained severely depressed after the war. The once prosperous, architectural significant, and ethnically mixed city of Vukovar, returned to Croatia in January 1998, had an unemployment rate of 90 percent over a year later and nearly every young person with a marketable skill had left. Of the 80,000 Croats who fled the city during the war, only 15,000 had returned, mostly old people without children (Harden 1999b).

close by: the Croats and the Muslims were eager for weapons with which to attack the Serbs (and, for a time, each other). There were opportunities in the other direction as well, and the speaker of the Bosnian Serb assembly made millions buying fuel from Croatia and then selling it to Croatia's Serb enemies in Bosnia. One senior Serbian commander in Bosnia sold a Muslim village some heavy artillery and then retired with his family to Serbia. Croats could sometimes rent tanks from the Serbs at a going rate of DM1,000 per day (Judah 1997, 242-52; Vulliamy 1996b; see also Burg and Shoup 1999, 138; Sudetic 1998, 90). Whether they had to pay extra for insurance is not recorded.

Serbia itself was also substantially criminalized during the war period. Observes Judah, "The unprecedented breakdown of law and order and the fantastic business opportunities provided by sanctions-busting meant that many Yugoslav gangsters who had hitherto operated in the richer pastures of Germany and Switzerland returned to reap the profits of war. Some became involved with Serbian paramilitaries, which under cover of patriotism became rapacious looting machines. After they had stolen all the cars and other goods from the frontline towns, they turned their attention to the home front" (1997, 255-56; see also Kinzer 1993; Firestone 1993; Sudetic 1998, 128).

And the condition continues. In post-war Belgrade a very prominent "criminal class, many of whom made their fortunes by plundering the possessions of ethnic Croats and Muslim who were expelled from their homes or killed in Bosnia during the war there, deal in stolen clothes from Italy, stolen cars, drugs, protection rackets, prostitution, and duty-free cigarettes" (Hedges 1998a; see also Judah 1997, 256-58; Harden 1999a; Dinkic 1995). Milan Lukic, the butcher of Višegrad, is reported to be spending the post-war years in Serbia, a wealthy man (Vulliamy 1996a).[37] Arkan has made millions of dollars selling loot and smuggling oil, and he now operates not only an ice cream parlor in Belgrade, but also gas stations, a shopping center, a savings bank, a protection racket, and a private prison used in kidnapping for ransom (UN Experts 1994, para. 131).[38] All this has been accompanied by a disastrous brain drain (Judah 1997, 276-78).

Meanwhile, in the Serb section of Bosnia, the leaders have expropriated the largest houses, drive luxury sedans, and are guarded by bodyguards with shaved heads and sunglasses, while gangs of armed car thieves roam the streets (Hedges 1997b; see also Borger 1997c). Armed gangsters have continued to reign in the Croatian section of Mostar as well (Hedges 1996b; Pomfret 1995).

The relationship of such behavior to "nationalism" and to "ethnic hatred," ancient or otherwise, is less than clear. Its relation to common criminality, however, is quite evident.

5. The probable effectiveness of international policing

If this is a fair representation of the most prominent military dynamic in the war zones of the former Yugoslavia, it follows that policing the situation would not have been the major challenge often anticipated.

Essentially, the intimidating, opportunistic thugs were successful mainly because they were the biggest bully on the block.[39] But, like most bullies (and sadists and torturers), they were not particularly

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[37] Other reports, however, indicate that he has sought psychiatric care, has become unhinged, sleeps with all the lights on, and drives around in a different car all the time. Still, he claims to be proud he killed so many Muslims in the war and has said he has an almost uncontrollable urge to kill again (Sudetic 1998, 355-56, 358).

[38] He has not done nearly as well in politics. He formed a political party in 1993 and spent over three million dollars campaigning for elections that year. Despite such lavish spending and despite the apparent support of Milošević, his party failed to gain a single seat (UN Experts 1994, para. 136).

[39] Of interest in this regard is that the Serbs never felt strong enough to take Sarajevo militarily even though at the outset of the war it was mainly defended only by police units, volunteers, and armed street gangs (Vasic 1996, 135-36; Rieff 1995, 131; Hedges 1997d; Burg and Shoup 1999, 138; Judah 1997, 211-12). Something similar happened in Srebrenica in 1992 (Rohde 1997, xiv-xv). They also had great difficulties in battles with a rag-tag Croat army along the Bosnia-Croatia border (Judah 1997, 208-10). And, although the Serbs eventually won the battle over the Croatian city of Vukovar, they did so at great cost and difficulty even though they vastly outgunned the defenders, most of whom were untrained and hastily organized local militia (Cigar 1993, 325-26; Silber and

interested in a fair fight. Moreover, they substantially lacked organization, discipline, coherent tactics or strategy, deep motivation, broad popular support, ideological commitment, and, essentially, courage.[40] Consequently, if confronted by a military force that possessed these qualities, their most likely reaction would be to flee.

And, to a considerable degree, this seems to be what happened. Swamped, unprepared, and badly outgunned at the beginning, independent Croatia, despite an international arms embargo, gradually built up and trained a conventional military force using Western advisors and, essentially, encouragement (Cviic 1996, 209; Vasic 1996, 134-35; Silber and Little 1997, 360; Silverstein 1997; Tanner 1997, 284; Binder 1998).

And an important step in building its army was the Bosnian government's risky but successful military operation in October 1993 to destroy two of the most important criminal gangs in Sarajevo which had helped defend the capital in 1992 but which then took control in various areas of the city, terrorizing non-Muslims and Muslims alike (Vasic 1996, 136; Judah 1997, 217-18; Maass 1996, 33; Hedges 1997d; Burg and Shoup 1999, 138-39; Burns 1993a, 1993b; see also Rieff 1995, 132). In the process, the leader of one of the gangs was killed while the other reportedly surrendered. An indication of the fighting tenacity of these criminals is suggested by a report that many of those arrested in the raid quickly "repudiated their commanders and asked for clemency" (Burns 1993a). Another Sarajevo gang leader, Jusuf Prazina, known as "Juka," demonstrated the depth of his ethnic loyalty by deserting and joining the Croats, then fleeing abroad to Liege, Belgium, where he joined a small Yugoslav expatriate community and where he was assassinated on 3 December 1993 by two gunshots to the head administered by one of his own bodyguards (UN Experts 1994, para. 78; see also Burg and Shoup 1999, 139). His body was found by hitchhikers two weeks later near a highway (Maass 1996, 33).

As early as January 1993, only a year after Serbs had effectively partitioned the country, the new Croatian army launched an attack on several important targets in the Serb-held Dalmatian area and found the venture an easy one militarily--there was little resistance (Bennett 1995, 228-29; Silber and Little 1997, 353; Tanner 1997, 288). In May 1995, they achieved the same success in the Slavonian area known as "Sector West" (they called it "Operation Flash"), taking it over in thirty-two hours. Then, over three or four days in August, using plans partly produced by some retired American generals, they pushed from most of the rest of Croatia the remaining Serb opposition which for the most part followed the example of its erstwhile "protectors" and simply ran (Silber and Little 1997, 353-60; Vasic 1996, 135; Tanner 1997, 294-97).[41] As Marcus Tanner puts it, "As soon as the bombardment started the Serb troops fled the frontlines, provoking a panicked flight into Bosnia by thousands of civilians, who left their houses with washing on the lines and meals half eaten on kitchen tables" (1997, 297). Similar results were then achieved in neighboring Bosnia by organized Croat and Bosnian forces.[42]

Little 1997, 177; Mackley 1993).

