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# Media Manipulation or Economic Decline? Explaining the Rise of Nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina

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# Media Manipulation or Economic Decline?

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Explaining the Rise of Nationalism in Bosnia  
Herzegovina

**History Student Worker CSB**

AN HONORS THESIS

College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for All College Honors and Distinction

In the Department of Political Science

by

Rachel Mullin

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## Introduction

Nestled in the hills of Sarajevo, just a short walk from the US embassy and the Bosnia Herzegovina Parliament, is a haunting sight. It is the stadium, or more accurately the remnants of the stadium, which held the opening ceremonies of the 1984 Winter Olympics. One would expect the former Olympic stadium to be well preserved and a point of pride for the city. Stadiums of past Olympics in cities such as Los Angeles, London, and Beijing certainly are. However, the stadium in Sarajevo consists of crumbling graffiti covered remains and gravestones. The gravestones serve as a continued reminder of the destruction and chaos caused by the siege of Sarajevo and the great loss of life as Serb forces held the city under siege for close to three years. During the siege, the city became an epicenter for conflict as Serb forces surrounded it and terrorized the majority Bosniak population. It was a four-year war during which civilians, rather than soldiers, suffered most of the casualties.

The ethnic conflict that engulfed the city, and more broadly the country, seemed to arise unexpectedly. Less than a decade previously, Yugoslavia had hosted the Olympic Games and been an example of multiethnic living. However, nationalist narratives spread by political elites and nationalist media sources emerged that called for ethnic exclusion and violent nationalism that ultimately destroyed Yugoslavia. Elites used these narratives as a way to remobilize and manipulate past stories to influence actions in the present. For instance, the practice by the Ustashe of targeting pregnant Serb women to “kill the seed” was used as justification for the rape camps set up by Serbian forces who were “replanting the seed” that had been destroyed a generation prior. Why were people so willing to accept these nationalist narratives? How were these narratives able to inspire individuals to embrace a sense of ethnic exclusion and to work outside of the state structure to take up arms against their fellow citizens?

Explanations for nationalism and its increased support within a society are numerous. Some observers point to the breakup of the Soviet Union and the subsequent unbalancing of Yugoslavia's position in the world as a reason for the violence.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars contend that the area was predestined to experience violent conflict due to the presence of ancient historical hatred between Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks.<sup>2</sup> Still other academics argue that the war was the result of purposely-constructed nationalism that leaders, such as Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic, used as a way to cement their own power and distract public attention from economic woes.<sup>3</sup> However, few of these scholars can explain the rapid rise of nationalism and move towards violence that took place in only a few years. None of these explanations for nationalism have studied the reasons for why individuals act on nationalist beliefs. Most simply take for granted the presence of a national identity other than Yugoslav. However, understanding why the public embraced nationalism so quickly is essential for understanding ethnic conflict. Situations of conflict can be better predicted or monitored if the role of timing is understood. The international community can take greater steps toward preventing ethnic and religious conflict if there is a better understanding of how normal national pride, such as singing the American anthem before sporting events, transitions into nationalist narratives calling for violence.

In this research project, I ask why nationalism rose so quickly in Bosnia Herzegovina. My research focuses on the period from 1989, the beginning of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, through 1992, the onset of the war in Bosnia Herzegovina. I examine two independent variables as possible explanations for why ethnic nationalism was able to gain such

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<sup>1</sup> Veljko Vujačić, "Elites, Narratives, and Nationalist Mobilization in the Former Yugoslavia, The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s by V. P. Gagnon,; The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia by Franke Wilmer; Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States by Vjekoslav Perica; "Saviors of the Nation": Serbia S Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism by Jasna Dragović-Soso." *Comparative Politics* vol. 40 no 1 (October, 2007), 105.

<sup>2</sup> Vujačić, 105.

<sup>3</sup> Vujačić, 104.

strong support during the period: media manipulation and activation by elites and economic inequalities that led to scapegoating. To test the first independent variable, I explore how ethnic elites purposely created and disseminated nationalist narratives through media to serve their own political ends. For the second independent variable, I examine the effects of the economic upheaval Yugoslavia experienced and the impact of scapegoating on the acceptance of nationalist narratives. I also test if it is necessary that both independent variables be present in order for the rise to occur.

Through gaining a better understanding of what led to the rise of nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina and an examination of potential climates that increase public's receptiveness of nationalist narratives, the international community could take important steps to create more effective conflict prevention measures and policies for dealing with ethnic conflict.

### **Preview:**

My project begins with a review of the literature relevant to my research. I first present important definitions and explanations of concepts that are the foundation of my research: nation, nationalism, and national narratives. I then focus on how scholars have previously explained the rise of nationalism. Based on the existing literature, I propose three hypotheses to explain a rapid rise in nationalism. My first hypothesis (*H1*) is that elite manipulation of the media was the crucial component for the spread of nationalism through nationalist narratives. My second hypothesis (*H2*) is that economic grievances led to the rapid rise of nationalism. My third hypothesis (*H3*) is that both the impact of the media and economic decline were necessary conditions for the rapid rise of nationalism.

I then outline my methodology that relies primarily on a qualitative approach. Using field interviews collected throughout Bosnia Herzegovina from all three ethnic groups during the

summer of 2013, the limited economic records from the period, and a variety of domestic and international press coverage of the time, I examine the understanding of the situation from an individual level. I do this in an attempt to see what inspired in people to adopt such abrupt shifts in ideology and transition away from living in multiethnic society. Pride in one's nation was not the sole focus of the new nationalist sentiments that emerged. The narratives were extremely violent and exclusive in nature and demanded the separation from and elimination of groups that had lived together for generations. I assess my proposed hypotheses to see which variables played a larger role in the rapid rise of nationalism. Finally, I discuss the larger theoretical and policy implications of the rise of nationalism.

## **Literature Review**

I begin by defining and explaining the concepts of nation, nationalism, national identity, and nationalist narratives. With that foundation laid, I look to the explanations for why nationalism arises. The literature exploring the role of the media and narratives is presented first. I then present the literature surrounding the role of economics. I conclude with an examination of literature arguing for a multivariable explanation. Through the presentation of these ideas, the major explanations for the rise of nationalism are presented and explained as well as the possibility for a combination of variables necessary to explain the rise.

### *Nation, Nationalism and National Identity*

At its heart, my research explores how violent nationalism arises. What makes people pick up arms and fight against people who had been their neighbors and friends? Why do they feel this is necessary? How is nationalism a step beyond belief in one's nation? I attempt to understand the evolution of national identity to nationalism to violence.

Ernest Gellner contends that a nation is “a group that wills itself to persist as a community.”<sup>4</sup> His definition of nation indicates a number of things. Nations are not things that found around the globe organically. Borders and capitals do not just appear on maps. Under Gellner’s definition, a nation is not a passive identity; it requires agency. Individuals provide this agency by actively adopting and promoting their nation. They (the individuals who subscribe to a nation) unite under a cause of nationhood and ensure through their efforts that the nation continues to exist. This definition also suggests that the many of the concepts people prescribe to nationhood, such as a common history, religion, law, culture, do not have to all be present. What binds a nation is simply the perception of unity as a nation. As Benedict Anderson phrases it, nations are “imagined communities.”<sup>5</sup> One way in which this perception of unity is achieved is through the use of the media.<sup>6</sup>

Anderson pays particular attention to the impact of print media, beginning with the advent of the printing press, on the development of nationhood. He contends that the birth of the modern nation was only made possible because of the development of printing.<sup>7</sup> The development of printing aided the sense of nationhood and nationalism in three main ways. First, print media created a unified field for the exchange of information and ideas below Latin<sup>8</sup> and above spoken vernaculars<sup>9</sup>. Second, it gave a sense of “fixity” or rigidity to language that in time nations would use to appeal to a sense of ancient unity through a common language.<sup>10</sup> Third, print media created “languages of power” or languages the dominated over the languages of

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<sup>4</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell Press (1983), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, New York: Verso (1983), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, 46.

<sup>8</sup> The language of European elites

<sup>9</sup> Such as regional dialects

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, 44.



other groups.<sup>11</sup> Through these three developments the ideas of what a nation could be spread throughout regions, and groups were able to unite behind the idea of a nation which previously could not have existed.

Simply having a nation does not imply nationalism, particularly violent nationalism. Nationalism takes the concept of a nation a step beyond a simple state of being. As Hans Kohn argued, nationalism is “a state of mind and an act of consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> Kohn built his definition after examining the world in the waning days of WWII. Like nation, nationalism has a necessary agency component. It needs to be created and spread throughout a community by individuals. It is not something that is innate to humans. Individuals are not born nationalistic rather they become nationalistic; it requires creation. Nationalism usually functions as a way to link together a sense of national identity to a prescribed territory. An example of this sense of nationalism could be Crimea, currently part of Russian territory but previously part of Ukraine. Crimea has historic ties to Russia; nevertheless, for generations these ties were part of a collective history, although they were not a way to demonstrate the necessity of Crimea to be part of Russia. However, through recent events, a sense of nationalism developed amongst Crimeans that they should be a part of Russia, and as a result they made a concerted effort (or an act of conscious as Kohn would phrase it) to become part of Russia. They linked their sense of national identity, Russian, to a territory. Nationalism also takes on an exclusionary component. It is determined as much by what it is not as by what it is.<sup>13</sup> It tends to stress a sense of national superiority and takes pride in being different from other nations.

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<sup>11</sup> Anderson, 45.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background*, New York: Transaction Publishers, (1944), 10.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, "Introduction," in Parker, et al. (eds.), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York, 1992), 5.

One way that nationalism develops is through nationalist narratives. Gerald Cromer describes these narratives “projective narratives<sup>14</sup>.” Projective narratives are stories that recall the past, but also teach how to behave in the present. These narratives rely upon using the history of a group and the heroes of the past as a rallying cry for action in the present day. They also can stress ideas of past victimhood and incite calls for modern day vengeance. They not only portray the past but also influence actions in the present, and they make behavior that should be criminal, such as killing or looting, permissible.<sup>15</sup> An example of this is the manipulation of Jewish history by groups such as Haganah, Etzel, and Lehi. By using stories of the Jewish sufferings at the hands of the Greeks and Egyptians, extremist groups were able to demonstrate how their actions against the British fit a similar mold. As a result, they were justified in their use of violence against the British.<sup>16</sup> Nationalist narratives are also used as a way to establish the ideas of “us” and “them.”<sup>17</sup> Through this establishment of who is part of a nation and who is an outsider, the authors of the narrative create a sense of exclusion that can be used to further support calls for territory.

