CRITIQUE OF INSTRUMENTALIST AND PRIMORDIALIST THEORIES: THE CASE OF YUGOSLAVIA

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the mainstream conflict in former Yugoslavia, an incomplete research exists on the *micro-military ethnic alliances* and micro-conflicts on the local and regional levels particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The article attempts to fill this knowledge gap through the examination of the theoretical frameworks, instrumentalism and primordialism as the two most frequently used frameworks in explaining the Yugoslav disintegration. In terms of instrumentalism, the article expands on the overreaching assumptions on the account of elitist capacity to instrumentilize ethnic violence in multiethnic societies. Article adds to the existing literature that instrumentalism can and often does inadvertently neglect identifying instances where the elitist's instrumentalisation of the masses did not materialize. Conversely, primordialism an approach that fell out of favor and an unfit framework in regards to Yugoslav dissolution, was substantially and eagerly applied as an explanans, particularly in the first stages of the war. In principle, the primordialism erroneously characterized the Yugoslav dissolution as the ancient ethnic grievances coming to the surface in the absence of strong central government and the primordialist never both-

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1   This article is part of Dr. Goran Patrick Filic's research first as a graduate student at the Columbia University and subsequently as his doctoral thesis at the University of Milan from 2013 to 2017. In his thesis Dr. Filic identifies the causal mechanism for the city of Tuzla and its ability to elect non-ethnic political leadership and reject the ethnic violence and antagonisms in wartime Yugoslavia. Dr. Filic defended his thesis in September 2017 at the University of Milan and teaches Political Science and International Relations at the University of Tampa, Florida.

ered to further that analysis. Hence, this article will go beyond the basic primordialist assumption, it confirms that primordialism, the genetically based argument, cannot adequately tackle conflicts in multiethnic societies as seen in Yugoslavia however, and omitted from the literature, the article posits that the approach has an inexplicably staunch and protracting capacity to linger and spread through the pores of society as a mechanism often utilized by nationalists elites to manipulate and sustain their radical views. This capacity in principle effectively protracts hostilities as attested in all former Yugoslav republics.

Keywords: Instrumentalism; Primordialism; Civil Conflict; Yugoslavia; Theory of Nationalism

1. Introduction

This article offers a refreshed critique of the two dominant theoretical frameworks used to examine the violent disintegration of the former SFR Yugoslavia, a nation whose multiethnic tapestry held the nation together for nearly eight decades (including Kingdom of Yugoslavia) only to disintegrate in an abnormally short and violent fashion. For example, both primordialist and instrumentalist approaches take the position that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina[2] was essentially a macro-war characterized by well defined delineated ethnic combatant sides. However, rather than what has been defined as one macro-war, the article shows that the war in Bosnia was rather a series of small amalgamated conflicts or micro-conflicts, which were disconnected, fractionalized and driven fundamentally by the continual formation of *inter-ethnic alliances*. With this analysis the article furthers inquiry into the concept of *transitivity of ethnic identity* in former Yugoslavia, and it asks: why was it relatively effortless to suspend ones 'nationalist cause' or ethnic identification and cooperate with other side either through war profiteering or switching military alliances. Additionally it asks, what could this suspension of ones' ethnic identity for the sake of financial, military and ultimately political gain tell us about the strength of the ethnic cause and/or peoples ethnic identity before and during the wars in Yugoslavia. This was the time when the political elites were presented with an opportunity to suspend one's ethnic identity either temporarily or permanently in order to benefit militarily, economically and politically. Inter-ethnic alliance switching was particularly evident in Bosnia where military alliances changed when the politics of war changed. The problem was not only the evasive individual or group commitment to their perspective *nationalist cause* in the war, but as a result of continual switching alliances, the so called 'ethnic conflict' was itself corrupted. One of the most explicit examples of this is when two and sometimes all three

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2   Hence forth Bosnia

sides would engage in sales of large volumes of gas (petrol), alcohol and cigarettes and even international humanitarian food aid. It is within this economic and *ethno-political entrepreneurship* that the article attempts to question; how much economic or political profit was required to abandon ones hardened nationalist cause or normatively suspend ones ethnic identify either temporarily or permanently. Thus, the article simply asks, since it could have been relatively easy to suspended ones identity for a few boxes of cigarets or few gallons of petrol, how much is ones ethnic identity worth or at least how much was it worth during the so called ethnic wars in Yugoslavia?