[40] Judah observes of Bosnian Serb General Mladic that "his war was a coward's war. He fought few pitched battles but managed to drive hundreds of thousands of unarmed people out of their homes," and he also questions Mladic's mental stability (1997, 230-31). On this latter issue, see also Block 1995; Perlez 1995. One of the most fanatical Serb nationalists, the political scientist Vojislav Šešelj, who spent a year teaching at the University of Michigan in his younger years, later seems to have become mentally unbalanced as the result of the torture and beatings he endured while in prison in Yugoslavia for counterrevolutionary activities. One academic colleague described him as "disturbed, totally lost and out of his mind" (UN Experts 1994, para. 107, 108; see also Judah 1997, 187).

[41] In victory, however, the discipline of the Croat forces often broke down in arson, destruction, and looting (Heller 1996; Tanner 1997, 298).

[42] If war breaks out again in Bosnia, it seems likely that the remaining Serbs will be forced from Bosnia by Muslim forces. Although the notion in the West is that the Bosnian forces should be built up so they can "defend themselves," in fact they have come to enjoy a considerable military advantage over the demoralized, corrupt, divided, impoverished, abandoned, badly-led, and probably increasingly depopulated Bosnian Serbs, and many are yearning for an opportunity to exact final revenge by cleansing the entire country of renegade Serbs.

It seems likely, therefore, that a large, impressively armed, and well-disciplined international policing force could have been effective in pacifying the conflicts in Yugoslavia. The approach would have resembled the "wall-to-wall cop" technique used to suppress riots in American cities or the one successfully applied by the U.S. military in Haiti in the mid-1990s: a town, city, or area would be flooded with well-armed and disciplined international troops; under occupation, the thugs would either flee or blend back into the population; and the troops would then gradually be withdrawn, leaving behind a trained police force to handle the situation.[43] The thugs would still exist of course, and many might remain in the area, as they do in American cities.[44] But, insofar as they remained unpacified, their role would be reduced to sporadic and improvised crime and violence, not town mastery.[45]

There seem to be two reasons why a such a force was never put together by concerned members of the international community.

First, they tended vastly to overestimate the fighting tenacity of the defenders, an overestimate that in turn stemmed from two errors of analysis. One error assumed that Serbs, in particular, were fanatically dedicated fighters, a notion deriving from a World War II myth which maintains that the occupying Germans, confronted with a dedicated guerrilla opposition, were forced to divert a huge number of forces to maintain their control in Yugoslavia. Even assuming the situations are comparable, the Germans occupied the country in a matter of days and rarely found the Yugoslav occupation much of a diversion, although quite a few Yugoslavs did manage to kill other Yugoslavs during and immediately after the war (Bennett 1995, 49-50; Mackley 1993). In Bosnia, suggests Mackley, no Yugoslav combat unit, regular or irregular, could successfully compete with the U.S. military "in anything but a drinking contest" (1993). The other error assumed that the wars in Yugoslavia were essentially a colorful, inexplicable Kaplanesque all-against-all conflict, rooted in centuries-old hatreds that could hardly be ameliorated by well-meaning, but innocent and naive, outsiders.[46] As the discussion above suggests, this explanation, so convenient to those favoring passivity, was substantially flawed. But an observation by Brian Hall seems particularly apt in this connection: "Literary clichés do not die easily, especially when informed by superficialities" (1994, 68).[47]

Second, the international community had, and has, an extremely low tolerance for casualties in peace keeping ventures when clear national interests do not appear to be at stake. If there was ever any doubt about this, the experience in Somalia in 1993 was illuminating. The international mission there

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[43] In the Sunnydale section of San Francisco, crime, especially gang crime, dropped 70 percent in one year after a determined cleanup and policing campaign was launched (Morning Edition, National Public Radio, 4 March 1999).

[44] In Haiti, the thugs seem to be reemerging after the troops left.

[45] A postwar policy of questing after war criminals is fraught with difficulties, particularly if it is extended to people below the top. There are unquestionably hundreds and probably thousands of people in Yugoslavia who could reasonably be accused of war crimes. Bringing even a small portion of them to justice (while letting the others roam unjustly free) will be a monumental task. Moreover, while many of the thugs are effectively cowards, they may lash out in desperate violence if they think they are being stalked--and especially if they are cornered.

[46] On this issue, see also Malcolm 1995, 4-5; Sadowski 1998, 24-25, 66-68. On President Clinton's seduction by Kaplan's book, see Drew 1994, 157. On Clinton's belated, regretful, public recantation in 1999 of the Kaplan perspective, see Seelye 1999. Talking about the conflict on national television on June 5, 1995, Vice President Al Gore had allowed as how the tragedy in Bosnia had been unfolding, "some would say, for five hundred years." Clinton, not to be outdone, opined in the same interview that "their enmities go back five hundred years, some would say almost a thousand years" (Cohen 1998, 397-98). The exact identity of the hyperbolic "some" was not specified. Perhaps one was Henry Kissinger who noted authoritatively that "ethnic conflict has been endemic in the Balkans for centuries" (as opposed to gentle western Europe presumably), and, patronizingly, that "none of the populations has any experience with--and essentially no belief in--Western concepts of toleration" (1999).

[47] Many of these seem to have been derived in various ways from Rebecca West's two-volume Black Lamb and Grey Falcon of 1941. The work was written after the author had made three visits--the longest of which lasted less than two months--to Yugoslavia between 1936 and 1938, and it often propounds views that are essentially racist. For a superb assessment, see Hall 1996.

helped to bring a degree of order to a deadly situation that was causing a famine reportedly killing at its peak thousands of people per day. Never before perhaps has so much been done for so many at such little cost.[48] Yet, American policy there was held to be a "failure" in large part because a few Americans were killed in the process.[49] In essence, when Americans asked themselves how many American lives peace in Somalia was worth, the answer came out rather close to zero (Mueller 1997, 83; Dole 1995, 41). The general reluctance to become involved in the actual fighting in Bosnia (despite, incidentally, years of the supposed "CNN effect") suggests that Americans reached a similar conclusion for that trouble spot--as did, it seems, Britons, Germans, Canadians, and others in their own terms.[50] It seems clear that policing efforts will be politically tolerable only as long as the costs in lives for the policing forces remain extremely low--and perhaps not even then.[51]

Policing the Yugoslav conflicts probably would not have been a difficult venture nor a terribly costly one. It might have taken a fair number of troops, perhaps in the hundreds of thousands, but there would likely have been very little real fighting and most of the policing troops would probably not have had to stay long. As in the Gulf War, there would probably not have been much of an enemy to contend with.[52] Indeed, it is possible the fighting conditions might have been nearly as benign as those that prevailed when policing troops were finally sent at the end of 1995 after the Dayton Accords.