Both nation and nationalism require an agency component. As a result, nationalism cannot arise without some cause for it, more specifically elites or powerful individuals spreading nationalism. Two possible triggers nationalism could be the role of elites in manipulating the media or public frustration resulting from economic decline.

### *Role of the Media*

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<sup>14</sup> Gerald Cromer, “In the Mirror of the Past: The Use of History in the Justification of Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 3 no. 4 (1991): 165.

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Cromer, 164-178.

<sup>16</sup> Cromer, 166.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, 1989), 270-71.

Amongst the scholarly community, and the wider popular press, there has been a great deal of discussion about the role of the media and ethnic violence. Strong support comes from the example of the role of the radio in Rwanda. Researchers have used phrases such as “broadcasting genocide,” “death by radio,” and “voice of genocide” to describe the role of the radio<sup>18</sup> and the radio “had large scale and direct effects on behavior.”<sup>19</sup> There are two main ideas. First, the radio was a tool to implant listeners with ideas of hate, fear, and dehumanization towards the Tutsis. Second, elites used the radio as a way to create and distribute a voice of the conflict that could issue the orders to kill and the Rwandans chose to obey.<sup>20</sup>

Lee Ann Fujii’s study of the Rwandan genocide also offers insight into the role of the radio. Fujii examined the radio as the voice of the ethnic cleansing. Leaders used the radio to spread messages of ethnic hatred, orchestrate attacks, and to give locations for where Tutsis were. According to Fujii, the genocide in Rwanda would have been almost impossible to carry out to the same degree if not for the genocidaires’ use of the radio.<sup>21</sup> The findings that leaders have used the media to inspire, orchestrate, and perpetuate ethnic conflict demonstrates the necessity of the media in spurring an increase in nationalism.

Samantha Powers places a similar emphasis on the role of the radio in orchestrating conflict. Like Fujii, Powers’ examination of the role of the media, in particular the radio, draws upon her research of the Rwandan genocide. She uses dozens of interviews, from both US officials and Rwandan citizens, and an examination of formerly classified documents concerning the events and the operations to develop her explanation. She cites examples of killers carrying out their acts with a radio in one hand and a machete in the other. The radio was a way for

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<sup>18</sup> Scott, Straus, “What is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence: Rethinking Rwanda’s “Radio Machete”” *Politics Society* vol. 35 no 4 (December 2007), 612.

<sup>19</sup> Straus, 612.

<sup>20</sup> Straus, 613.

<sup>21</sup> Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, (2009).

extremists to spread messages of hate in the build up to the conflict.<sup>22</sup> Once the conflict began, elites used the radio to broadcast the location of targets, orchestrate attacks, and coordinate missions. In Power's assessment, without the radio, the violence of Rwanda would not have been possible on the same scale.

Not everyone is in agreement with Powers, Melvern, and Fuji about the necessity of the media in sparking nationalism. Examining Fuji's work, Scott Straus contends that media is not the only necessary component and that labeling it as such oversimplifies the issues. Through an examination of the exposure of RTLM broadcasts, the content analysis of broadcasts, and interviews with individuals about the role of the radio in their decisions to commit violence within Rwanda, he argues that the existing belief amongst scholars is overly simplified and unsupported. Straus admits that the media did play some role, but that it cannot explain the ethnic conflict in its entirety. Focusing on the media fails to provide an agency component. He contends that scholars need to pay closer attention to "issues of agency, context, institutions, and history."<sup>23</sup> Rather, Straus contends that greater emphasis and study needs to be placed on the agency of Rwandans themselves and an understanding of the greater context of what was occurring in Rwanda.<sup>24</sup>

### *Economic Grievance*

Decremental deprivation caused by economic woes is another potential explanation for the rapid growth of nationalism. Ted Robert Gurr uses this concept to refer to situations in which economic production and strength decline, but the public's expectations for things such as public

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<sup>22</sup> Samantha Powers, "Bystanders to Genocide," *The Atlantic Monthly Group*, September 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Scott Straus, "What is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda's Radio Machete," *Politics Society* vol 35 no 4 ( December 2007), 632.

<sup>24</sup> Straus, 611.

services, jobs, and prices do not. The result of this deprivation is intense frustration on the part of the public and an increased propensity for violence.<sup>25</sup> Gurr bases his arguments on an extensive examination of over 160 conflicts, particularly civil wars and rebellions that have occurred within the past 200 years.<sup>26</sup> He also draws heavily upon the work of psychologists in order to understand the personal motivations that inspire individuals to rebel. Gurr argues that individuals who are discontented are more likely to be anxious about social climate and have an increased susceptibility to radical ideological shifts.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, this same propensity for violence is not usually seen when people are economically satisfied and that the economy is able to meet their expectations. This discontent could lead to strong calls for nationalism as well as increase susceptibility of the public to create scapegoats of ethnic groups perceived to be benefitting from the declining economic situations.<sup>28</sup>

Scholars have applied the idea of decremental deprivation to a wide number of political shifts, such as the Color Revolutions in post-Soviet states. Through an in-depth examination of the revolutions that occurred in Ukraine, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Turkey, and China, Lane analyzed the GDP of each country compared to the Human Development Index, as a measure of national wellbeing.<sup>29</sup> Lane notes that in all but China and Belarus, the economic situations, and as a result the social condition of the societies, were declining markedly in the lead up to revolutions. These declines led to a weakening of loyalty to the established governments and a decrease in trust.<sup>30</sup> He demonstrates

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<sup>25</sup> Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: Politics, Cultures and Religion in Yugoslavia*, Boulder: Westview Press (1992), 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Boulder: Paradigm Press (2010), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Gurr, 197-198.

<sup>28</sup> Gurr, 198.

<sup>29</sup> David, Lane, "'Colored Revolutions' as a Political Phenomenon", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 25 no 2/3, 125.

<sup>30</sup> Lane, 125.

an important correlation between economic issues and a propensity for protest and calls for governmental change.<sup>31</sup>

### *Media and Economic Woes Necessary*

Throughout the literature focused on explaining the rise of nationalism, numerous studies support a multivariable explanation. One such idea is that there is a bottom up explanation, as suggested by Daniel Goldhagen. This school of thought argues that ethnic division occurs because it finds receptive public support. It focuses upon three main premises. First, a leader initiates and spreads the principle or ideology that justifies the ethnic conflict, or genocide. Second, the citizens make a conscious choice to participate. Finally, those who have the power to prevent the violence do not step in to stop it.<sup>32</sup> In its simplest form, nationalist violence is the result of hate models spread at the grassroots level.<sup>33</sup> The animosity towards a group is reflected at all levels and leaders of ethnic conflict are simply mirroring and putting into action attitudes that the populace already holds. The major support for Goldhagen's position stems from his study of Germany during World War II. He observed strong anti-Semitism in society (due largely to the perception that Jews were to blame for the economic struggle Germany was experiencing) and argued that it was this hatred that led average German citizens to carry out atrocities as part of the "Final Solution." Within this framework, the public does not develop violent nationalist sentiments because they hear them expressed by leaders or in the media. Rather the public already has a sentiment against specific groups and willingly choose to follow leaders who promote and expound those sentiments.

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<sup>31</sup> Lane, 126.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*, New York: Public Affairs (2009).

<sup>33</sup> Mark Levene, "Why is the Twentieth Century the Century of Genocide?" *Journal of World History* vol 11 no.5 (Fall 2000), 324

In cases other than Germany, both economic tensions and narratives are necessary to incite violent nationalism as well. Through his examination of conflict in Nazi Germany, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia, Peter Zvagulis found similar preconditions in each conflict. Based on an in-depth examination of events leading up to the eruption of conflict, Zvagulis notes that in all three cases there was a preexisting condition of economic crisis and a history of ethnic tension. Those in political power used the media to draw upon these ethnic tensions to bolster tensions between groups. Weakness within the political structure and the presence of a power struggle among elites exacerbate these issues.<sup>34</sup> Building upon these findings, Zvagulis argues that political figures seek to control the media and use it to create scapegoats in situations of heightened collective frustration, such as economic crisis or political upheaval.<sup>35</sup> Much like Goldhagen, Zvagulis' analysis indicates that ethnic conflict is not due to the presence of just nationalist media or economic woes. Rather it is a combination of both that incites conflict.

Independent Variable	Corresponding Hypothesis
Media Manipulation	Elite efforts to use media to spread manipulated nationalist narratives
Perception of Economy	Perceived economic woes along national lines led the scapegoating of other groups
Media/Economy Hybrid	Economic woes made the public receptive to an ideological shift which was provided by the elite manipulation and use of nationalist narratives spread through the media

<sup>34</sup> Peter Zvagulis, "Blaming the Scapegoat," *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, (Autumn 2010), 8.

<sup>35</sup> Zvagulis, 10.

## Research Design

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable in this puzzle focuses exclusively on the rise of *nationalism* between 1989 and 1992 within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nationalism includes the rise of calls for independence amongst the various Yugoslav states, such as Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, etc, as well as exclusionary nationalism that spread throughout the region.<sup>36</sup> I study nationalism through the proxy of nationalist narratives. A shift in nationalist narratives from celebrating the multi-ethnic society of Yugoslavia to narratives focused on violence and exclusionary policies are indicative of the rise of nationalism. The public speeches of Slobodan Milosevic provide examples of these narratives. At the beginning of his career, Milosevic was a member of the communist party in Yugoslavia. However, during the time covered in this research, there is a marked shift in his speeches, which call for the Serb people to unite in their homeland and demonize other ethnic groups. Through focusing solely on the rise of nationalism, I can explore an area of the conflict that has received little attention and test which mechanism best explains how nationalism rises out of regions that previously had had few calls for exclusion and violence based solely on ethnicity.

### *Independent Variables*

In order to test my three hypotheses, I look at two independent variables. The first is the role of the media. The second is economic woes. Finally, I examine whether both variables must be present to explain the outcome.