At the core of this article's argument is the instrumentalist and primordialist analyses of the war in Bosnia. For instrumentalists the argument is straight forward, the elites instrumentalized the conflict by politicizing the ethnic cleavages. However, the basis of this argument is only partially true. Through this sweeping assumption, the instrumentalist framework neglected to identify and address the micro-conflicts and the cases where the civil society refused to be instrumentalized for the purpose of setting in motion ethnic violence. This implies that the proponents of instrumentalism, in their intent to foster a micro level ethnic conflict, neglected to consider the anatomy of the local political leadership and that of civil society, as in the cities of Tuzla and Vares for example. Both municipalities voted along the non-ethnic political lines during the first multiparty elections and stood in direct contradiction to the instrumentalist assumption that all wars in Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia, were unquestioningly motivated by political elites (Armakolas, 2011; Filic, 2018). Hence the instrumentalist weakness is made apparent; its wide canvas brush assumption failed to identify instances where ethnic violence could possibly be rejected; as such instrumentalists failed to identify the *formation, structure and composition* of the local and regional civil structures. There were other dozen cities in Bosnia whose population was on the brink of voting non-ethnic which could have swayed the outcome of initiated violence and poses the questions whether the war could have been even possible. Nonetheless, the instrumentalists' assumptions, in the case of Yugoslavia and in particular Bosnia during the war, were therefore mistaken in their oversimplification, which assumes a relative easiness of the elites to instrumentilize the ethnic grievance and according to their analysis, it appears that the wide margin of the majority of Yugoslav ethnic groups were already nationalistically charged and ready for violence, which has never been the case even before the violence erupted.

The central aspect of this article is that the negative *consequences of the oversimplification* of the conflict on the part of the instrumentalist as well as the primordialist approaches are strongly felt even thirty

years after the conflict. Currently, Bosnia remains irreparably ethnically divided, Croatian nationalist narrative dominates the Croatian media, while Serbian and Albanian ethnic myths grow in amplifications exponentially in the last ten years while at the same time all the former republics exist in a vacuum of nationalists' myths, deep historical revisions and the half truths on the causes and consequences of the recent war. Equally important is the byproduct from both frameworks is the notion that supposedly all citizens in former Yugoslavia never stood a chance against the politically induced nationalism. In part, this is due to the fact that the primordialist initial apprehension of the conflict was based on expounding the myth of supposed 'ancient hate, fear and grievances' between different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia which went hand in hand with the nationalists' narratives designed to facilitate ethnic violence. As such the article aims to analyze the oversimplifications of both approaches: the existence of a single macro war and the failure to identify those that rejected the violence and the concept of ancient grievances. The war in Yugoslavia was neither a macro nor an ethnic one, rather it was an *ethno-political entrepreneurship* or opportunistic war and financially enriching for the political and business elites to position themselves to benefit economically and politically from the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Unsurprisingly, these are the same elites who managed the post transitioning process misappropriating large amounts of international aid, creating ripe conditions for corrupt and self enriching privatization schemes. Privatization of Yugoslav enterprises had occurred under the radar and away from the public interest ultimately producing the elitist political systems, albeit corrupt in all former Yugoslav republics.

The article's first section addresses the common denominator of both frameworks, citing main scholarly research on the concepts of ethnography, ethnicity and identity. Common scholarly questions are addressed, namely how ethnicity is perceived in relation to the concept of nationalism. Focus rests on some of the key facets of ethnicity and nationalism such as the elaboration of myths and their uses in the nationalist narratives, as well as their destructive impact in times of war. The second section assesses the instrumentalist framework and how the wars in Yugoslavia tend to be seen through its prism. Here, I will argue that instrumentalist framework is predisposed to manufacturing of micro fractionalized conflicts into one macro war. Localized micro conflicts and the forging of ethnic alliances within the macro war often go unnoticed in the sweeping epic of conflicts. Third section addresses primordialism, particularly its past and present formulations. The article inquires on the fundamental primordialist assumptions in defining ethnicity as an ascriptive concept, and how this concept continues to successfully reinvent itself. In this section the

article underpins the emotive drives of primordialist ethnic antagonism, namely fear and anger, but also cultural concepts that tie ethnic enclaves to one another.

The limits of primordialism have been properly addressed by most scholars by now and the theory has for a long time fell out of favor however the article proposes refreshed analysis on some of the commonly over-looked elements of the approach such as *intervals of peace*, the *timing of conflicts*, and *transitive properties of identity*. Finally and most impor-tantly, I propose a new assessment of primordialism: the insidious growth and *resistance [sustainability]* of hate and ethnic grievances, as well as the validity of provisional exchange or suspension between one' [ethnic] identity and monetary provisions. In other words, the article's inquiry in this section asks; what are the justifications today, for those who associ-ated themselves with a particular ethnic group(s) in 1989, prior to the war in former Yugoslavia, while identifying with another ethnic group shortly prior to the eruption of violence? Here the article attempts to address the *motivations*, *strength*, and *fluidity* of one's ethnic cause or ethnic iden-tity when presented with lucrative financial gain as seen during the wars in Yugoslavia. The article does not question the validity of primordialism, rather it unpacks the primordialist enigmatic protracted power of lingering in the post-conflict societies, presenting itself as a manipulative and effec-tive tool used by the ethno-political entrepreneurship elites to sustain the nationalist narratives through falsifying the truths, revising and relativ-izing historical facts and maintaining euphoric ethnic myths. The last section are concluding remarks.

2. POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY

Ethnicity is an emotive state of belonging to a specific group of people (Kellas, 1998). An 'ethnic group' on the other hand tends to be defined as a group of individuals who distinguish themselves distinctively in a fashion characterized by socio-cultural attributes (Farley, 1984). Aguirre & Turner (1995) explain that when a subpopulation of individuals disclose shared historical experiences and/or unique behavioral and cultural traits, it [group] exhibits ethnicity. According to this definition, Smith (1998) refers to the six main characteristics to define the 'ethno' namely: a collec-tive proper name, myths of common ancestry, shared historical memo-ries, common culture (or one or more differentiating elements of) an asso-ciation with 'specific' territory [homeland] and a 'sense' of solidarity for 'significant' part of the population. The above mentioned ethnic facets provide each group with the set of distinct traits differentiating them-selves from others and as such in this sense, ethnicity may be consid-ered as a synonym for the feeling of 'identity' or as Cornell & Hartman

(1998) propose, "identity is that sense of ethnic distinctiveness". This relationship between ethnicity and identity is voiced explicitly by Horowitz's (1985) definition of the former: "ethnicity is a highly inclusive group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily through kinship and typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness". Eriksen (2001) goes little further and separates ethnicity from culture, "while ethnic identity should be taken to refer to a notion of shared ancestry, culture refers to shared representations, norms and practices". In other words, "one can have deep ethnic differences without correspondingly important cultural differences as was the case in Yugoslavia for example, and one can have cultural variation without ethnic boundaries [English of the middle class and the English of the working class]". Lastly, it is important to mention that presently the debate exists on how ethnicity should be defined for research purposes. Some argue for 'quantoid' and others for 'interpretivist' definitions (Fearon & Laitin 1996). The interpretivist[3] approach is situational and case based, and would make ethnicity more flexible and adaptive for particular research, while the quantoid[4] approach would attempt to precisely define ethnicity, no matter what the purpose and usage is for, in order to clearly have a universal benchmark that would allow more precise comparative studies.[5] For the purposes of this research, this article applies interpretivist approach to the ethnicity.

The relationship between ethnicity, nationalism and the creation of ethno-national myths plays a crucial role in ethnic conflicts. Generally, nationalism has been perceived as: "the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases the totality, of the population [..] it is the establishment of an anonymous impersonal society, with mutually sustainable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of the previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves" (Gellner 1983); "[nationalism] rarely reflecting a long-term tradition or a coherent way of life. Nor is it necessarily founded on a common language, or religion, or ethnicity, or historical experience.

3   Smith (1998) and Wallerstein (1987) claim that ethnicity must be viewed as a plastic and malleable social construction, deriving its meanings from the particular situations of those who invoke it – "ethnicity has no essence or center, no underlying features or common denominator".

4   Gerring & Barresi (2003) notes "this type of lexical confusion means that, as scholars cannot achieve a basic level of agreement on the terms by which we analyze the social world, agreement on concussions is impossible".

5   For further discussion on quantoid or interpretivist debate please see (Fearon and Laitin 2000) http://www.uky.edu/~clthyn2/ PS439G/readings/fearon_laitin_2003.pdf accessed 5th October 2021.

All these are more often the result of sovereignty than its reason: they are social artifacts, political constructions. The nation is an imagined (and, what is more, a newly imagined) community" (Hobsbawm 1990); an "imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1983); "process to establish the ideological justification of the state" (Eriksen 1993). In terms of parallel between ethnicity and nationalism Cornell & Hartman (1998) argue that nationalism is based on real or assumed ethnic ties. However, the concept of nationalism has slightly more ideological and political dimensions because it refers to the expressed desire of people to establish and maintain self-governed political entity (Kellas 1998).

Explicitly implied in this article is the timing when the ethno becomes nationalistic, resulting in the emergence of ethno-nationalism, which in turn becomes a threat to the existence of the state and leads to ethnic conflict with other groups. The problem lies not with the fundamental definition behind national self-determination defined as "moral agency and political authority [...] holding that nations are entitled to govern their own affairs and, in particular, to form their own states" (Brubaker 1998), the problem arises when one group's ethno-nationalist goals and determinations become exclusive and/or aggressive vis-a-vis other ethnic groups. This is to say, maintaining the principle "whereby asserting that state and nation should be congruent; thereby providing powerful lever for evaluating and redrawing state boundaries for legitimating or delegitimizing political frontiers according to a kind of correspondent theory of justice" (ibid. p. 274). The term 'ethnic conflict' therefore, arises when "one ethnic group vis-a-vis another ethnic group defines its goals in 'ethnic' terms i.e, claims that its distinct ethnic identity and the lack of opportunity to preserve, express and develop it [identity], is the reason that its members do not have the same rights, and cannot realize their interests (Roessingh 1996). What this article aims to underline are the motivations behind setting goals by one ethnic group in relation to another. It is "important to recognize exactly when nationalism turns into chauvinism and under what conditions, so that we can try to avoid the transition or reverse it" (Hobsbawm 1990). In terms of the former Yugoslavia in the late 1980s principally, Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Albanians and Bosnian Muslims (Bosnjaks), all began formulating their ethnic agendas (Izetbegovic 1990) which, consequently were deemed threatening to the other ethnic groups, i.e, the rise in Serbian nationalism was threatening to Croats, Slovenians and Bosnian Muslims and vice versa. This was particularly evident with Serbian nationalist ethnic goals[6] in Kosovo, [Croatian] Krajina and Slavonia and

6   Memorandum by Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/674 Infamous Memorandum by SANU. Weblink accessed on October 20th, 2021.