However, it would be impossible to guarantee that such a venture could be carried off with extremely few--or no--casualties. The international community waited, then, until victory by Croats and Bosnians and a thorough exhaustion with war had substantially dampened the situation and until international policing troops could be sent in with almost no prospect for taking casualties. It is a policy, heavily determined by domestic politics, which valued the lives of the foreign police vastly more than those of the local victims.[53]

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[48] New York Times columnist William Safire, in urging withdrawal from Somalia, did go so far as to concede of the venture that "the saving of hundreds of thousands of lives is no small thing" (1993). What, one might wonder, would he consider to be a large thing? According to American Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the lowest estimate of the number of lives saved is 110,000 (MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, 2 March 1995). The economic cost of the international mission has been put at $2 billion.

[49] The experience has heightened the U.S. military's already considerable reluctance to get involved in situations in which there is no clear military goal and where it is not clear how they will achieve a "decisive" victory (see Gordon 1992; Powell 1992). But the venture in Haiti was essentially the same as the one in Somalia: the goal was to bring stability to a chaotic situation and to build a coherent police structure. However, the experience in Haiti certainly demonstrates there is little glory in such ventures: when the last of the American troops were withdrawn from Haiti in March 1996, at the end of a mission that was at that point remarkably successful, the story was given eleven inches in a lower corner of page 14 of the New York Times. And it probably garnered that much space only because President Clinton greeted them upon their arrival, making it into something of a media event (Mitchell 1996).

[50] As Martin Bell puts it, "The unstated principle seemed to be that British and French and Dutch lives mattered more--much more--than Bosnian lives. That probably reflected majority opinion in the troop-contributing nations" (1995, 266). By 1997, Spanish troops had suffered some 17 deaths in the Bosnian war, and, in policing the deeply-troubled situation in postwar Mostar, the government indicated that this was enough for them, and they withdrew from further confrontation, something that greatly encouraged the Croat gangs the city (Hedges 1997a).

[51] Poll data demonstrate that President Bill Clinton (in part because he confronted vocal Republican opposition on the issue) was never able to increase the numbers of Americans who saw wisdom or value in sending U.S. policing troops to Bosnia even though it was expected that there would be few casualties. Six months after the venture began, support for it had still not risen even though it was completely successful in that the Bosnians had stopped killing each other (even if they hadn't come to love each other) and, most importantly, in that no Americans were killed (Larson forthcoming). On George Bush's inability, in part because of Democratic opposition, to increase public support for his proposed war in the Gulf, see Mueller 1994a, chs. 2, 3.

[52] On this issue in the Gulf War, see Mueller 1995b.

[53] On the deep concern of the American public for U.S. casualties and on its almost complete unconcern about foreign ones, and for the argument that the public has never had much stomach for losing American lives in

<u>6. Conclusions, extrapolations, and implications</u>

   The discussion thus far, particularly in the last two sections, has focused on the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. It has stressed the importance of relatively small bands of thugs in determining the key dynamics of the wars that took place there. In this section, I attempt to extrapolate from these observations and to develop some implications.

   First, the situation in the 1999 war in Kosovo seems to have borne a number of similarities with the previous conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. Second, the conditions in these wars suggest that Hobbes was wrong--even profoundly wrong--about the essential dynamics of an anarchic state of nature. Third, the extension of such Hobbesian notions to the international arena, a process central to the "realist" perspective, is in similar error. Fourth, the usefulness of the concept of "ethnic warfare" is questionable insofar as it implies a conflict of all against all, an implication which seems to be both unrealistic and greatly misguiding. Fifth, it seems likely that what happened in the Balkans is not at all unique to that area and could, under appropriate conditions, occur just about anywhere, even in such seemingly unlikely places as Canada. And sixth, conflictual events in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere should not be taken to imply that warfare itself has recent been transformed: what seems to be different is not that irregular warfare has become newly invented or newly invigorated, but that conventional warfare has retreated in frequency and significance, allowing residual (but readily policeable) irregular war to rise in seeming prominence.

<u>1. Kosovo, 1999</u>

   The data are not yet all in on the 1999 war in Kosovo, but a number of elements familiar from the experience in Croatia and Bosnia seem to have reappeared there.

   <u>Forcing the choosing of sides</u>. The ruling Serbs substantially created the problem, especially after 1989, by officially discriminating against the Albanians (Malcolm 1998a, ch. 17). Then, when some Albanians resorted to anti-Serb terrorism in 1998, the Serbs foolishly moved against then with excessive violence that included massacres and the creation of masses of refugees, especially in rural areas. Although the terrorists of the Kosovo Liberation Army did not enjoy great support among the Albanians, especially in the cities, the Serb depredations, carried out mainly by special paramilitary units under the direction of the ministry of the interior in Belgrade, greatly increased the support for the terrorists by essentially forcing Albanians to make a Bosnia-like decision: they had to choose between rule by brutish racist thugs from their own ethnic group or rule by brutish racist thugs from the other ethnic group (Hedges 1998b; O'Connor 1998b; Finn 1999; Judah 1999). The KLA, which numbered no more than 150 before the massacres, quickly increased to an estimated 12,000 (Steele 1998).[54]

   <u>The process of ethnic cleansing</u>. Before the 1999 war the province was being ethnically cleansed of Serbs by the actions of Albanians. In reaction to Serb oppression, the majority Albanians often adopted a position of considerable hostility to local Serbs and this, enhanced by the still rather minor violence committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army, was easily enough to drive many Serbs from the area even though they enjoyed the protection of the Serb-dominated police force of 20,000 (Steele 1998). Comparatively few of them actually suffered great hardship, but most were made to feel unsafe, and, for many, this was fully enough (Hedges 1998b; Hedges 1998c; O'Connor 1998d; Erlanger 1999a). As in Bosnia, it does not take much to get people to flee.

   <u>Serb unwillingness to fight</u>. In planning for a 1999 offensive against the KLA, Yugoslavia's Milošević was confronted with a grim reality--one that was, however, hardly novel for him. Kosovo is much closer to Serbia's core interests, or, at any rate, sentiments, than Bosnia or Croatia, and Serbs had

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ventures and arenas that are of little concern to it, see Mueller 1996a, 1997.

 [54] As in Bosnia and Croatia, the Serbs committed atrocities, and as in those instances, the stories of the atrocities were often even worse than the reality: see O'Connor 1998c. In addition, there seems to be a considerable difference between the rural and the urban. The KLA is substantially composed of rural dwellers, often raw and unschooled, who have considerable disdain for the Albanian urban elite--which, in turn, often sees them as "arrogant, brutal, and rude" (Hedges 1999).

been dutifully weaving fanciful myths and legends about the region for a good 600 years. These myths and legends are prominent among those that have so impressed Robert Kaplan and others, and ones that, they have repeatedly assured us, are profoundly motivating to the history-mired Serbs, mesmerized and romanticized as they were by such ancient, if vaporous, mysteries. Nonetheless, following the earlier pattern with respect to Croatia and Bosnia, an large percentage of Serbian youth was entirely able to contain its enthusiasm for actually <u>fighting</u> for dear old Kosovo. One Serb writer even called Kosovo "dead history," a place containing a lot of beautiful old monasteries which are, however, hardly worth spilling blood over, and others simply saw it as a "lost cause" or concluded, in the words of a Belgrade truck driver, "Now we would be fighting for Milosevic's throne. I wouldn't give one hair for Kosovo or for Milosevic" (Perlez 1998). Belgrade's newspapers cited despairing letters from army conscripts on this issue, and some policemen were dismissed for refusing assignment to Kosovo (O'Connor 1998d).