The *first independent variable* is the role of elite manipulation of the media. I measure

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<sup>36</sup> The reason that the decision to take up arms is not explored within this puzzle is because it involves a different set of behavioral factors that are explained by a different set of independent variables.



this variable through an examination of press coverage within Bosnia Herzegovina and the surrounding area, particularly Croatia and Serbia. The reason for including media sources beyond just Bosnia Herzegovina is due to the substantial readership newspapers from throughout the region had within the country as well as the power of Milosevic and Tudjman's radio addresses, which were broadcast throughout all of Yugoslavia. My examination of the media includes analysis of the growth of nationalist press and its readership numbers leading up to 1992, which would be indicative of increased nationalist sentiment. I also explore the use of nationalist narratives within radio, television, and newspaper by key political elites. The use of nationalist narratives, their focus, and their change from 1989 to 1992, help to demonstrate how or if nationalist sentiments rose during the period.

The *second independent variable* is economic woes. I measure the potential impact of economics on the rise of nationalism in a number of ways. I examine quantitative data such as the GDP, inflation rates, and the unemployment rates. If these factors demonstrate a substantial, downward change in the economic situation of individuals it would indicate the likeliness for increased economic frustration. This frustration, as was explained previously, could potentially be the cause of rise in nationalism as groups sought scapegoats for economic woes. The quantitative data is complemented by the qualitative data from individuals from Bosnia Herzegovina and their perception of the economic situation. If individuals felt that their economy was suffering and the government was not taking the necessary steps to alleviate the issues, than even if the numbers do not support this idea it would still indicate that perceived economic woes allowed nationalism to flourish.

### *Hypotheses*

Based on the existing literature concerning the role of elite manipulation of the media, I hypothesize that:

*H1: Efforts by the elites to spread nationalist narratives through the media to led to the rise of nationalism.*

In order for this hypothesis to hold true, I expect to see a marked increase in the number of nationalist focused newspapers. I also expect to see an increase in the use of nationalist narratives by political figures and references to historical tensions. Finally, I expect the responses of individuals interviewed to reference the media as one of the major causes for the increase in nationalism they experienced. I do not expect to encounter examples of other factors being responsible for the rise of nationalism, such as references to the economy.

Based on the literature surrounding the idea that economic woes can instigate an increase in nationalism, I hypothesize that:

*H2: The spread of economic woes along perceived ethnic lines led to the scapegoating of other ethnic groups resulting in an increase in nationalism.*

Examining the rise of nationalism through this lens, I expect to see a downward trend in economic data. This trend can take the form of increasing levels of inflation, unemployment, monetary depreciation, etc. As a result of this downward trend, there should be an increase in the public's frustration in regards to the economy and the presence of newspaper articles that either subtly or blatantly report on issue in terms of nationality, such as references to certain nationalities over others or portraying economic issues as impacting one group over another. The sentiments expressed by individuals I interviewed should mirror this frustration. I do not expect to see the manipulation of historical tensions within this hypothesis.

My final hypothesis contends that both the elite manipulation of the media to spread nationalism and economic woes were necessary for nationalism to rise as quickly and strongly as it did amongst the Bosnia public.

*H3: The perceived economic woes made the public receptive the spread of nationalist narratives by political elites causing a rise in nationalism.*

This hypothesis acknowledges that both the media shift and economic woes were necessary. If this hypothesis explains the outcome, there should be an increase in the spread of nationalism by elites through the media. In addition, a growing sense of economic frustration and lack of faith in the current government to fix the situation should be apparent. I also expect this hypothesis to help explain the timing of the rise of nationalism. Public frustrations with the economy should be a larger factor before the rise of nationalism comes through strongly and widespread amongst the masses. When examining the evidence for this hypothesis I do not expect to see nationalism stressed prior to economic upheaval.

### *Methodology*

I test the three aforementioned hypotheses by examining the case of Bosnia Herzegovina between 1989 and 1992. Bosnia provides an ideal case study for my three hypotheses. In the build up to the war, Bosnia experienced a sharp rise in elite spread of nationalist ideas and a steady economic decline.

In order to examine my second hypothesis, concerning the impact of the economy, I use the available economic data to test the changes in the economy. Through comparing the changes in unemployment, government spending on public services, inflation rates, and GDP, I can examine if the economy suffered a significant downward shift from 1989 to 1992. If so, this would support of the idea that when there is increased economic frustration, populations are

more likely to become exclusionary of other groups, in this case other ethnic groups. I then compare my findings with what individuals within Bosnia Herzegovina reported as their reasons for accepting nationalism and narratives. Throughout my analysis of the impact of economics, I make extensive use of newspapers. I rely on both local as well as international papers. Through these papers I am able to gain an understanding of how individuals as well as the international community viewed the economic situation.

Significant amounts of my research are from field research collected throughout the summer of 2013. Over the period of 10 weeks, I conducted extensive, formal, IRB approved interviews with seven<sup>37</sup> individuals from all three main ethnic groups within Bosnia Herzegovina, Serb, Bosniak and Croat. These individuals were from a variety of ages, and had various roles throughout the war. Some had been children during it, some had participated in it, and some had lost family members during the war (See Appendix 1). I asked participants the same series of questions dealing with the role of nationalist narratives, the spread of nationalist ideas, and their general perception of the years leading up to the war. From these responses, I gained an understanding of the public perception during the period, how, at an individual level, they encountered and understood national narratives, the role of the economy on daily life, and an idea of how individuals viewed the rise of nationalism. My interviews were not without limitation though. Unfortunately, I have a rather small sample size of formal interviews from which to draw upon and that is largest hindrance to my findings. In addition, many of the individuals I spoke with had ties to various liberal NGO's throughout the country. As a result, their viewpoints were often more liberal than the general populace.

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<sup>37</sup> I conducted an additional nine informal interviews to gain relevant background insight, to help with my personal understanding of the issue, to help shape my questions. However, these interviews were not collected following the IRB framework of my research and their responses are not used as evidence in my research.

Another major limitation facing my research is the amount of available data. For most of the period of my research, Bosnia Herzegovina did not exist as an independent country and its economic information was lumped in with that of all of Yugoslavia. When data is available for just Bosnia Herzegovina it is limited. In addition, in the years directly preceding the war, the World Bank has no data on record for the country. As a result, most of my economic data comes from secondary sources who compiled their data from a collection of local newspapers during the period. In addition, due to Bosnia Herzegovina's proximity and the interconnectedness of nationalism with Croatia and Serbia, it is impossible to study the impact of just Bosnian elites on the spread of nationalism. The spread of nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina was not just Bosnian nationalism; it was also Serb and Croat nationalism that was spread by leaders in both Croatia and Serbia. However, I believe this is permissible given the fact that the nationalist calls coming from Croatia and Serbia had a significant impact on Bosnia Herzegovina, possibly more so than just the calls for nationalism coming from within Bosnia Herzegovina. Despite these limitations, my research retains the ability to offer important insight in the rise of nationalism.

### **Contribution**

The contribution of my research extends beyond the boundaries of the Balkans. My work constitutes an attempt to explain the timing of the rise of nationalism. While many previous studies have demonstrated why nationalism rises, far fewer studies examine the timing of the rise of nationalism. In order for the international community to construct preventative policies concerning ethnic conflict (rather than just taking reactionary responses) understanding timing is essential. My research offers steps in the right direction for creating an understanding of how normal levels of nationalism shift to something that is dangerous.

My research also is a retesting of Straus' skepticism concerning the impact of the media on the conflict in Rwanda. If my research demonstrates that the spread of nationalist narratives and the calls to action by elites through nationalist publications was not enough to incite the violence, than Straus' contentions against Fujii, Powers, and others gains strength. Furthermore, I extend Gurr's idea of decremental deprivation past its original applications. While the theory already has substantial support, if it explains the rise of nationalism in Bosnia it could provide the framework for more in-depth studies of public perceptions of the economy by future scholars.

Through my research there is also the potential to improve international policies concerning genocide and to create more proactive policies in order to use the lessons from Bosnia Herzegovina to avoid a similar fate in countries such as Syria or other future conflicts. Given the current situation in Syria, there is a strong potential for the conflict to shift to one of ethnic slaughter if the opposition party gains power and seeks to incite the public against the Alawite community in Syria that is usually seen as benefitting from the Assad regime. If the international community is better able to monitor nationalist narrative and determine when the shift in these narratives indicates a strong chance of violence, it can take steps to mitigate at least one component of the bloodbath in Syria. Overall, my research offers insights that can improve the international community's ability to prevent ethnic conflict and also retests some of the prominent explanations for nationalism within the scholarly community.

### **Presentation of Evidence Nationalist Narratives and the Media**

I first hypothesize that nationalism rose due to efforts by elites to use of the media to spread nationalist narratives. Under this explanation, the rise of nationalism was a direct result of the spread of nationalist ideas, particularly nationalist narratives. To examine this potential

explanation I rely upon an examination of the changes in newspapers over the time period, the focus of political elites' speeches, and rely heavily upon the recollections of the subjects of my field study for their perception of the impact of the media on the emergence of national identities other than Yugoslav. From this data, I expect to find a significant increase in nationalist focused press, the spread of nationalist narratives by key political figures aimed at dividing the country, and a public perception of increase nationalism.

During the buildup to the war, a strong nationalist focus press emerged, largely controlled by powerful elites throughout Yugoslavia. The country experienced an increase in republicanization of the press that resulted in a greater nationality specific readership of papers. This republicanization occurred as newspapers focused on the news and opinions of their particular republic of publication rather than on Yugoslavia as a whole.<sup>38</sup> Figure 1 demonstrates the sizeable decrease in readership of major Yugoslav papers in the lead up to the war. Prior to the late 1980's, many of these papers wrote for audiences across Yugoslavia, rather than having a particular nationalist bias.<sup>39</sup> As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, the media, particularly those that became tied with political elites, took on larger and larger nationalist biases. Individuals began to look more and more to local republic papers for news, rather than reading media sources from around the country.<sup>40</sup> In 1989, a public opinion survey of the entirety of Yugoslavia was conducted by *Borba*, asking respondents which papers were most influential in the country, most respected, least respected, and read with the most frequency.<sup>41</sup> The survey found that there was a close relationship between the republic of residence and newspaper

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<sup>38</sup> Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia From the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo*, Boulder: Westview Press (1999), 38.