Bosnia, equally, and the Croatian ethnic goals (Tudjman 1990), in hetero-geneous communities of [Croatian] Krajina and Slavonia with large Serbian population as well as in Bosnia. Both ethnic groups used 'social engi-neering' (Markovina 2014) of historical myths (Hall 1998) which provided and fueled an intense power capable of arousing deep passions and nation-alistic feelings which were ultimately used in pursing territorial aims and political power gains (Gagnon 2004).

Moreover, the concept of national identity is inescapably connected to the creation of ethno-national myths. Hobsbawm & Ranger (2012) coined the term 'invention of traditions', which explain that nationalist elites invent myths and traditions closely connected to the newly estab-lished state and its freshly concocted concepts of nationalism, nation-state, national symbols, revised history etc. Shnirelman (1995) reflects on nationalist myths as being diffused among East Slavs (ethnic Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians) whereby myths are being created by national intellectuals and proliferated by the ethno political elites with the goal of using these myths as an instrument for ethno-political mobilization and inter-ethnic conflict. Kaufman (2001) refers to [national] myths as existing at the core of every nationalism, "the core of the ethnic identity is the "myth-symbol complex" … "the combination of myths, memories, values and symbols that defines not only who is a member of the group but what it means to be a member. National elites create nationalist iden-tities, using ethnic symbols to mimic the cues that originally invoked a genuine kinship/group-defense response: hence the "motherland" and "fatherland" concepts, and various symbolisms and 'inventing traditions' commonly used by nationalist to combine the notions of home territory and family" (ibid. p. 25).

3. Instrumentalism

Instrumentalism within the International Relations field of study is essen-tially a two fold framework. First, it argues that the ethnic conflicts emerge from the elitist desires and needs for economic or political gains (Gellner 1983; Gurr 1993; Collier & Hoeffler 2004). Secondly, it claims that those desires and needs are precipitated by inciting ethnic animosities vis-a-vis rational [intentional] manipulation of the ethno part of the society (Banton 1983; Hechter 2004). As such, multiethnic societies tend to be predisposed to ethnic instrumentalisation (Horowitz 1985; Varshney 2002). Fenton (2002) in analyzing the instrumentalism notes, "if behavior in terms of ethnic associations could be seen to be serving some individual or collec-tive political or economic ends, then the ethnic action could be reinter-preted as instrumental". Instrumentalism does not postulate that ethnic wars are ancient or embedded in the human subconsciousness rather, it

posits that the ethnic conflicts arise when the ethnic identities are politicized and manipulated to generate political and socio-economic advantages for one ethnic group at the cost of depriving or neglecting other ethnic groups (Ruane & Todd 2004; Chandra 2004). In addition to ethnic greed and grievances, instrumentalism advances a few other different models to help explain ethnic conflicts. One of those models, which to some extent contributes to the overall rise in ethnic tensions, is the concept of security dilemma: referring to a situation in which actions by one state or [ethnic group] intent to heighten its security, such as proliferation of its military strength, reordering of its territorial military presence or making alliances, can lead other state or [ethnic group(s)] to respond with similar measures, producing increased tensions that can lead to an armed conflict, even when no side really desires it (Jervis 1978; Posen 1993). In terms of former Yugoslavia, this was evident when considering how Slobodan Milosevic, Franjo Tudjman and Alija Izetbegovic exploited rich Yugoslav multi-ethnic diversity first in Kosovo between Serbs and Albanians, followed by Serbs and Croats in Croatia and finally between all three ethnic groups in Bosnia, respectively. When these approaches were combined, elitist economic and political greed and the instrumentalisation of ethnic grievances coupled with the security dilemma, Yugoslavia was simply taken hostage by those in power, who designed and espoused their nationalist agendas. However, and despite all predispositions pointing to the fact that the war was slowly becoming inevitable, if both framework structures had not existed, the resulting outcome may have been the absence of ethnic animosities and thus of conflict.