  <u>The use of criminals and opportunistic thugs</u>. "War upon rebellion," T. E. Lawrence once observed, "is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife" (1926, 196, ch. 33). In a doomeager willingness to ignore such wisdom and to repeat the mistake of 1998, Milošević allowed himself to believe assurances that a really substantial offensive could wipe out the KLA in five to seven days (Perlez 1999; Dinmore 1999). Since he needed dedicated fighters for this, he found many of them in the same place as before: criminals were released from prison to join and to form paramilitaries (Gordon 1999; Ingrao 1999).

  <u>An orgy of thug-dominated violence, destruction, and looting</u>. In the meantime, NATO was threatening to bomb if the offensive took place. Concerned about this, those running the Serb offensive appear to have tried to keep it under some degree of control. Given the quality of the personnel principally carrying it out, the offensive would likely be brutal (and ultimately counterproductive) like the offensive of the year before, but efforts were made to keep it localized and focused mainly on KLA stronghold areas.

  Accordingly, observed a senior Western official, the Serbs at first seemed more interested in "channeling and moving people" rather than in "destroying and killing." The hope was that by limiting civilian casualties they could avoid triggering NATO's bombs (Erlanger 1999b). For the rest, Serbian "special police," presumably in an effort to deter, pointedly announced to western journalists that they "would kill every Albanian in sight" if NATO bombed (Ingrao 1999). Ethnic Albanians and others in Kosovo expressed the fear that this was not an idle threat (Gall 1999a; Gall 1999b; Erlanger 1999e; Erlanger 1999g; see also the warnings in Kuperman 1998).

  Dismissing such threats as "foolish Serbian bravado," NATO launched the airstrikes under the assumption, as Clinton admitted later, that after "a couple of days" of bombing the Serbs would halt their offensive (Whitney and Schmitt 1999; Broder 1999).[55] It was also hoped the bombing would "stop Albanians and Serbs from killing each other," as U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke put it (Rieff 1999).[56]

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  [55] On this issue, see K. Mueller 1999.

  [56] The Central Intelligence Agency estimated that there was a 50/50 chance Yugoslavia would back down, and a 50/50 chance they wouldn't. A State Department official, yearning for certainty rather than a reasoned assessment of probabilities, denounced this estimate by "those bastards" for "having it both ways" (McManus 1999). No planning or provision was made for the possibility that the CIA's second possible outcome would transpire and that masses of refugees would be forced out of Kosovo.
  Planning for the bombing seems to have been based on an overestimate of its effectiveness in Bosnia in 1995. Although the bombing (which, however, took far longer than two days) probably helped to concentrate the Serb mind, it may not have been necessary to obtain the resulting Dayton agreement which ended the war. Before the bombing even began the Serb military position was falling apart to Croatian ground attacks--the importance of which, Holbrooke notes, was not appreciated by policy planners at the time (1998, 73). Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs had agreed to let Milošević negotiate for them, giving him virtually total control over their fate. Since he had been repeatedly urging them for more than two years to accept various peace plans offered by the West, this appointment was close to an admission of defeat. Milošević's gracious, warm-hearted evaluation of his Bosnian co-negotiators is indicated by his angry assertions to Holbrooke: "They are not my friends. They are not my colleagues. It is awful just to be in the same room with them for so long. They are shit" (1998, 105-6). Also relevant is the fact that the Dayton agreement involved substantial concessions on the part of the <u>Bosnian</u> government (Burg and Shoup 1999, 356).

Instead, the bombing had a sort of Pearl Harbor effect on the Serbs: like Americans in 1941, they were sent into a state of outraged fury.[57] Virtually all vocal opposition to Milošević vanished, and, in a major shift, draft and mobilization orders were now frequently obeyed (Erlanger 1999c; Harden 1999a).

The Serbs couldn't take their fury out directly on Brussels, London, or Washington, but they did have an enemy conveniently close at hand: the Albanians of Kosovo. Accordingly, the bombing sent Serb forces in Kosovo into an orgy of vengeful violence and destruction that lasted for several weeks and seems to have been intended to carry out the goal, apparently previously considered unrealistic, to drive the majority Albanians from Kosovo. This rampage was partly facilitated by the fact that it could, in a sense, proceed unseen: monitors who might have been able to observe and document Serb behavior had been withdrawn in anticipation of the bombing campaign (Kifner 1999b; Erlanger 1999g).

There are two aspects of this situation that are notably different from those attending the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. First, Serb hostility toward Albanians has generally been considerably greater than that toward Croats or Muslims. There has been far less intermarriage, and as Brian Hall has observed, there seems traditionally to have been a "unanimity of Serbs' opinions about the Albanians, from drunks to bartenders to journalists to university professors" such that "even people who managed to be rational about the Croats could not speak of the Albanians without sounding as though their skin was crawling" (1994, 268). And second, the bombing had an impelling or triggering effect on Serb fighting morale, greatly inspiring or heightening a rage directed against a local ethnic group.

Nevertheless, what happened in Kosovo often resembles the process seen earlier, except that, in part because of these two special circumstances, it may have taken place at an even higher degree of brutality. Most strikingly, the violence seems to have been almost entirely committed by marauding, if sometimes uniformed, thugs rather than by conscripts in the army.

After the bombing began, whatever control there was collapsed and the frenzy began: it was "a breakdown in already poor discipline," as one observer put it (Stanley 1999). As in Bosnia and Croatia, the army did provide a sort of generalized support for the rampage, it participated directly in some areas, and it hardly escapes blame for the results in any case. But, as one report puts it, "in hundreds of interviews," Kosovo Albanians "have said that nearly all the killings of civilians were committed by Serbian paramilitary forces and not by the regular army" (Harden 1999c).

The overall pattern was quite similar to that in Bosnia: "The army held the ground; special police and paramilitary units, sometimes with long hair, beards and bandannas, cleared the villages, often killing those who resisted leaving; the civilians were channeled toward buses or the border; bodies were often cleared out by other police units. Then the army checked the village again" (Erlanger 1999i). The Kosovo capital of Priština had been mostly immune to violence previously, but after the bombing began, "radical Serbs with guns, masked members of paramilitary units and at least some policemen rampaged through the city, burning and looting and ordering Albanians to leave," according to a New York Times report.[58] Eventually, the army and the police were able to bring the violence under control there, arresting 350 for crimes against civilians, and clearing off the paramilitary forces, "most of whom are radical Serbs who learned their trade in Bosnia and applied it here." Elsewhere, it was even worse: "a lot of vile and angry people, maddened, who were out of control," a Serb official put it. Asked if patriotic Serbs would later feel any shame for what was done in their name in Kosovo, he answered, "a lot" (Erlanger 1999d). But a draftee who does feel shame also remembers the exhilaration of the experience and notes that some people liked the killing: "You find out a lot about people in 24 hours of war" (Erlanger 1999i).