<sup>39</sup> Ramet, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Ramet, 38.

<sup>41</sup> Ramet, 39.

preference.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in Bosnia Herzegovina local Muslims relied upon the Bosnian Republic Press (*Oslobodjenje, AS*). Croats turned to the press from the Croatian republic, mainly *Vjesnik* and *Vecernji list*. Serbs turned to Serbian Republic publications such as *Politika*.<sup>43</sup> This shift in readership from Yugoslav focused papers to papers focusing on nationalist ideas and the use of the media by elites to spread these ideas demonstrates one of the major ways that elites used the media to gain support.

The divergence in readership and in nationality-specific newspapers created a rift in multinational communication and fed into ideas of exclusivity. For instance, Serbian papers *Politika* and *Politika Ekspres*, two of the papers that maintained the highest readership, were instrumental in creating national tensions. Milosevic and his supporters used both of these papers to spread their ideas and create animosity against other ethnic groups. They spurred animosity amongst Serbs against Croats for the supposed “theft” of Serbian factories and land. They created hatred for Kosovo’s Albanians for alleged acts of rape and arson against local Serbs. In addition, they demonized Tito and his call for “brotherhood and unity” throughout Yugoslavia.<sup>44</sup> Making use of extensive field studies conducted over a number of years, personal interviews, government documents, local and international newspapers, and countless other sources, Sabrina Ramet offers an essential overview of the situation in the lead up to the war throughout the republics. She goes so far as to argue, “that without the active participation of the press, the Serbian national movement could never have created the anger and resentment, which, in time, would drive the Serbs into battle against their erstwhile fellow Yugoslavs.”<sup>45</sup> As the Yugoslav press suggests, the period of 1989 through 1992 was a time of increasing isolation between the

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<sup>42</sup> Ramet, 39

<sup>43</sup> Ramet, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Ramet, 40.

<sup>45</sup> Ramet, 40.



republics and increased nationalist sentiments. The media fragmentation also demonstrates a conscious choice on the part of the papers, mainly the elites who controlled them, to shift from a collective sense of being written for all of Yugoslavia to a focus on specific nationalities and regions.

Figure 1: Yugoslav Newspapers with Circulations Larger than 10,000 in Rank Order <sup>46</sup>

	1983 Sales (number of copies)	1990 Sales (number of copies)	Percent Change in Sales	Market Range
<i>Vecernje Novosti</i> (Belgrade)	339,859	222,282	93% decrease	Originally read throughout country, then developed a Serb focus
<i>Vecernje list</i> (Zagreb)	309,839	221,942	28% decrease	Croat focus
<i>Politika Ekspres</i> (Belgrade)	249,758	198,790	20% decrease	Serb
<i>Politika</i> (Belgrade)	243,826	184,551	24% decrease	Milosevic controlled
<i>Slobodna Dalmacija</i> (Split)	71,571	107,483	50% increase	Yugoslav (was shut down by Tudjman)
<i>Druzina</i> (Ljubljana, Catholic)	n/a	100,000	n/a	Catholic focus
<i>Glas Koncila</i> (Zagreb, Catholic)	n/a	100,000	n/a	Catholic focus
<i>Delo</i> (Ljubljana)	99,840	94,280	5.5% decrease	Slovenia based
<i>Ognjisce</i> (Koper, Catholic)	80,000	n/a	n/a	Catholic focus
<i>Vjesnik</i> (Zagreb)	73,030	74,563	2% increase	Owned by Croatia and party controlled
<i>Sportske Novosti</i> (Zagreb)	141,247	70,597	50% decrease	Yugoslav sports

<sup>46</sup> Ramet, 41.

<i>Vecernje Novine</i> (Sarajevo)	35,049	66,911	91% increase	unknown
<i>Novi List – Glas Istre</i> (Rijeka)	71,274	56,586	20% decrease	Regional within Croatia
<i>Vecer</i> (Maribor)	55,476	54,561	2% decrease	Regional within Slovenia
<i>Mali Koncil</i> (Zagreb, Catholic)	50,000	n/a	n/a	Catholic youth
<i>Oslobodjenje</i> (Sarajevo)	71,557	47,690	33% decrease	Bosniak focus
<i>Sport</i> (Belgrade)	45,670	106,781	133% increase	Serb focused (published in Cyrillic)
<i>Sportski Zurnal</i>	n/a	42,142	n/a	Serb (Cyrillic)
<i>Dnevnik</i> (Novi Sad)	34,158	39,677	16% increase	Serb
<i>Borba</i> (Belgrade)	30,976	31,408	1 % increase	Yugoslav (Paper of the Communist League)
<i>Preporad</i> (Sarajevo, Islamic)	30,000	n/a	n/a	Muslim revival
<i>Nova Makedonija</i> (Skopje)	25,089	23,404	7% decrease	Macedonia
<i>Vecer</i> (Skopje)	31,959	22,948	28% decrease	Unknown
<i>Pravoslavlje</i> (Belgrade, Orthodox)	22,000	n/a	n/a	Serb
<i>Magyar Szó</i> (Novi Sad)	26,485	20,708	22% decrease	Marketed to Hungarian Serbs
<i>Pobjeda</i> (Novi Sad)	20,073	19,570	2% decrease	Unknown
<i>Glas Slavonije</i>	26,485	12,349	53% decrease	Croat

Sources: Ramet, 40-41; *Vecernje Novosti* “About Us”

<http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=sr&u=http://www.novosti.rs/&prev=/search%3Fq%3DVecernje%2BNovosti%26biw%3D667%26bih%3D614>; the remaining sources on markets were taken from the Wikipedia pages of the respective newspapers as a result, their credibility cannot be verified.

The use of nationalist narratives by key political figures, and their spread through the media, indicates another form of media manipulation of the press. The political speeches of Slobodan Milosevic, Franjo Tudjman, and Alija Izetbegovic, each the president of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia Herzegovina, in their respective order, all stressed various forms of national identity amongst their respective ethnic groups.

Milosevic provides the best example of this. In Milosevic's earliest speeches from the period, he stressed a strong sense of being Serb and a sense that being Serb created exclusivity from other Yugoslavs. This idea is most evident in his speech commemorating the Battle of Kosovo.<sup>47</sup> Given in 1989, just at the beginning of the collapse of the Yugoslav system, Milosevic stresses and reawakens the idea of Serb nationalism. He draws upon the 600 years of Serbian history of "enslavement" following their defeat at the Battle of Kosovo. He goes on to stress the necessity for Serbs of unity to ensure a future, as well stating that war is not out of the question for ensuring the integrity of the Serb people. He also refers to the past victimhood the Serbs have suffered at the hands of the Croats, particularly he focuses on Croatian fascism during WWII. He concludes his speech with the oath "long live Serbia."<sup>48</sup> This speech had far reaching impacts within the Serb community. It was heard in person by over one million individuals who were in attendance, as well as being broadcasted over the radio stations, and reprinted in newspapers throughout Yugoslavia.<sup>49</sup> Some young Serbs could still repeat key parts of the speech over 20 years later.<sup>50</sup>

The President of Croatia, and head of the majority political party Franjo Tudjman, also uses strong calls directed at the Croatian community. In his address to the "extraordinary"

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<sup>47</sup> Slobodan Milosevic, "St. Vitus Day Speech," June 28, 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Slobodan Milosevic, "St. Victus Day Speech," June 28, 1989.

<sup>49</sup> Dr. Nick Hayes, interview, December 13, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Interview 1, 6/22/13.

session of the Croatian Assembly in August of 1990, he issued a kind of reminder to the Serbs of Croatia. He stated “the Serbs in Croatia must understand in their own interest that the Republic of Croatia is the republic and national state of the Croatian people who seek within it their sovereignty and their equality.”<sup>51</sup> He went on to elaborate that the Serbs in Croatia have benefitted from receiving services that “exceeded three, four, five, sixfold their share”<sup>52</sup> under the Serb dominated national structure. Through the use and spread of these ideas, which were spread throughout local papers, Tudjman stressed to the Croatian people that it was in their best interest to unite under the idea of a Croatian state. He also subtly pointed out to the majority Croatian audience that the Serbs were unfairly benefitting from the Yugoslav services they received. At a time when Yugoslavia’s economy was in shambles and social services were very much needed, it is doubtful that this point was missed by the Croatian listeners. In addition, by referring to the population of Croatia, not all as Croatian, but with terms such as Serbs living in Croatia, Tudjman demonstrated that there was a difference between people and in a way indicated that the Serbs within Croatia somehow do not belong. While Tudjman’s speech was slightly more subtle than Milosevic, it was no less of a clear message of Croatian nationalism.

The President of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, also stressed a sense of community and coming together amongst the Bosniak community. However, his approach differed slightly from that of Milosevic and Tudjman in the stress he placed on religion, specifically Islam. The sense of a shared Muslim identity came out in a number of Izetbegovic’s speeches. For example, he referred to the Muslim community in his plea to the international community to help Bosnia in the wake of Croat and Serb aggression. He went so far as to chide the international community and question them if their inaction is “because the group of 1 million refugees who have crossed

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<sup>51</sup> Franjo Tudjman, “Tudjman Addresses Assembly”, *Zagreb Domestic Service in Serbo-Croatian*, August 24, 1990.

<sup>52</sup> Tudjman, “Tudjman Addresses Assembly.”

Europe are Muslims and those who oppress them while they are running from the face of oppression are Christians?”<sup>53</sup> He also routinely referred to the three groups that made up Bosnia as Croats, Serbs, and Muslims, rather than the term Bosniak. While I contend that Izetbegovic’s use of nationalist narratives was not nearly as strong or as violently inclined as that of Milosevic or Tudjman, the stress placed upon the divisions of religion was yet another way for elites to demonstrate the differences between the ethnic groups within Bosnia rather than their similarities.

These speeches helped to form the ideas of nationalism that became central within the region. More importantly their ability to be heard by sympathetic ears was crucial in furthering the spread of nationalist ideals throughout the region.