Consequently, some instrumentalists do not deny the ethnic sentiments to which primordialists subscribe. They however, do distance themselves from the ascriptive, genetic facets of the ethnicity, and contest that ethnicity is an instrument for ethnic mobilization used by the elites (Moynihan & Glazer 1975). According to Varshney (2009) ethnicity is neither inherent nor intrinsically valuable, rather "it [ethnicity] masks deeper fundamental economic and political interests. Moreover, the concept of greed underpins the elite motivations and is essentially seen as the fundamental drive in the ethnic conflict. This is because the ethnic conflicts occur in relation to either economic opportunities or political predation and as such, the ethno in relation to greed is perceived as a rational strategy whose goal is to restrict the large share of the economic and political resources, particularly among the very close circles of political elites (Collier & Sambanis 2002). Hence ethnicity can also be viewed as the means to gain political power in order to obtain resources from the state. As such, instrumentalists argue that "ethnic conflicts develop among rational agents over scarce resources and is constructed by political entre-

preneurs to obtain economic or political gains" (Chandra 2004). Therefore, the ethnic conflict is the result of the participant's' rational activities in the widespread interests for power and security. As Williams (2015) describes it, it is a, "deliberate manipulation based on a rational decision to incite or encourage ethnic violence". Along the same lines, Bates (1974), Rabushka and Shepsle (1972), assert that political elites, motivated by economic and political aspirations, are the ones that incite and encourage ethnic wars.

Another important concern of instrumentalism deals with the question of why citizens follow elites in their quest for power even by means of ethnic violence. This question can also be posed as: 'why can some multi-ethnic communities coexist peacefully and others generate violence'? In relative terms to the inquiry, what enticed ethnic Muslims, Serbs and Croats to follow their prospective ethnic leaders? One answer that instrumentalism provides is the concept of *opportunity cost* for collective action. Instrumentalists put forward an argument that explains that an individual opting to cooperate instead of fighting depends on the cost-benefit analysis that the ethnic group will make. When the cost for cooperation is more than its perceived benefits, ethnic conflict tends to be unavoidable (Little 1997). Collier and Hoeffler (1998) define these benefits as "lootable commodity" and participation in irredentist movements is calculated on the basis that the cost in participating in the irredentism is low, while sharing of the loot is substantial. In addition to collective action instrumentalists also propose that some will take part in ethnic violence even when the argument put to them does not personally convince them, yet they will follow the crowd anyway. This is what happened in the 1991 attack on the city of Dubrovnik by Serbian and Montenegrin reservists[7], who were enticed by the material loot to join the military in ethnically cleansing the Dubrovnik suburbia, something for which the Montenegrin government apologized to Croatia and Dubrovnik citizens profusely. In line with this thinking Hardin (1995), argues that the central strategic issue in ethnic mobilization is rather an issue of coordination, and not an issue of collective action because, in collective action, it is rational to free ride but in coordination it is rational to cooperate as long as others are cooperating.

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7   Reserve units are inactive members of the active military forces. They operate on an on-call basis from the main military force. In case of Dubrovnik, the bulk of JNA forces consisted of army reservists from Montenegro, whose crossing onto the Croatian territory was backed by planes, armor and artillery of the JNA. These "reservists" were enticed by the loot and pointless shelling of an ancient city, essentially tainting the 50 years of JNA legacy as a military which successfully resisted Nazi and Fascist occupation in WW II and liberated its own territories. The wide brush painting of JNA as a mercenary military is part of the nationalists agenda. JNA carries a very negative connotation in the region even though most scholars will agree that the JNA was used as a pawn in the entire conflict. Web source accessed: https://www.yorku.ca/soi/_Vol_5_1/_HTML/Pavlovic.html on November 21st 2021.

Schelling (1963) provides an example of this in the hypothetic situation where a couple separated in a department store will, most likely without any prior understanding, find the common or obvious place to meet. The idea that both will seek the focal point, translates in more general terms in relation to the ethnic mobilization – hence he argues that 'prominence' or 'uniqueness' of the ethnicity will serve as a focal point to coordinate the ethnic mobilization, inferring that the ethnic mobilization is only a coordination problem. This, however, does not explain the risks associated with ethnic mobilizations. Lastly, in the analysis of instrumentalism, Varshney (2009) asks "can one really explain ethnic preferences in an entirely instrumental way, or is recourse to the psychological or cultural foundations of ethnicity necessary"? Thus, perhaps inadvertently, instrumentalism continues to use some aspects of primordialism, through the elitist drive for power: the elites instrumentilize the ethno grievances among the ethnic groups in order to ignite ethnic animosities, which eventually if it is needed or deemed so, will lead to a more violent conflict.

4. Limits of Instrumentalism

Varshney (2002) and Horowitz (1985), question the part of collective mobilization, in particular how the elites are able to mass mobilize and achieve a collective response. Furthermore, they ask why would ethnic collective action not be crippled by the free rider i.e, 'bandwagoning' problem if the masses are instrumental? (Varshney, 2002). For Varshney, it is somewhat understandable that one would mobilize or join the movement when he or she is close to benefit politically and economically. But what about others who will not have direct benefits? To help answer this, Olson (1965) provides concepts of 'selective incentives' while, Sen (1973) employs notions of commitment to help explain why others would join. Leaders will incentivize membership through appropriate monetary or material benefits, while commitment to the group is mandated by fear of being ostracized from the group. However, if one knows that the odds are high that the ethnic mobilization would lead to violence or to some kind of punitive action by the state authorities, why would anyone then participate at all? Varshney, much like Olson, contends that certain aspects of coercion can possibly explain part of the mobilization, but both agree that it would be overly simplistic to think that coercion can explain complete or long term mobilization (Olson 1965; Varshney 2002). The idea that coercion is not powerful enough to drive the collective mobilization for long periods of time translates in more general terms when considering the war in Bosnia. The war in Bosnia, in a classical sense, is a war which appears to be a macro conflict; however close inspection reveals that the Bosnian conflict was well *fractionalized territorially* with ethnic alliances forged