Moreover, if the thugs, as in Bosnia and Croatia, were in some sense brutally (and ultimately counterproductively) carrying out nationalist goals, they, like their predecessors, also seem to have borne

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[57] As Gordon Prange observes of the reaction to Pearl Harbor, "The American people reeled with a mind-staggering mixture of surprise, awe, mystification, grief, humiliation, and, above, all cataclysmic fury" (1981, 582). For the argument that this reaction inspired a misguided policy, see Mueller 1995a, 103-110.

[58] Although indications that the marauders sported sunglasses are less common than in Bosnia and Croatia, there are more reports that they hid behind masks, particularly ski masks.

rather less noble aspirations more frontally on their minds: pure sadism, mindless violence, debauched boozing, and, mainly, focused, if opportunistic, looting. Thus, while killing and other brutalities were common, the true name of the game seems to have become personal enrichment. For example, the Serb paramilitaries in many cases made special efforts to concentrate their activities on the homes of wealthy Albanians (Rohde 1999). A true ideologue would scarcely have been so picky.

There were plenty of murders, of course, but Albanian lives were routinely spared by the payment of cash. One child remembers that "three people with black masks and big guns" threatened to kill his mother unless he gave them money, and the 550 Deutsche marks hidden in his sock saved her (Kifner 1999a). Another victim reports that the paramilitaries yelled, "Give us money or we'll kill you." Then they took the wedding ring from her finger and heirloom earrings from her ears, ransacked the apartment ostensibly in search of weapons, and stole her washing machine and an old television set (Erlanger 1999f). Serb reservists report that "everywhere in Kosovo they were surrounded by Serbs in uniform carrying stolen televisions, satellite dishes and other electronic equipment." The experience generated what a soldier called "one of the best jokes of the war": a "Rambo," asked why he had quit the war, responds, "I couldn't carry a gun and a television set at the same time" (Harden 1999c).

Some of the victims specifically refer to their persecutors as criminals. "Those people are from prisons, are out from prison now, criminals and gypsies with big weapons, with black masks," screamed one Albanian refugee (NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, PBS, 1 April 1999). "They were not policemen. They were criminals Milosevic let out of jail," recounted another (Kifner 1999a).

Some Albanians claim that their Serb neighbors aided or joined the marauders, but the evidence on this seems to be remarkably limited. There is a reasonable suspicion that local Serbs guided the marauders to the homes of the wealthier Albanians, but a reporter very experienced in the area found no Albanians who were able to "name a local Serb who was involved" (Rohde 1999).[59] Local Serbs were armed for the job, like their counterparts in Bosnia and Croatia, and some doubtless did join the rampage. But there are also accounts of Serb neighbors looking after an elderly Albanian man, bringing him bread and yogurt (Erlanger 1999f), and instances of returning Albanians finding their apartments intact because of the intervention of Serbian neighbors (Erlanger 1999h).

Crumbling rather fighting. The military conclusion of the war bears similarities to the endings of the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. Beside the ethnic cleansing of cities and villages, there was also a somewhat more coordinated effort to engage the KLA in what may have resembled actual military operations. The KLA was a small force, poorly trained, applying tactics more nearly improvisatory than planned, and far less well equipped. It was, however, growing, and it was probably less casualty-averse than the Serbs. Moreover, it was supported by semi-coordinated NATO air attacks which were much more likely to be effective whenever the Serbs massed for an attack. After engaging and failing to extinguish this unimpressive force with its damaging longer-term potential, it seems that the Serbs essentially crumbled.

Ethnic cleansing continues. With the military collapse, the situation became even less safe for the local Serbs, and ethnic cleansing of them by the now-vengeful Albanians resumed at a heightened pace. The Serbs have continued to leave, and the region is becoming almost entire Albanian in a process similar to the one in Bosnia where even after the war Serbs, Croats, and Muslims continue, out of simple, understandable fear, to avoid an integrated existence. The mechanism is neatly described by a Serb nurse and war widow who yearns to return to Sarajevo (O'Connor 1998a):

> Ninety percent of the people in Bosnia want to live together, but no government will
> protect minorities from the 10 percent, and they can kill you. We are still only safe among
> our own people.

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[59] Interestingly, Rohde's article is given the headline, "Where Neighbors Attacked Neighbors, Justice Is Far From Easy," by his New York Times editors even though the article nowhere supplies any clear evidence that this ever took place and reports instead the animated insistence of local Serbs that masked paramilitaries were to blame.

2. Nationalism, Hobbes, and the state of nature

Michael Ignatieff (1993) compares the conditions that prevailed in Yugoslavia to a Hobbesian state of nature. But the Yugoslav experience suggests Hobbes was wrong--perhaps profoundly wrong--in some important respects.

Hobbes was obsessed by the chaos and calamity of the English Civil War that took place during his lifetime, and his important book, Leviathan, was, he notes, "occasioned by the disorders of the present time" (1909, 556). Actually, he never really experienced those traumatic disorders first hand since he judiciously fled to France when he saw war coming (Rogow 1986, ch. 6). However, he could still theorize of course, and he viewed the English Civil War as essentially one of competing ideas--in that case religious ideas, rather than nationalist ones as in Yugoslavia. And, like Ignatieff on Yugoslavia, he envisioned the conditions as a descent into a base state of nature where, without "a common power to keep them all in awe," people live in a perpetual state of war of "every man against every man," where "there is no place for industry because the fruit thereof is uncertain," where there is "continual fear and danger of violent death," and where life, as he famously put it, is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (1909, 96-97, 105).

Robert Kraynak's analysis of Hobbes' thought is particularly useful because he attempts to keep that thought in historical perspective. Kraynak argues that in Hobbes' vision of human history people did once manage to lift themselves out of a barbaric, if somewhat innocent, state of nature into a form of ordered civilization. This progressive development proved fragile, however, because scholars, priests, and lawyers developed competing and incompatible religious doctrines based on authority rather than on objective science, and then convinced their various co-religionists to engage in destructive and vicious doctrinal wars. In particular, notes Kraynak, in Hobbes' opinion the English Civil War emerged when "various intellectual authorities, driven by a desire for honor and glory, competed among themselves to corrupt and seduce the credulous people." For Hobbes, "the tragedy and folly of doctrinal politics" is that eventually "intellectual elites mobilize the masses against their rivals and foment rebellion" (1990, 86, 88). And Hobbes held that the resulting brutish conditions of civil war are scarcely, if at all, distinguishable from those of the barbaric, pre-civilized state of nature (Kraynak 1990, 144). It is a "kingdom of darkness" and a "confederacy of deceivers" in which "force and fraud" become "the two cardinal virtues" (Kraynak 1990, 131, 152).

The Yugoslav experience calls into question Hobbes' conception of the state of nature of whichever variety as a war of "every man against every man." Hobbes does acknowledge that humans group themselves (so the state of nature may not be quite as "solitary" as his famous description seems to suggest), and thus that the perpetual wars of the state of nature are waged between groups rather than between individuals (Kraynak 1990, 148-49). The implication of the image is one of perpetual and total violence, however, in which all partake.