Due to the strong political control and pressure exerted over the media, many media sources had little option but to support these nationalist ideas. The largest paper in the country, *Vecernje Novosti*, centered in Belgrade, became one of the major mouthpieces of Milosevic’s calls for Serbian nationalism when he forcibly installed one of his political party members as the editor of the paper.<sup>54</sup> The *Vjesnik* in Zagreb faced similar pressure given that the Croatian Democratic Union, a political party, owned it.<sup>55</sup> Powerful politicians quickly destroyed papers that did work to remain a forum for open conversation from all sides. For instance the Split published paper, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, which experienced an increase in readership up until 1990, was headed by a group of editors and journalists committed to running stories from all of the republics and relaying the facts, rather than national biases. However, President Tudjman

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<sup>53</sup> Ailja Izetbegovic, “Bosnian President Appeals for Help,” *Riyadh Saudi Arabian Television Network in Arabic*, December 1, 1992.

<sup>54</sup> “Vecernje Novosti,” accessed March 18, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ve%C4%8Dernje\\_novosi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ve%C4%8Dernje_novosi).

<sup>55</sup> “Vjesnik,” accessed March 18, 2014, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vjesnik>.

shut the paper down for its efforts.<sup>56</sup> Even individual journalists faced pressure to ascribe to the growing nationalist press. Reporters who broke rank were routinely beat up by local party thugs, were kept from covering stories that could be used for nationalist purposes, and some ended up permanently losing their positions as a result of their actions.<sup>57</sup>

Even those who did not describe themselves as nationalists felt the pressure to redefine themselves because of the impact of the media. All of the individuals I spoke with described different experiences of their first time hearing of “nationalism,” but almost all of them, regardless of their respective nationality and location of growing up, cited the media as the first source from which they heard nationalist rhetoric emerge. One woman recalls that “the only place I ever heard talk of nationalism was from the media, like the newspapers or the television.”<sup>58</sup> Another tells of how she “never knew she was Bosniak and that others were Serbs or Croats”<sup>59</sup> prior to the 1990s. In her memory, it was only once leaders like Milosevic came to power (which occurred in 1989) that the stories began. She phrased it as, “he won and then the stories started.”<sup>60</sup>

Few individuals I interviewed had heard of nationalism or nationalists prior to 1990. When asked about her first experience with nationalism, the Croat woman<sup>61</sup> said she had never heard of the word nationalist or nationalism until the summer of 1991 when she was 13. Growing up in a small town outside of Sarajevo, she cited the media as the major propellant for nationalist ideas or what she refers to as “the virus.” She remembered that it was through “political

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<sup>56</sup> “President Tudjman’s Crackdown on the Freedom of Press,” FECL, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.fecl.org/circular/1007.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Bennett, “How Yugoslavia’s Destroyers Harnessed the Media,” Frontline, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/karadzic/bosnia/media.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Interview 5, 8/2/13.

<sup>59</sup> Interview 4, 8/2/13.

<sup>60</sup> Interview 4, 8/2/13.

<sup>61</sup> She self-defined as Bosnian Herzegovinian, but says that the wider community labelled her as Croat during the conflict and would do so today as well

advertisements and local papers”<sup>62</sup> that elites spread these ideas. It was only after intensified media coverage of nationalist ideas that she saw her local community begin to “identify” and “divide” themselves. When asked if she believed the nationalist narratives to be responsible for the rise of nationalism and the eventual conflict, she responded with a resounding yes. The narratives caught on with individuals who began to believe the stories of ancient rights to land, victimization at the hands of other nationalities, and calls for vengeance.<sup>63</sup>

A Bosniak individual who grew up outside of Mostar, and fought on the Bosniak side to during the fight for Mostar, expressed a similar sentiment concerning the absence of nationalism prior to the 1990s. In his opinion “nationalism and the problems it caused, were produced.” Prior to the early 1990s he spoke of a Mostar and surrounding area in which people lived in peace together. However, nationalism began to appear from all different sources, including families, government officials, and the media, particularly from “the newspapers and publications in the region of what is now the Republic of Srpska.”<sup>64</sup> Following this introduction there was a shift in daily life. People began to separate themselves by nationality when once they had lived peacefully together. He contended, “politicians created nationalism as a way to divide us and to gain a greater number of votes.”<sup>65</sup> Political elites spread messages that taught people if they did not vote for their respective nationality, then the other side would win and they would face destruction.<sup>66</sup>

Other respondents offered similar sentiments concerning the impact of the media and political elites on the spread of nationalism. Three women from Sarajevo, two which would be classified as Bosniak by society (they self-identified as Bosnian Herzegovinian) and a Serb, all

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<sup>62</sup> Interview 7, 9/22/13.

<sup>63</sup> Interview 7, 9/22/13.

<sup>64</sup> Interview 1, 6/22/13.

<sup>65</sup> Interview 1, 6/22/13.

<sup>66</sup> Interview 1, 6/22/13.

blamed the spread of nationalism on the intentional spread of nationalist narratives by political elites. A Bosniak woman cited the spread of nationalist narratives by political figures as Yugoslavia began to crumble as a way to build political support for themselves. Both decried the fact that individuals were no longer able to refer to themselves as Yugoslav and instead had to identify with particular groups or face being ostracized from all sides.<sup>67</sup> One Bosniak woman explained, “As Yugoslavia fell part, people began to have to declare themselves. My family said they were not religious and were just Communist. This was not acceptable to our community though. We faced suspicion from our neighbors because of it and had to declare as Bosniak, even though we were not religious.”<sup>68</sup> The Serb woman presented the media as playing a more subtle role in the rise of nationalism than blatant calls. In her recollection, “the newspapers were biased in how they reported things. They took sides in descriptions of events. They made the Serbs out to be the bad guys in stories about Croatia and misreported events in Slovenia. It portrayed the Serbs unfairly”<sup>69</sup> She herself described how the overwhelming power of nationalism within her community made her change from being a staunch supporter of Tito and a united Yugoslavia to having an intense hatred. She called nationalism “a weapon, as a way to do conflict.” As she said, “I don’t know why when I think back, but I hated anyone who was not Serb. . . all Serbs wanted to kill all Muslims and all Muslims wanted to kill all Serbs.”<sup>70</sup>

As these individuals demonstrate, the intense rise of nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina did not arise organically; rather it relied upon the manipulation of the public through the media. By presenting biased accounts of events, pandering to nationality specific

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<sup>67</sup> Interviews, 8/2/13.

<sup>68</sup> Interview, 8/2/13.

<sup>69</sup> Interview Three, 8/1/13

<sup>70</sup> Interview, 8/2/13.



readerships, and creating a sense of fear for those who were not of the same nationality, the elites convinced the public that they had to divide themselves and align with their respective group.

Individuals that chose not to align faced social exclusion and immense suspicion. This suspicion was felt from all nationalities, not just a specific group. For instance, a Bosniak woman's family had never described themselves as Bosniak. They were not particularly religious, did not feel a relation towards the Muslim religion, and as a result did not self-define as Bosniak as many wanted them to. They classified themselves as Communist and thought nothing of nationality. However, in the lead up to the war, this classification became unacceptable in the eyes of their neighborhood community. In order to placate the community and ensure they were completely isolate, they acquiesced and identified themselves as Bosniak.<sup>71</sup>

The Serb woman faced a similar experience within her school community. She was a high school student during the war and attended a school composed of students of all three nationalities. In her recollection, nationality had never been an issue between classmates and was not something that was discussed or thought about. However, during class elections in the early 1990s she recalled nationality becoming a factor in whom was elected to the board for a concert for peace effort.<sup>72</sup> Her Serb classmates stressed the importance of having Serb students in leadership positions for event.<sup>73</sup> This emphasis on nationality turned an event meant for peace into an example of the exclusion occurring between groups that had once been classmates and friends together. As these two events demonstrate, no longer could individuals pride themselves on being part of a multi-ethnic society, but felt forced to bend to societal pressure to identify with one of the respective nationalities.

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<sup>71</sup> Interview, 8/2/13.

<sup>72</sup> She did not recall the exact year but did know that it was before the start of the war

<sup>73</sup> Interview, 8/3/13.

Political elites within Yugoslavia benefited from the manipulation of the media and spread of nationalist narratives. Political elites used nationalist narratives as a way to focus public attention on international aggressors rather than on the internal challenges facing the country.<sup>74</sup> This idea finds clear support in Milosevic's use of nationalist narratives to divert attention for the economic situation within Serbia. For example, during his national broadcast in 1992, the interviewer asked him about the economic situation within Serbia. Rather than offering a direct answer to the question, he focused on the history of the Serb people as resilient and later goes on to discuss how Serbia was suffering from unfair international pressure and how the country must unite to avoid these threats.<sup>75</sup> Nationalist narratives were also a way for politicians to give legitimacy to shaky claims of national identity.<sup>76</sup> The stories these narratives spread created a sense of shared history and experiences, while also excluding groups that did not have the same history. They served as a way to create a sense of identity and to distract attention from other problems within society.

*HI* offers a viable explanation for the creation and spread of nationalism throughout the Yugoslav states. The evidence demonstrates that there was a shift amongst the public towards newspapers that centered on nationalist ideas and a decrease in the readership of papers offering a more multi-ethnic viewpoint. In addition to the popular press, political figures laced their speeches with nationalist narratives that were violent and exclusionary. This emergence of nationalist calls created a pressure amongst the public to identify themselves as one nationality rather than supporting the multi-ethnic society of Yugoslavia. Overall, *HI* demonstrates how this shift occurred.

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<sup>74</sup> Veljko Vujačić, "Elites, Narratives, and Nationalist Mobilization in the Former Yugoslavia." *Comparative Politics* Vol 40. no.1 (Oct, 2007), 105.

<sup>75</sup> Slobodan Milosevic, "Milosevic Interview on Pressure Facing FRY and Good Prospects for New State", *Radio Television Serbia in Belgrade*, May 28, 1992.

<sup>76</sup> Vujačić, 111.

*HI* falls short explaining why people embraced these new calls for nationalism. It demonstrates what messages were present for the public to latch on to, but not why they felt a need to do so. Within Yugoslavia, there had always been recognition of the various ethnicities. Many people knew the variation between being Croat or Serb. However, they still embraced and supported the multi-ethnic society that Yugoslavia was. What changed? This is something that elite manipulation of the media alone is not able to explain.