throughout the conflict. Essentially the so called War in Bosnia was more of a local or regional nature rather than an all sweeping, encompassing one. This only goes to show that indeed, coercion has limited impact. An interesting case where collective mobilization, coordination and coercion did not last, happens to be the city of Vares, when the Croatian forces i.e, [Croatian Council of Defense or HVO] collaborated with the Muslim forces i.e, [Army BiH], during the early stages of the conflict, when both sides jointly fought the Serbian forces i.e, [Republic of Srpska Army or VRS] while at the same time HVO and Army BiH were in a vicious conflict in other parts of Bosnia, as they were in city of Mostar, for example. Both collective action and coordination faltered as alliances formed continuously out of convenience and strategic interests, across wartime Bosnia. When circumstances came to change alliances again, Serbs and Croats resurrected their former alliance in Vares in 1993 and jointly fought the Muslims when the Army BiH, in retaliation to Stupni Do[8] atrocities, attacked and sacked the city in November of 1993 and in the process expelled all Serbian and Croatian civilians while also conducting desultory atrocities against the ethnic Croatian and Serbian civilians in and around the city. It appears that the violence was not so much ethnic as it was fitting to strategic interests, depending on the circumstances and the goals deemed by the combatants. Many have argued that the war was not so much ethnic, class based or ideologically motivated, but rather that at its core lay a basic interest for material, economic and political gain (Banton 2000; Jovic 2001; Gagnon 2004). Moreover, instrumentalism appears to bundle up micro conflicts within a macro war in its approach to explain an elite driven war. Therefore, when explaining the War in Bosnia by asserting that the political elites instrumentalized their respective ethnic groups with an aim to have them fight against each other, one would expect a unitary ethnic conflict with precise delineated ethnic lines.

Clearly this was not the case in Bosnia. All three sides collaborated and forged alliances with each other throughout different cities and regions when the convenience for all called for them to do so. They collaborated strategically and economically, setting aside their so called 'ancient ethnic hatred' for the other, in favor of pertinent benefits. Yet it is still common to think of the war in Bosnia while envisioning clear cut delineated sides, as we generally think of WWII for example. The only difference is that when we think of WWII, there is no evidence that the U.S. Army collaborated with the Nazis or Japanese against the Soviets or British. The same can be said for the Falkland Islands conflict between the British and Argentine

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8   Stupni Do, atrocities committed by the (Croatian Defense Council, HVO unit from Kiseljak led by Ivica Rajic on Muslim civilians during the Croat–Bosnian War. Web link https://www.icty.org/sid/222 visited on Nov. 10th, 2021.

armies – never have the two armies collaborated in different parts of the Falklands to further their local or regional interests. Other examples such as these exist. In such instances one can speak of macro war without any hesitation. However the same cannot be said for the Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia. Here, the term 'macro war' cannot be applied – when the warring factions kept switching sides swiftly throughout the duration of the war. Additionally, Varshney (2002) asserts that 'ethnic' based mobilization is related to the coordination game but 'class' based mobilization is riddled with free-rider [bandwagoning] problem. He goes on to ask why does ethnicity provide some kind of "epistemological comfort of home" but does not have the same effect on class or party? After all, Varshney continues "communist party leaders believed that there would be a new socialist man, replacing ethnicity or nationhood" (Varshney, 2002). In line with this thinking, he also observes that the elites in multiethnic societies will choose ethnicity rather than economic or ideological programs as means to their power. I for one must disagree with this assumption because it is somewhat overreaching and implies rigidity. While it is true that the elites will grab on the ethnic cleavages in order to instrumentalize the ethnic identity, it is not however a commonly used. In other words, Varshney's assumption would imply that the elites in the city of Tuzla for example, mobilized the citizens by their ethnic affiliation, which was not the case at all. In fact, the civil society in Tuzla counter-mobilized precisely by concentrating on ideological and civic merits.[9] To cite but one example, such large scale ideologically based mobilization took place during WWII, in the Soviet Union, in former Yugoslavia, in Italy, in France etc. Anti-fascist resistance and the mobilization of partisans were based on ideological beliefs and not on perceived ethnic cleavages. Instrumentalism bundled up the war in Bosnia into a single macro-war and doing so betrayed a somewhat hasty and false generalization.

More importantly, by oversimplifying the components of the conflict, the resulting trend is a misinterpreting of the root causes of said conflict, as well as a misperception of ethnic relationships and alliances forged throughout the war. Those are the instances that can paint a very different picture of the ethnic groups and their motivations, including the political elite capability to ignite a war and, its behavior after the war, and its ability (or lack thereof) to navigate through the conditional terms of peace.