But although there was plenty of deception, force, and fraud in the civil wars in Yugoslavia, people there did not descend into the undifferentiated, albeit grouped, war of all against all that Hobbes so vividly depicted and so ardently and influentially abhorred. Rather, it was a condition in which a mass of essentially mild, ordinary, and quite normal people were often unwillingly and bewilderedly brought under the vicious and arbitrary control of a rather small group of thugs with guns.

Hobbes' greatest mischief, however, comes from his solution to the problem he invents. He assumes that every person is, at base, "radically insecure, mistrustful of other men and afraid for his life" (Kraynak 1990, 179). Therefore, the only way out of the mess is for everyone permanently to surrender to an authoritarian ruler, one who primarily values glory and stability rather than doctrinal orthodoxy or ideological purity, and one who will maintain the necessary force to keep all people from once again giving in to their natural proclivities for isolation, hostility, and insensitivity to the rights of others (Kraynak 1990, 165, 176).

But the Yugoslav experience suggests that this monumental--perhaps even impossible--task is hardly required. Most people most of the time do not have a great deal of difficulty getting along and in fabricating useful rules and patterns of conduct which allow them peacefully to coexist. For example, by the time Hobbes was writing, business contracts had very often been effectively and efficiently honored out of mutual self-interest and through reputational enforcement mechanisms, despite an absence of effective

+political force.[60] This experience is contrary to his cynical and uninformed assertion that bonds "have their strength, not from their own nature (for nothing is more easily broken than a man's word), but from fear of some evil consequence upon the rupture" (1909, 101).

Police may be needed, even necessary, to maintain order, but they need not normally be large in number nor does their control need to be Leviathan-like. This is because they mainly need simply to protect the many from the few, rather than everyone from everyone else as Hobbes would have it. But, as it does not normally take a large number of police to maintain order in a community, it does not take a large number of thugs to maintain a different kind of order, one that can look a great deal like chaos--or hell--and where life indeed can readily become solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

In Yugoslavia, nationalism proved essentially to be simply the human characteristic around which the thugs happened to choose to array themselves. This process does, however, furnish them with a degree of predictability--if you are a member of the opposite group you can be sure they will persecute you, but if you are a member of their group, they will more or less protect you as long as you seem to be reasonably loyal. That is, they may be thugs, but they are not <u>random</u> thugs.

Nationalism, then, was important only as an ordering, organizational, or predictive device or principal, not as a crucial motivating force.[61] In many respects the same sort of dynamic would hold if their organizational principal were handedness or loyalty to a specific soccer team. If the thugs surged into town determined to cleanse it violently of, say, lefthanders or of supporters of an opposing team, those in that group would quickly find it in their interest to leave while righthanders or fans of the thug-favored team would, often reluctantly, come to recognize that the thugs had become their only protection against revenge-seeking thugs of the other proclivity or persuasion. And as they hunkered down behind their protecting thugs or as they sought gradually to flee the war zone, members of each group would probably reflect in bewilderment from time to time that before the thugs came, they didn't even know the handedness or the soccer loyalties of their friends, neighbors, and schoolmates. Thus, identity, as Chaim Kaufmann notes, "is often imposed by the opposing group, specifically by its most murderous members" (1996, 144).

3. The concept of international "anarchy"

Some theorists known as "realists" have extrapolated the Hobbesian mischief to the international sphere. There is, of course, no effective international government, or sovereign in Hobbes' terms, and so, in a technical sense anarchy prevails in the international sphere. And therefore, so the thinking runs, the nations of the world must be in a sort of Hobbesian state of nature.

Thus, John Mearsheimer holds that in this condition, "there is little room for trust among states" and "security will often be scarce" (1990, 12, 45) And fellow realists Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz declare that international politics tends toward "pure coercion," that "no state can confidently rely on the goodwill of other states over the long term," that "trust is hard to come by," that "all states all of the time must make provisions for their defense," that statesmen "must be shortsighted," that states "cannot afford to be moral," that "military power is necessary for survival," and that states "need force" because "they cannot get along without it" (1983, 3-8).

But it does not follow that a situation that is anarchic in the sense that it is unregulated and unpoliced is necessarily anarchic in the sense that it is chaotic and violent. That is, it need not necessarily be a conflict of all against all. It is the relatively rare rogues, or in this case rogue states, that are the problem. Under ordinary circumstances, trust and mutual accommodation are entirely possible.[62]

4. The essential nonexistence of "ethnic warfare"

The whole concept of "ethnic warfare" may be importantly misguided. The concept generally is

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[60] On these issues, see Benson 1997; Ellickson 1991; Mueller 1999, ch. 4.

[61] As Yahya Sadowski notes, "ethnicity is one pattern around which people can organize--and its appeal must constantly compete with many other ways that people might group themselves" (1998, 150).

[62] For the argument that this may be the wave of the future, see Rosecrance 1986, Mueller 1989.

taken to imply a Hobbesian war of all against all and neighbor against neighbor, a condition in which everyone in one ethnic group becomes the ardent, dedicated, and murderous enemy of everyone in another ethnic group. By contrast, it seems to me that ethnic warfare is much more like non-ethnic warfare in the sense that it is actually waged by only a small portion of the population--though the fighters may often have the general support and sympathy of a wider population.

In fact, the mistaken--even racist--image that an entire ethnic group is devotedly out to destroy another ethnic group is an important <u>cause</u> of the violence itself, and it can shatter any ability to perceive nuance and variety. Moreover, it can logically lead to calls for genocide: if everyone in a given ethnic is out to get me, the only effective way the threat can be removed is to eliminate all of that ethnic group. And, the all-against-all image can discourage policing by suggesting the costs would be enormous because the entire ethnic group must be directly policed, rather than just a small, opportunistic, and often quite cowardly subgroup.

5. What happened in Yugoslavia could happen anywhere

If my assessment is essentially correct, it suggests that what happened in Yugoslavia is not unique or particularly special to the area, but could happen just about anywhere.

By contrast, the Serbian writer, Aleksandar Tisma has gloomily concluded from his country's tragedy that "There are no ordinary people; every man, especially male, is a criminal" and that "There are civilized people and less civilized people. Here in the Balkans, people don't belong to the civilized but to the less civilized" (Perlez 1997).

But it seems to me he is wrong on both counts. Chaos is more nearly a conscious human creation than a cosmic necessity. The wars in Yugoslavia did not break out because every man is a criminal or a potential criminal, nor did they come about because the peoples in the Balkans are "less civilized." When order breaks down criminals and sadists can be given free rein, and small bands of them can then quite easily seize the opportunity and debase the conditions of life.