### **Economic Argument**

My second hypothesis is that economic woes led to social frustration and the scapegoating of other ethnic groups. To test this explanation, I examine the economic trends leading up to the onset of war, particularly the downward spiral of the economy and the inability of the populace to maintain their expected standards of living. The analysis of the economy relies primarily on evidence gathered from newspaper coverage during the time as well as individuals' perceptions that I gathered during my field research. I expect to find that the economic woes of the times led to sentiments of frustration with the current political system and a susceptibility to ideological shifts resulting in the shift towards nationalism.

### **The Economic Reality**

Understanding the economic situation in 1988 is important for conceptualizing why such sudden economic shifts arose between 1989 and 1992. In 1988, the Yugoslavia economy was in shambles. The economic system that Tito created failed as Yugoslavia's position as the leader of the Non-Alignment Movement became increasingly obsolete and the economy of the country continued to decline. The public increasingly voiced complaints about the close relationships between politicians and enterprises. For example, the Agrokommerc scandal in Bosnia, in which a food enterprise wrote over \$1 billion worth of IOUs to its 13,000 employees despite knowing

that it lacked sufficient funds to compensate its workers, led to widespread animosity and the trial of 25 individuals for “undermining the economic system” of Yugoslavia.<sup>77</sup> The frustration surrounding corruption began to wear on the public. Mass protests broke out, such as the case in which 1,500 workers, primarily from the shoe and leather industry, stormed the federal parliament in Belgrade calling for the ouster of corrupt officials.<sup>78</sup> The situation became even worse due to the skyrocketing inflation rate. In October of 1988, inflation reached a rate of 236%, a new record for the country.<sup>79</sup> To put this inflation in perspective, the prices of meat rose by as much as 53% and bread rose 60% within Serbia.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the country was also facing foreign debt amounting to \$21 billion and was struggling to ensure that the Soviet Union continued to pay Yugoslavia the \$1.7 billion it owed.<sup>81</sup> Due to these massive problems and the failure of past efforts, the Yugoslav government opted for a drastic change and began to shift to a more open market approach to the economy.

The shift to a market economy, beginning in 1989, led to one of largest shifts and continued economic declines in Yugoslavia’s history. The newly elected Prime Minister, Ante Markovic set a new economic course. In March, following a dismal February during which inflation reached 1,000%, Markovic declared that only through the deregulation of the economy could Yugoslavia hope to recover from its economic crisis.<sup>82</sup> Within Yugoslavia, there was a dramatic upheaval as the state privatized companies failing to turn a profit and unemployment rose to a rate of 16%.<sup>83</sup> To make matters even worse for the average citizen, the government

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<sup>77</sup> Bruce, Clark, “Yugoslavia: Banks Still Handicapped By Political Influence,” *Financial Times*, London England, 22 June 1988, pg. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Alton Lieven, “Belgrade Ignores Protest with Austerity Pledge; Yugoslavia Austerity Programme,” *The Times*, July 9, 1988.

<sup>79</sup> “Yugoslavia to Overhaul Crisis Ridden Economy”, *Australian Financial Review*, October 31, 1988, pg. 42.

<sup>80</sup> “Yugoslavia Votes Economic Changes”, *The New York Times*, October 23, 1988, 14.

<sup>81</sup> “Yugoslavia to Overhaul Crisis Ridden Economy”, 42.

<sup>82</sup> “Yugoslavia’s New PM Unveils Radical Economic Reform Plan”, *The Toronto Star*, March 17, 1989, 23.

<sup>83</sup> Reuters, “New Currency in Yugoslavia”, *The New York Times*, August 31, 1989, 14.

completed a redenomination of the dinar. In the course of less than one year, the dinar went from being 3,000 to the dollar to 28,900 to the dollar. The situation became so bad that Yugoslavia began to print a 500,000 dinar bill, which still was worth less than \$17.<sup>84</sup> The economic climate, including rising inflation and the devaluation of the currency, created a growing sense of frustration with the government's inability to alleviate the situation.

The years that followed saw little improvement in the economic situation. In 1990, Yugoslavia's businesses took yet another hit from international sanctions against Iraq, its largest third world trade partner. As a result of the sanctions, Yugoslavia lost \$1.3 billion over the course of the year and an overall loss of \$3.3 billion.<sup>85</sup> In the same year, inflation rose to over 2,000% and \$17 billion in foreign debts.<sup>86</sup> As violence began to emerge in 1991, Yugoslavia also suffered a major decrease in tourism<sup>87</sup>, particularly along the Dalmatian coast, which previously had served as a vital revenue source for areas such as Croatia. Furthermore, the country's foreign reserves fell from \$10 billion to \$2.7 billion in less than 13 months. Citizens also began to pay their bills in either "new" or "old" dinar.<sup>88</sup> By 1992, it was clear that the civil war would spell economic doom for the country as newspapers declared that a quarter of the 23 million Yugoslavia citizens lacked basic necessities and the economy showed no signs of recovering.<sup>89</sup>

The economic situation within Yugoslavia was dire. Between 1989 and 1992, the country experienced an abrupt shift, as attempts to create a more open market system led to mass layoffs and growing unemployment. In addition, the staggering inflation rates led to average citizens

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<sup>84</sup> "New Currency in Yugoslavia", 14.

<sup>85</sup> Wire Reports, "Yugoslavia Offers Crisis Debt Aid to Business", *Journal of Commerce*, September 27, 1990, 5.

<sup>86</sup> "The Party Departs", *The Guardian*, January 24, 1990, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Haupt, "An Economic Fuse Burns Below the Loft Debaters," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 1991, 8.

<sup>88</sup> "An Economic Fuse Burns Below the Loft Debaters", 8.

<sup>89</sup> Masao Shimazaki, "Yugoslavia Civil War Means Economic Doom for People", *The Daily Yomiuri*, April 2, 1992, 5.

seeing their livelihoods constantly decrease. The collapse of the dinar also led to lifelong savings suddenly becoming worth almost nothing as the cost of day-to-day necessities continued to skyrocket. Throughout the entire period, the joint Yugoslav government was able to do little more than continue to make promises of attempting to fix the economy but never being able to achieve actual results. The Yugoslav economy had a profoundly negative impact upon the 23 million Yugoslav people.

### *The Economic Perception*

In order for the economy to play a decisive role in the rise of nationalism, it is necessary that the public perceive problems with the economy. Nationalism requires actors and voices in order to develop and become powerful, not just spiraling inflation.

The public's perception of the economy was as dismal as the actual economic realities. International press coverage of the country makes multiple mentions of persistent strikes plaguing the country.<sup>90</sup> The first major strike to receive international news coverage occurred outside the Parliament in Belgrade in 1988. The protest began with a focus on corruption but the protestors were not appeased by small actions and called on a nationwide strike in July of the same year.<sup>91</sup> The protests continued as government action to quell the economic unrest failed.<sup>92</sup> This increasing persistency of strikes is one indicator of civil unrest amongst the population.<sup>93</sup>

The printing of new currency also caused tension amongst the public. Under the new currency, "old" dinar became worth just 1/10,000 of "new" dinar.<sup>94</sup> This effectively made the savings families had accumulated over their lifetimes worthless. This loss of wealth is an

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<sup>90</sup> Alton Lieven, "Belgrade Ignores Protest with Austerity Pledge; Yugoslav Austerity Programme," *The Times*, July 9, 1988.

<sup>91</sup> "Belgrade Ignores Protests with Austerity Pledge; Yugoslav Austerity Programme"

<sup>92</sup> Reuters, "New Currency in Yugoslavia", *The New York Times*, August 31, 1989, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Exact numbers were not able to be found, however papers mention a persistent increase in strikes

<sup>94</sup> Robert Haupt, "An Economic Fuse Burns Below the Loft Debaters," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 1991, 8.

additional reason for the public's belief that the economy was causing them a great deal of strain. At the same time that money was becoming worthless, the price of goods continued to soar for the average citizen. As one woman discussed, "We eat only twice a day, mostly boiled potatoes, a very small amount of cheese and ham."<sup>95</sup> In addition, the average family income hovered around 14,000 dinar in 1992 leading up to the war. With this income, many goods remained far out of reach for individuals. A new pair of leather shoes cost 15,000 dinar (more than an entire month's salary) and one kilogram of apples cost 300 dinars.<sup>96</sup> Over a quarter of Yugoslavia's citizens, close to 6 million people, were unable to provide for their own daily necessities.<sup>97</sup>

Given the inability of individuals to continue the standard of living they had grown accustomed to, individuals began to look for scapegoats for their problems. As an individual I spoke with put it, "someone had to be to blame for the struggles were all having and the easiest to blame was other nationalities, or at least people thought it."<sup>98</sup> It is an exemplification of what Gurr finds with decremental deprivation that when a public becomes dissatisfied economically, they are willing to embrace ideological shifts and shifting societal identities, such as making scapegoats of those who they had previously considered friends and compatriots. Beginning in 1989 a clear division amongst the nationalities emerged surrounding the Yugoslav economies. With the unveiling of the economic overhaul in 1989 also came the unveiling of a new government with only 19 rather than 29 ministers. The new Prime Minister, a Croatian politician, appointed his fellow Croatian politicians to the Finance Minister position and the head of the Development Ministry. Additionally, Croatian politicians who had been in office prior to the new Prime Minister retained their positions in positions such as Foreign Minister and Defense

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<sup>95</sup> Masao Shimazaki, "Yugoslavia Civil War Means Economic Doom For People", *The Daily Yomiuri*, April 2, 1992, 5.

<sup>96</sup> Masao Shimazaki, "Yugoslavia Civil War Means Economic Doom For People", *The Daily Yomiuri*, April 2, 1992, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Masao Shimazaki, "Yugoslavia Civil War Means Economic Doom For People", *The Daily Yomiuri*, April 2, 1992, 5.

<sup>98</sup> Interview Three, 8/1/13.