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9   The city of Tuzla is the third largest city and an industrial center in Bosnia. The city managed to reject ethnic nationalism whereby the civil society elected the non-ethnic party option. In fact Tuzla and Vares were the only municipalities to do so in the whole of Bosnia during the first municipal multiparty elections that were held in Yugoslavia. For further study on the phenomenon of Tuzla, see. Armakolas, I. (2011). The Paradox of Tuzla City: Explaining Non-nationalist Local Politics during the Bosnian War and Filic, G. (2018). Rejection of Radical Nationalism in Wartime Yugoslavia: The Case of Tuzla (1990–1995).

Hence the war in Bosnia may have taken a different dimension if the focus had been more on examining the team changing fluidity that existed among the Serb, Croat and Muslim combatants rather than impulsively defining the war purely in terms of ethnic antagonisms. In the case of the Bosnian conflict nothing was what it seemed to be. As it is often said, in war the first casualty is the truth. It was never perfectly clear who was on this or that side, as combatants would barter truce for convenience strictly among themselves and did so many times unpredictably. When we take into consideration these facts they never fail to illuminate the absurdity of the Bosnian conflict and the grievous and unfortunate consequences it visited on the civilian population.

Finally, instrumentalism did not properly address that there were those who refused resolutely to change or suspend their ethnic or national identities thereby effectively disallowing elites to instrumentilize their ethnicity. This was seen specifically in both the municipalities of Tuzla and Vares. Tuzla for example is one of those rare cities in the region where citizens' identity rest squarely on being Yugoslav, still today, even showing an increase from the last poll conducted in 1990[10]. For many of the people this city, the changes in identities [national and ethnic] during the Yugoslav wars were largely opportunistic and can be understood simply as means of survival. This was particularly true with ethnically mixed families that found themselves in a newly homogeneous environment. In addition elites cannot always manipulate ethnic cleavages. Citizens are not necessarily irrational for choosing not to change identities when it would appear to be 'rational' to do so. Most importantly, instrumentalism, in regards to the elites' overreaching assumptions, neglects woefully to identify and address the anatomy of civil society. Some societies exhibit in their anatomies traits that are far more robust than the elitists' ability to instrumentilize the group's 'ethno'. Lastly, as the Bosnian conflict unveiled, instrumentalism should not be too hasty in grouping local, fractionalized conflicts into one. Upon closer inspection, the facts on the ground may depict a very different reality, as was seen in Bosnia[11].

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10   Konacni rezultati Popisa 2013–Federalni zavod za statistiku. Weblink: www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanje.pdf. Accessed September 20th 2021.

11   Personally attested dozen of interviewees whereby young JNA conscripts in the first stages of conflict were sent to the front lines as a buffer zone between Croatian paramilitaries (ZNG) and Serbian paramilitaries in Krajna region. Same conscript, was sent home to Bosnia, who had to join the TO BiH (Territorial Defense) who at that time fought the Serbs, (Vojska RS) and then in later stages of the war in Bosnia, as the politics changed, he had to join HVO (Croatian Defense Council) and fought the Muslims (Army BiH). One individual not by his choice, as senseless as it sounds, had to fight all three ethnic groups in the war, the Croats, the Serbs and the Muslims.

5. Primordialism

The roots of the primordialist approach are embedded in the writings of German romanticist philosophers such as Herder and Fichte, but the paradigm has been since advanced and its strongest proponents Geertz (1963), Shils (1995) and Van Evera (2001) argue that the ethnic ties are inherent in humans and as such have a deep natural connection among people of the same ethnic identity, and this, in turn, produces natural distancing from other groups. Primordialism , the oldest tradition of inquiry in the subfield of ethnicity, advances that the 'ethno' is an ascriptive primordial attribute in humans, and emotions of fear, hatred or anger can stem from the groups' differences. These differences appear commonly in language, territory, race, ethnicity, religion etc. (Isajiw 1993). Because primordialists claim that the ethnic identity is ascriptive and inherent, general assumption therefore is that the ethnic group membership is fixed [hardened] and passed down intact across generations (Isajiw 1993; Chandra 2012). For Poata-Smith, (2013), ethnic identity is singular, timeless and fixed with distinct social boundaries". Esteban (2012), takes a firmer stance and asserts that ethnic differences are perceived as "ancestral, deep and irreconcilable". For Shils (1957) and Gertz (1963) ethnic identity is eternal, inflexible and ontological. In terms of ethnic conflict, Weir (2012) declares that since these differences are ancestral and irreconcilable, as such, ethnic conflict stems naturally and inevitably from ancient hatreds between ethnic groups. Some primordialists go as far as to say that the differences reach beyond human ancestors, "the urge to define and reject the other goes back to our remotest human ancestors and indeed beyond them to our animal predecessors" (Lewis 1992). According to this view, "tendencies toward xenophobia and intolerance are more natural to human societies than liberal politics of interest" (Crawford 1998).