And thugs are everywhere at least in small numbers, and small numbers, only, are necessary if the conditions are ripe. Combat studies suggest that perhaps two percent of combat soldiers enjoy killing--that is, they are "aggressive psychopaths" or, put a bit more mildly, "if given a legitimate reason, will kill without regret or remorse" (Grossman 1995, 180).[63] Brian Hall, musing about the situation as Yugoslavia was breaking up, discusses the "one-to-five percent of any population, any nation...that become Ustasha, or Chetnik, or Partisan, not because they were afraid, or confused, or idealistic, but because they wanted to hurt people....War was their dream come true" (1994, 210). Moreover, as various studies have suggested, it is often quite possible to get ordinary people to participate in acts of considerable cruelty when they are placed, voluntarily or involuntarily, into a supportive environment--ideological or ethnic hatred is by no means necessary for this capacity to emerge.[64]

Accordingly, if there is a breakdown in law and order, thugs, sadists, and psychopaths can rise to a dominant role, others can lend a hand or withdraw into isolation, and any place can degenerate into a Bosnia. England may seem rather tranquil and well ordered in many respects, but it is also the home of some of the world's most notorious soccer hooligans (Bufford 1991). Canada often seems to be a nation of sweetly reasonable people, but that is not the conclusion one would draw from watching a hockey game. Denmark may remind people mainly of Hans Christian Andersen and little mermaids, but it once was the home of world-class marauders, and it seems unlikely that that propensity has been fully bred out of the

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[63] Grossman also points out, however, that such individuals often seem entirely capable of blending back into the population after the war without finding a need to do further killing (1995, 181).

[64] Milgram 1975; Haney et al. 1973; Zimbardo et al. 1973; Browning 1998; Katz 1993. Musing on this general issue, Maass discusses a brutal murder by two British boys of a three-year-old in 1993, the My Lai massacre carried out by American troops in Vietnam, gratuitous murders and dismemberment of Argentine soldiers by British soldiers during the Falklands conflict, and the torture and murder of a Somalia boy (complete with trophy photographs) by Canadian soldiers on peacekeeping duty in the boy's country (1996, 54-57).

race in the intervening centuries.[65]

Policing. In a recent book, Yahya Sadowski finds that, although cultural strife is found about as much in developed countries as in poorer ones, it is less likely to turn violent in prosperous societies. Therefore, he concludes, economic advancement tends to reduce cultural violence (1998, 174-76).

In this he may be too much of an economic determinist and, to that degree, too much of a pessimist. It is the actions of leading politicians and police organizations that seem to be most important in keeping ethnic and cultural conflict from erupting into major violence. Prosperous societies do seem to do better in this regard than poorer ones, and thus prosperity may be beneficial if it helps to develop competent governments and police forces. But wealth is not the key operative factor.

For example, as noted earlier, because of sound political policies, ethnic violence has been avoided in Bulgaria even though that country is hardly more developed than Serbia or Bosnia. And, far from being inevitable as so many people seem to believe, the disasters in Yugoslavia could almost certainly have been avoided if politicians and police had behaved in a more sensible manner. Or, putting it the other way, it is entirely possible to imagine Bosnian-like chaos in prosperous Quebec or Northern Ireland if the Canadian or British authorities, like their Yugoslav counterparts, had attempted to deal with those cultural conflicts by encouraging murderous rampage rather than through patient policing and political accommodation.

Other wars. Generalizing from the wars in the 1990s that took place in Croatia and Bosnia, this paper stresses the importance of vicious and opportunistic, but substantially non-ideological, criminals and criminal-like elements in the development of those wars. It seems to me that this approach is much sounder and more productive than ones that explains the wars as situations in which murderous communal rage, exploding from pent-up ancient hatreds or from the cynical, savvy manipulation of malevolent, short-sighted politicians, induces a Hobbesian conflict of all against all.

Certainly a considerable element in many unconventional wars has been the savage ministrations of gangs that are essentially criminal, warriors who are far more interested in sadistic violence, mayhem, and booty than in ideological goals or ethnic aggrandizement. As Sadowski points out, that has been central to the clan warfare that has racked Somalia in the 1990s (1998, 165-68). And David Keen traces the various elements of brigandry in civil wars, concluding that such conflicts commonly are "not simply a breakdown in a particular system, but a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection" (1998, 11).

There are doubtless instances, however, in which the Hobbesian vision comes closer to being realized. A recent case in point may be the disaster that took place in Rwanda in 1994. [66] Nonetheless,

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[65] On the murderous rivalries of motorcycle gangs in tranquil Denmark, see Kinzer 1996. In this case, however, the thugs are taken to be an aberrant "social pathology," not held to be typical of the entire national spirit as so often happens in Kaplanesque discussions of the Balkans.

[66] The essential purpose of the violence in Bosnia and Croatia was ethnic cleansing, not mass murder (though, of course, many murders were committed), whereas the explicit goal in Rwanda was genocide. It is questionable whether the overall policies in Bosnia, Croatia, or Kosovo satisfy the official definition of genocide unless the definition is taken to equate genocide with massacre or persecution (Kuper 1981, 210):

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:
(a) Killing members of a group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births with the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Plenty of "harm" was inflicted in the wars, of course, but the "intent" of the policies, however murderous, does not seem to have been to "destroy" another group so much as forcibly to move it to another area (and sometimes to force members of one's own group to move in the opposite direction). In some respects, it might be suggested, the phrase, "war crime," is redundant.

there are considerable similarities between the two cases.

The main momentum of the killings in Rwanda was carried by a relatively small number of specially-trained Hutu murderers who went on an orgy of killing that was often facilitated by local officials acting under orders from above, while most other Hutus stood by in considerable bewilderment. In his book on the crisis, Gérard Prunier pauses to reflect that a "social aspect of the killings has often been overlooked": As soon as the killing groups "went into action, they drew around them a cloud of even poorer people, a lumpenproletariat of street boys, rag-pickers, car-washers and homeless unemployed. For these people the genocide was the best thing that could ever happen to them. They had the blessings of a form of authority to take revenge on socially powerful people as long as these were on the wrong side of the political fence. They could steal, they could kill with minimum justification, they could rape and they could get drunk for free. This was wonderful. The political aims pursued by the masters of this dark carnival were quite beyond their scope. They just went along" (1995, 231-32). They were fully willing to murder fellow Hutus suspected of not being committed, and they often sought to expand their numbers by forcing other Hutus, on pain of instant death, to join the killings: as one such "innocent murderer" or "victim-killer" put it, "either you took place in the massacre or you were massacred yourself" (1995, 247).[67]

Discipline among the killing bands was poor, particularly among the new recruits who "tended to be street boys who were drunk most of the time." And "the militias crumbled into armed banditry in the later course of the war as the administrative structure which had recruited and supported them fell apart" (1995, 243-44).

As in Yugoslavia, the marauders were put down fairly easily when confronted with a reasonably coherent military force. Several thousand refugees were saved in a Kigali stadium because UNAMIR, which Prunier characterizes as "the powerless UN 'military' force," simply forbade the murder squads entry (1995, 254, 377). And when the Tutsis eventually were able to bring in an army, they had to battle for the capital city, but then took over the rest of the country "with a minimum of fighting" (1995, 268).

6. Thugs as residual warriors

Between 1993 and 1997, Michael Ignatieff traveled around the world, seeking the identity of what he called the "new architects" of "postmodern war." He found them in "the paramilitaries, guerrillas, militias, and warlords who are tearing up the failed states of the 1990s" and in "the barefoot boys with Kalashnikovs, the paramilitaries in wraparound sunglasses, the turbaned zealots of the Taliban who checked their prayer mats next to their guns" (1997, 3, 5-6).