Minister, despite the fact that many other politicians removed when the government was downsized. The Croatian-heavy emphasis on economic issues was not missed by the local press in their coverage of the event, as numerous newspaper articles made points of focusing on the nationality of the newly appointed ministers.<sup>99</sup> As the years progressed, discussion of who dominated the economic situation continued. In 1991, as Serbia began to stretch its military muscles, Leslie Gelb focused on the ethnic inequality within Yugoslavia, noting that “Yugoslavia is rife with economic inequality, with Serbs at the top of the food chain.”<sup>100</sup> In few places was this dominance felt more strongly than within Bosnia Herzegovina. As a result of the Serbian economic blockade Bosnian industry was working at only 20% capacity in 1992, hundreds of thousands of workers were left with nothing to do, and food cost between 50 and 300% more in Bosnia than in neighboring states.<sup>101</sup> This intense conflict or, perhaps more accurately, the perception amongst the public and the press of conflict, indicates a growing tension over the economy. In addition, the focus of the press and the portrayal of one nationality as being responsible for the state of the economy supports the idea that it was these economic woes that lead to the growth of nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina.

### *Impact of Economics on Nationalism*

There are a number of reasons for why economic grievances could have been responsible for the rise of nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina. Gurr’s idea of decremental deprivation provides a particularly insightful explanation for how the troubled economy could have led to the intensified sentiments. Bosnia provides a vivid example of several of these factors, in particular

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<sup>99</sup> “Yugoslavia’s New PM Unveils Radical Economic Reform Plan”, *The Toronto Star*, March 17, 1989, 23.

<sup>100</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, “There is a Dark Side to Self-Rule in Yugoslavia,” *St. Petersburg Times*, July 12, 1991, 16.

<sup>101</sup> Kitty McKinsey, “Independence Vote Will Solve Nothing in Volatile Bosnia, Critics Fear”, *The Gazette*, February 27, 1992.



the decline of production and an inability of political elites to resolve crises. The economy of Yugoslavia crumbled around the populace; however, their expectations for standards of living and government services did not. For instance, a Bosniak woman from Sarajevo discussed a deep sense of frustration that Yugoslavia scaled back their public services, such as healthcare, during the economic downturn. In her mind, that was the time the people needed these services the most.<sup>102</sup> Even close to 20 years later, she bore resentment towards the Yugoslav government for not being able to provide for the people. In addition, not only was the government of Yugoslavia no longer able to provide for its people, but its people were no longer even able to retain what they had previously had, such as their life savings. It is little wonder that anger resulted. As Gurr puts it, “Men are likely to be more intensely angered when they lose what they have than when they lose hope of attaining what they do not yet have.”<sup>103</sup> The citizens of the former Yugoslavia were angry, not because they had lost the hope of making money or of gaining from an improved economy, but because the gains they had already made and the savings they had amassed had been taken from them.

Even the government admitted that they expected the public to be upset over the economic changes they instituted. With the economic overhaul launched in 1989, the government also called for the creation of social programs to help lessen the possible rise of social tensions.<sup>104</sup> These programs were far from sufficient. The increased number of strikes that followed in the economic overhaul speaks to the inability of the social programs to appease the frustrated Yugoslav public.

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<sup>102</sup> Interview

<sup>103</sup> Gurr, 50.

<sup>104</sup> “Yugoslavia to Overhaul Crisis Ridden Economy”, *Australian Financial Review*, October, 31, 1988, 42.

Economic frustration also makes individuals more susceptible to radical ideological shifts and a propensity for violence.<sup>105</sup> Due to the harshness of the Serbian trade embargo, individuals in Bosnia Herzegovina were unable to provide for their basic needs, maintain their usual lifestyles, and their government became unable to provide the services expected, which resulted in rising public animosity. This could have made them more easily susceptible to ideas of nationalism. The intense stratification between Serbs and Croats could have been due to the media portrayal that the economic overhaul, which failed, was the brainchild of Croatian officials. In addition, it was the fault of the Serbian policies that prices of basic necessities continued to increase at rapid rates, given the vast inequality between the economic situations in Serbia versus Bosnia Herzegovina.

As the evidence suggests, the economic situation within Yugoslavia and Bosnia Herzegovina played a major role in the rise of nationalism that occurred between 1989 and 1992. It created a sense of frustration amongst the public and an animosity towards a government that continued to make promises of saving the country, but never delivered. In addition, the economic inequalities split along national lines, such as Croatian and Serbian, also provided an outlet for frustrations, and allowing groups to scapegoat and blame for the economic woes Bosnia Herzegovina was facing.

However, the economy alone cannot explain the rise of nationalism. There are a number of reasons that H2 falls short. The economic woes present within Bosnia Herzegovina and the surrounding regions answers the question of why individuals had grown frustrated with the current system. The public watched as their standard of living continued to decline at an ever-alarming rate as even providing the necessities became impossible for significant segments of the

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<sup>105</sup> Gurr, 50.

population.<sup>106</sup> The government that promised to take steps to improve the situation failed to deliver and came to bear a great amount of resentment amongst the public for failing them when needed most. This embrace of a new ideological shift is a perfect archetype of the effects of decremental deprivation. However, economic decline alone does not explain a shift in ideology towards nationalism. As decremental deprivation demonstrates, economic decline can increase susceptibility for ideological shifts. Nevertheless, that shift did not have to be towards nationalism. Any number of shifts could have occurred; the public could have instead directed their anger at the state or increased calls for a more socialist state. The explanation that economic woes led to an increase in nationalism is not enough to answer my question because it fails at answering the why nationalism component of my research question. All that economic woes demonstrate is support for the idea of decremental grievance that prolonged economic decline leads to societal frustration and a susceptibility to ideological shifts. It falls short in explain why nationalism was the shift that occurred.

### **Media and Economic Decline Hypothesis**

It is clear from the available evidence that both the elite manipulation of the media and the economic decline influenced the situation within Bosnia Herzegovina. However, neither media manipulation nor economic grievances were enough on their own to spark the marked rise in nationalism. The elite manipulation of the media only explains how nationalism spread and economic decline only demonstrates why there was a sense of societal frustration with the status quo. I argue that they were both necessary in order for nationalism to rise. The poor economy created a public that was responsive to an ideological shift while the elites' use of the media spread of nationalist narratives then provided a new ideology for the public to embrace. Between

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<sup>106</sup> Masao Shimazaki, "Yugoslavia Civil War Means Economic Doom For People", *The Daily Yomiuri*, April 2, 1992, 5.

1989 and 1992, the perfect combination of economic woes and media coverage existed to inspire the rise of nationalism.

This explanation arose from an interview with a Bosniak woman in Sarajevo. When asked about her thoughts on the start of the war and the role of nationalism narratives, she responded, “the only reason anyone was listening to the nationalists was because of the economy.”<sup>107</sup> The nationalist narratives elites were spreading gave the public a focus for their general frustration with the situation and someone to blame. If not for the extreme stress caused by the inability of individuals to provide for themselves and thrive in the economy, nationalistic leaders would have found few followers. In her mind, if the political elite had spread the same nationalistic messages during a time when the economy was doing well, they would have fallen upon deaf ears.<sup>108</sup>

A Croat woman near Mostar who also saw multiple variables at work in the situation echoes this sentiment. She felt “the biggest factor, more than religion or the media, was economic interests.”<sup>109</sup> In her memories, she remembers a Mostar in which people were frustrated economically and saw other ethnicities having greater economic wellbeing than others, in particular the perceived discrepancy between Bosniaks and Croats. As a result, “nationalism became an excuse.”<sup>110</sup> Her observations of the situation support the idea that both the elite manipulation and spread of nationalism and economic decline were necessary components. The economic decline and the perceived discrepancy between groups created a frustration within society. The calls of nationalism, which she refers to as excuses, then allowed those who were economically frustrated to latch onto these ideas. If it were not for the spread of these ideas

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<sup>107</sup> Interview 3, 8/1/13.

<sup>108</sup> Interview 3, 8/1/13.

<sup>109</sup> Interview 2, 7/19/13.

<sup>110</sup> Interview 2, 7/19/13.

through elite controlled media sources, individuals would have had to find another outlet for the blame and anger they were harboring.

Newspaper coverage of the economic decline also sought to highlight the role of certain nationalities and the victimhood of others. For example, in the coverage of the new (and ultimately last) attempt of the Yugoslav government to revive the economy, the paper goes out of its way to highlight the nationalities of the politicians responsible for the plan. One such line includes “Markovic has brought in a streamlined government of only 19 rather than 29 ministers, with key economic posts filled by new, younger faces from the liberal Croatia and Slovenia regions.”<sup>111</sup> The article then goes on to list by name four important Croatian politicians who have been given or retained important political positions. While this article does not directly create a sense of blame on the Croatian politicians for the economic decline, it is noteworthy the amount of attention that is given to the nationality of these politicians. They are all working for the Yugoslavia government, but that receives no mention in the report, only their republic of origin. This illustrates yet another way the press was able to subtly highlight the role of ethnicity within the Yugoslav political system.

In the direct build up to the war, the tensions between the republics and how they were portrayed in the media became even more apparent. A striking comparison of how the international community reported the events versus how local press presented it demonstrates just how manipulated the public perception of events really was. In international coverage of the blockades, such as provided by the Japanese based paper *The Daily Yomiuri*, the blockades are presented from an objective view. The article discusses how each republic has played a role in the economic decline. Such as “Serbia and Croatia prohibited the export of manufactured goods, food, and fuel to Bosnia Herzegovina” or “Serbia used to ship raw materials to Croatia and

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<sup>111</sup> Rueter, “Yugoslavia’s new PM unveils radical economic reform plan.”

Slovenia, and received manufactured goods from them in return. But the market relationship has ended, and each industry is hurting.”<sup>112</sup> The report suggests that all the republics are suffering and that the fault should be borne by the political elite who fail to uphold promises to end the embargos. However, when local Serbs are asked about the economic situation or who bears responsibility and the response is far different. When asked if there is a frustration with the local political elite for the state of economy, the answer is a resounding no. As one man told reporters, “Milosevic is a hero. He’ll get the support of the whole people if he continues to protect the interests of Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia.”<sup>113</sup> Rather than looking at their own political leaders as a possible cause of the continued economic decline, many Serbs responded, “This is the result of economic pressure by the European Union.”<sup>114</sup> As the evidence above suggests, the political elite were able to successfully convince the public that they were victims of others inflicting economic harms against them and that the nationalist politicians were the true heroes striving to serve and protect their people.