In these considerations, he is, as he acknowledges, echoing and developing some of the notions of Martin van Creveld who has proclaimed that war has become "transformed" as we enter a "new era, not of peaceful competition between trading blocks, but of warfare between ethnic and religious groups." In the future, "war will not be waged by armies but by groups whom we today call terrorists, guerrillas, bandits, and robbers" (1991, ix, 197).

But, actually, this concern is not exactly a new one. As Sandra Halperin (1998) has documented, ethnic conflict occurred frequently in Europe in the nineteenth century--far more so than in the twentieth--and Van Creveld himself points out that what is often called "low-intensity conflict" has been vastly more common worldwide in the post-1945 period than conventional armed warfare (1991, 20). For his part, Ignatieff admits that "irregulars are as old as war itself, and their savagery is proverbial." He argues, however, that in the past "armies managed to co-opt irregular militias, introduce regimental discipline, and bring their violence under state control," whereas "the irregulars of the Balkan wars are historically distinctive, in that instead of being co-opted and tamed by the state, they were covertly instigated by states--Serbia and Croatia--to perform atrocities, not as an unintended consequence of drunkenness and indiscipline, but as a deliberate military strategy." War, he concludes, "used to be fought by soldiers; it is now fought by irregulars. This may be one reason why postmodern war is so savage, why war crimes and atrocities are now integral to the very prosecution of war" (1997, 6, 132).

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[67] This occasionally happened in Bosnia as well it seems.

Since history is liberally festooned with instances of marauding bandit gangs, violent local uprisings, and rampaging mobs, it is not immediately clear that such energies have been terribly well modulated by organized armies in the past. And the notions that the savagery of war was somehow brought under control in the past by disciplined armies and that annihilation has not often been part of a deliberate military strategy would come as rather remarkable news to quite a few of their victims--the residents of Carthage, for example, whose city was totally devastated by Roman forces in 146 BC. Indeed, in ancient times it was not uncommon for victors quite deliberately to "consecrate" city-states to the Gods by killing every person and animal in them and by destroying all property (Botterweck and Ringgren 1986, 189-98). If the Bible is to be taken as literal truth, the Israelites launched a series of such wars. Concerned that the current occupants of the promised land might subvert the Israelites by teaching them the "abominations which they have done unto their gods" thus causing the Israelites to sin, God sternly required that such damage be prevented (Deuteronomy 20: 16-18). The book of Joshua routinely relates the consequent and very deliberate annihilation of the peoples of Jericho, Ai, Libnah, Lachisk, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Hazor, and the areas in between (the people of Gibeon, however, cut a deal and were merely enslaved).

History, of course, is filled with examples of similar slaughters. According to Thucydides, when the Athenians invaded the island of Melos in 416 BC, they very deliberately "put to death all the grown men whom they took and sold the women and children for slaves, and subsequently sent out five hundred colonists and inhabited the place for themselves" (1934, 337). Josephus' classic account of the Jewish War that ended in 79 AD catalogues massacre and the slaughter of prisoners as a process "integral to the very prosecution of war," which, together with pestilence, human sacrifice, famine, and cannibalism, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions (1982, 450-51). When Genghis Khan's hordes deployed into Russia in the thirteenth century, whole towns "vanished"--they were deliberately smashed, burned down, and depopulated. In Riazan, for example, the captured men, women, and children were killed with swords or arrows, thrown into fires, or bound, cut, and disemboweled (Brent 1976, 117, 120).

Pillage and booty-seeking has often been central to the war process. It was the motto even of the well-organized Gustavus Adolphus that "war must support war" (Millet and Moreland 1976, 15; see also Contamine 1984, 57). Knights in the fourteenth century, observes Richard Kaeuper, "seem to have accepted arson and pillage as normal and expected accompaniments of campaigning"; as Henry V put it jauntily, "War without fire is like sausages without mustard" (1988, 84). Wanton destruction was central, not peripheral, to Genghis Khan's approach to war; it was his motto that "the vanquished can never be the friends of the victors; the death of the former is necessary therefore for the safety of the latter," and some 18,000,000 may have fallen victim to this policy in China alone (Montross 1944, 27, 145). He also found the "greatest pleasure in life is to defeat your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses, and to clasp to your breast their wives and daughters" (Kellet 1982, 292-93).

However, if Ignatieff and van Creveld are correct that war used to be fought by soldiers, but is now fought by irregulars, this may be comparatively good news. There is nothing new in the fact that irregulars engage in warfare. They always have and, as suggested above, any co-optation of that drive by organized military forces seems scarcely to have dampened war's savagery. What may be new, however, is that regular soldiers no longer do so--or at any rate no longer do so as much. That is, organized, disciplined, coordinated warfare has become comparatively rare, and we are increasingly left with the poorly-coordinated, if sometimes savage, ravages of irregulars. It is not, as van Creveld would have it, that low-intensity has risen to "dominance" (1991, 205). Rather it is that, increasingly, warfare of that sort is the only kind still going on--war by thugs is the residual, not the emerging, form.[68]

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[68] Those seeking to identify a truly new form of warfare might better focus on the economic warfare that has become more fully effective in the wake of the Cold War through the coordinated efforts of the major countries. Economic sanctions have probably killed more people in the 1990s in Iraq alone than have been killed in all of history by all weapons of mass destruction and far more than have been killed in all the wars attending the breakup of Yugoslavia. See Mueller and Mueller 1999; Mueller and Mueller forthcoming.

But the experience of Yugoslavia suggests that irregulars can be dealt with rather readily, and cheaply, by organized military forces. Irregular forces are ill-disciplined, opportunistic, easily bored, and often cowardly. In particular, they have not solved a problem that is crucial to military effectiveness: the creation of an armed force that will stand and fight when ordered to do so (no matter how absurd and dangerous the situation appears to be) rather than giving in to a natural inclination to run and hide.[69] Consequently, when confronted by real armies, irregulars have a way of disintegrating before very many shots are fired. Van Creveld suggests that "armies will be replaced by police-like security forces on the one hand and bands of ruffians on the other" (1991, 225). If that is true, the experience from Yugoslavia strongly suggests that the security forces, if they are willing to make the effort, can rather easily prevail and at low (but not zero) cost. (Of course, if irregulars can be molded into disciplined and dedicated fighting forces willing to stand and fight and to take substantial casualties, they can become highly formidable.[70] However, almost by definition, such forces may not really be "irregulars." At any rate, it seems wise to avoid putting such forces in the same category as "bands of ruffians.")

Moreover, if some states, like Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, came to depend on irregulars, it is not because they find this approach particularly desirable or preferable, but because they are unable to muster an adequate number of recruits to field a real army. And in the end, if, again like Serbia but unlike Croatia and Bosnia, they continue to rely on such unreliable, corrupt, and fundamentally inept forces, they are likely eventually to go down to precipitous and pathetic defeat.

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[69] On this issue, see Mueller 1995a, ch. 8.

[70] On the extraordinary ability of the Vietnamese Communists to accomplish this, see Mueller 1980.

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