Bosnia bears many similarities in its rise of nationalism to the rise of nationalism in Nazi Germany. In both cases, there were intense feelings of economic frustration. This frustration led to a confusion of loyalties within society. This economic instability was further aggravated by the weakness of political institutions and power struggles amongst the elite.<sup>115</sup> In the case of Germany, Goldhagen contends that Hitler and his extreme anti-Semitism did not cause Germany to commit acts of genocide. Rather, Hitler simply gave the public a scapegoat that they so desperately sought for their economic woes. Hitler used his political speeches to spread nationalist narratives that excluded the Jews from the sense of being German. They became

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<sup>112</sup> Massao Shumazaki, “Yugoslavia Civil War Means Economic Doom for People”

<sup>113</sup> Alan Ferguson, “Serbs Blame Economic Woes on a Conspiracy by the West,” *The Toronto Star*, May 16, 1992.

<sup>114</sup> Ferguson, “Serbs Blame Economic Conspiracy on the West”

<sup>115</sup> Zvagulis, “Blaming the Scapegoat”, 8.

scapegoats through political rhetoric. In a similar manner, elites used the media within Yugoslavia to serve a similar purpose. Whereas Hitler tailored his speeches to blame groups such as Jews for the economic catastrophe Germany experienced following WWI, leaders like Milosevic were able to blame the various nationalities within the republics of Yugoslavia was the declining economic situation.

The need for a scapegoat stems from a sense of collective frustration.<sup>116</sup> In situations such as Bosnia Herzegovina, when social tension reaches a point that disrupts the normal order of things, such as the disruption caused by the economic woes, collective identity was disrupted by the chaos. As a result, identities within groups become endangered and easily manipulated by opportunistic political leaders. When the present government is unable to restore order and a sense of collective identity, these new political leaders and their ideologies are able to take seed and expand.<sup>117</sup> In the context of Yugoslavia this development occurred through a number of steps. The radical shift of the economy from controlled to open markets in 1989 and the resulting economic failures created intense social tensions. This social tension, and the split along economic lines of the various regions of Yugoslavia disrupted the collective identity as “Yugoslavs” and instead people began to see themselves as their various nationalities that had not previously existed.<sup>118</sup> These ideas of separate identities were then spurred on through the spread of nationalist narratives that provided a new sense of collective identity among groups that had previously been filled with the sense of being Yugoslav.

The joint impact of elite manipulation of the media and the economic decline also are important for explaining the timing of the rise of nationalism in Bosnia Herzegovina. The

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<sup>116</sup> Zvagulis, 10.

<sup>117</sup> Zvagulis, 10-11.

<sup>118</sup> All interviews conducted said that nationalities such as Serbian, Croatian, or Bosniak, had not been heard of by the interviewees prior to 1990.

presence of both created what could almost be dubbed a perfect storm of circumstances. It was essential in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina that economic decline predated the manipulation of the media by elites to spread nationalism. From 1985 onwards, there are signs that the economy within Yugoslavia is struggling. As early as 1985 there are newspaper articles discussing the impending economic crisis. For instance, a special session of the party's Central Committee was called in October of 1985 to deal with the rising inflation and the more than one million individuals who were unemployed.<sup>119</sup> Yet one does not yet see a strong pressure from elites for the media to take on a nationalist focus. It is only after the final attempt to shift to open market economics in 1989 that the elites truly begin to embrace the idea of spreading nationalism and pressure the media. From this point forward one finds speeches such as Milosevic's calling for a united Serb people or the crackdown against papers that expounded a Yugoslavia identity. This order is important because it demonstrates how the economic situation, which began first, created amongst the public a general sense of frustration. This frustration could have turned against anyone. However, at the same time the economy becomes the worse, there is a concerted effort by political elites to focus the attention of the public on nationalism and use other nationalities as someone to blame for the frustration they are experiencing. Without first an economic decline and then the emergence of elite manipulation of the media, the outcome within Bosnia Herzegovina would likely have been much different.

Both media and economic woes were necessary conditions for the rise of nationalism in Bosnia Herzegovina. The economic situation and its portrayal as falling along national lines created an immense social frustration amongst the public. This created an opportunity to disrupt allegiance to a united Yugoslavia. As a result, the deliberate spread of nationalist narratives by political elites throughout the media found a sympathetic public. Becoming Bosniak, Croatian,

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<sup>119</sup> "Economic Crisis Hits Yugoslavia," *The Globe and Mail (Canada)*, October 31, 1985.



Serbian, allowed individuals to regain a sense of belonging that was lost with the collapse of Yugoslavia and also to band together against those blamed for their economic woes. As a result I contend that *H3* is the best explanation for both the rise of nationalism in Bosnia and the timing for when it arose.

### **Review of Findings**

All three of my presented hypotheses have merit and offer a different insight into why the public in Bosnia Herzegovina embraced nationalism so quickly between 1989 and 1992. *H1* offers important insights into what the majority of individuals attribute the rise of nationalism to; the power of the media and nationalist narratives. For instance, as previously discussed, Gellner expresses that a nation is something that has to be constructed, and thus nationalist narratives worked as a way of building up a sense of collective identity and history within each republic where previously individuals had ascribed to a sense of Yugoslav identity. It also offers support for scholars such as Fujii and Powers who argue in support of the power of the media in inciting ethnic conflict and tension. However, it falls short of demonstrating why the public was receptive to the nationalist messages inundating their press. It simply explains what ideas were present for the public to grasp on to, but not why they felt the need to disavow their previous loyalty to Yugoslavia.

My second hypothesis, examining the role of economic woes, also offers important insights and points of support. The case of Bosnia Herzegovina demonstrates strong support for Gurr's ideas of decremental deprivation, given that as the economic situation continued to worsen the public's expectations did not. In addition, the animosity and frustration expressed by individuals demonstrates how individuals were dissatisfied with the established system and as a result were willing to accept new ideas and plans for improving their situations. The major

shortcoming of the economic approach, however, is that it fails to explain why the public chose extreme forms of nationalism as the new ideology to embrace. All that the hypothesis supports is that there was a desire for something new, but not what that new thing needed to be. Why, for instance, did the public embrace calls for nationalism over calling for a strengthened Yugoslavia and a return to more controlled markets? It cannot answer that question.

My third hypothesis provides the best answer to my original research question of why ethnic nationalism gained such strong support in Bosnia Herzegovina. It fulfills the shortcomings of the two previous hypotheses. Like *H2*, it successfully demonstrates how the economic situation faced by Yugoslavia and Bosnia Herzegovina, created an atmosphere of intense social frustration amongst the public and a sense that the established government had failed the people. Unlike the shortcoming of *H2* it also provides an explanation for how this dissatisfaction was answered. The spread of nationalist narratives through the media provided an ideology for the public to rally around when collective senses of identity became shaky. It is also the only one of the three hypotheses which is able to explain the timing factor for the rise of nationalism.

Overall, while further research is needed to perfect all of the hypotheses, *H3* provides the best explanation for the rise of nationalism because it is able to answer both the question of why the public chose to support nationalism and also why they chose the period between 1989 and 1992 to make this shift in ideology.

### **Future Research**

The research I have conducted is not perfect. One major area that I would like to delve into more and that is necessary in order to strengthen my research is the motivation of elites. Why did elites actively seek to raise nationalism within the country and region? This is something that I only barely touch on. It would greatly improve my research if I could talk with

media staff or media owners to gain an understanding of what their motivators were. Through this insight I would be able to suggest with greater certainty the role of the media played and what was the incentive for elite manipulation of the media.

Applying my hypotheses to cases beyond Bosnia Herzegovina is also something I would like focus on with future research. Throughout the world, we see numerous examples of economic woes affecting the standard of living in countries. Yet these economic woes do not normally shift into sharp ideological shifts that call for violent and exclusionary nationalism. Applying the lessons for the Bosnia case to more situations in order to determine if both the media and economic woes are required for nationalism to grow would give greater credibility to my results. In particular, I would like to look at the situation in Kenya in 2002 and 2007. Kenya offers a similar situation to Bosnia Herzegovina in terms of economics, but one does not see the same rise in nationalism. It would be a good comparative case study to Bosnia Herzegovina.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding the rise of nationalism within Bosnia Herzegovina will not bring back to life the bodies buried in the Olympic stadium, nor will it enable the millions of refugees the wars in the Balkan created to return home. Nor can it atone for the thousands of lives lost and the millions of dollars spent in efforts to stop the war this nationalism eventually sparked. That price is a cost that Bosnia is still paying and will continue to pay as it struggles to rebuild and recreate a society in which Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks can all live peacefully, without animosity towards each other. However, that does not mean that there are not important lessons to take away from this research.

Understanding the variables involved in the rise of nationalism answers important questions for the scholarly community. From my research, insights can be gained into how the

media is used by political elites to create, perpetuate, and spread nationalist narratives that serve their interests and how these narratives are received by the public. Also, analysis of the economic situation of Bosnia Herzegovina, and more importantly, the perception of the economy, exemplifies how economic upheavals can create systems in which the public become frustrated with current status quo institutions and ideologies and seek out leaders or ideologies that promise to improve their situations. Finally, analysis that explores the impact of both economic woes and nationalist focused press demonstrates the dangers that can arise as a result when a socially frustrated public is presented with a supposed solution to their woes, particularly when that solution comes at a grave cost to others.

Through gaining a greater understanding of the role of the media and nationalist narratives, the power of economic woes to upset collective identity and the potentially deadly mix when both factors align together, the international community can take steps to ensure that situations such as what occurred in Bosnia Herzegovina, do not continue to repeat themselves around the globe.

## Appendix 1

### List of Interviews<sup>120</sup>

Interview 1 - Bosniak male outside of Mostar, conducted on June 22, 2013

Interview 2 – Croat woman,<sup>121</sup> Mostar, conducted July 19, 2013

Interview 3 – Serb woman, Sarajevo, conducted August 1, 2013

Interview 4 – Bosniak woman, Sarajevo, conducted August 2, 2013

Interview 5 – Bosniak woman, Sarajevo, conducted August 2, 2013

Interview 6 – Bosniak woman, Sarajevo, conducted August 2, 2013

Interview 7 – Bosniak woman, Sarajevo, conducted September 22, 2013

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<sup>120</sup> All Interviews were conducted under promise of remaining anonymous. As a result, interviews are labeled with only the date on which they took place. The reason places are also not referenced is due to potential for identification based on the stories they shared and possible ramifications within communities.

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