Essentially, primordialism aims to explain the fear of domination, expulsion or even extinction that lies at the base of most ethnic conflicts (Glazer 1986). In doing so, the approach exposes the binding to a particular set of beliefs that evoke strong and often negative emotions such as hate anger, fear etc, all which could be claimed as culprits in the most violent atrocities. Thus, for supporters of this approach the unspeakable acts which took place during the ethnic violence witnessed in Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Congo etc, were driven by either emotion or passion, and stemmed from fear, hatred or anger (Van Evera 2001). Primordialists tap into the role of emotions to help explain ethnic violence. However, while emotions appear to be primordial, they are as Suny (2001: 8) notes, "a socially and politically constructed reality, drawn from the historical memories of past injustices and grievances … National identities are saturated with emotions that have been created through teaching, repetition and daily reproduc-

tion until they become common sense, these tropes; betrayals, treacheries, threats from the "others" and survival are embedded in the familiar emotions of anxiety, fear, insecurity and pride". Van Evera (2001), does not shun from this view himself; in fact he insists that ethnic identities are socially constructed and that we should not take ethnic identities as fixed only to make things easier for the purpose of political analysis. However he still defends his original position arguing that the "ethno" is not fixed but rather hard to reconstruct once it is formed: "ethnic identities, while constructed, are hard to reconstruct once they form". On the same subject he asks: "should we take ethnic groups as fixed for the purpose of political analysis? – the constructivists' claim that ethnic identities are socially constructed are clearly correct". Reconstruction can occur but the "conditions needed for reconstruction are quite rare, especially in modern times, and especially among the ethnic groups in conflict" (Van Evera 2001, 2).

6. Limits of Primordialism

The strentgths of the primordialist approach are also its weaknesses and for this reason it has been widely attacked. There are generally two major fallacies with this approach described in the literature. First, the approach focuses on the 'irrationality' of ethnic violence. Then it is contingent upon the idea of 'primordial' or 'genetics', or 'hatred before human predecessors' (Turton 1997; Besteman 1998). This projects the notion of ultimate hopelessness, and defines ethnic violence as 'perpetual, permanent and ineradicable' (Laitin and Sunny 1997). In this sense, primordialism avoids dealing or rather ignores structural, political and economic processes within which these conflicts occur and implies that in ethnically heterogeneous societies there will naturally and inevitably be violent ethnic conflicts (McKay, 2011). However, the problem with this argument is that there are many examples of ethnically heterogeneous countries such as Botswana, compared to many African countries, whose ethnicities peacefully coexisted for longer periods or who still maintains peace (Holm and Molutsi 1992).

The coexistence of ethnic groups in Botswana is constitutionally grounded in differentiations – meaning differences are constitutional – we can interpret this almost as if differences are given a legal statute and thus indirectly pulls the rug from under those who may have intentions of manipulating differences in any way. Yugoslavia under Tito is another example of constitutionally grounded ethnic differences. Under its 1974 constitution amendments, Yugoslavia provided for equality of the constituent peoples and minorities, de facto declaring that there were no majorities or minorities (Glenny 1992; Gagnon 2004). Secondly, as Varshney (2009) and Wilkinson (2001) point out, there are concerns with time variances. If ethnic hatred has such deep bonds and is thus deeply rooted,

why does ethnic violence diminish and increase at different time periods? In other words, primordialism's approach poorly explains the existence of peace in heterogeneous states prior to the conflict, as seen in the former Yugoslavia. Additionally, on the subject of timing, primordialism poorly explains the timing of violent outbreaks. So far it fails to explain why ethnic conflicts occur when they do, which invites the argument of causality (Jackson 2002). That is to say, in the case of Yugoslavia, primordialism fails to explain a causal mechanism: did ethnic hatred escalate due to the state collapse, or did ethnic hatred cause the state collapse? Another limitation of primordialism as raised by Varshney (2009), is what he refers to as inter-spatial variance: he asks how and why some ethnic groups manage to live peacefully during conflicts in the same geographical areas (cities or small towns), but not in another? This question alludes to the topic of diaspora. It is common to see the most recent Yugoslav diaspora members having established good relations with one another in their new communities since their relocation from the last war, and this occurs even among former enemy combatants. Primordialism also poorly explains the idea of transitivity and, specifically when it comes to diaspora, the transitivity of emotive concepts. This is to say that primordialism fails to explain peaceful coexistence among former ethnic enemies while having this presumably "fixed and inherent deeply rooted ethnic hatreds" for each other.

Relatively weak explanations to justify the process of accumulation of hate leave unanswered questions on the transitivity property of the aforementioned ancient hate. Deeply rooted emotions such as hate, anger or fear should, de facto, have transitive and uniformed properties. And yet, one asks, why does one ethnic group express ethnic antagonism towards another group in one setting be it city or village, but the same group is not subject to the same emotions in another city or a village etc. If ancient animosities are rooted biologically, deep in the individual's psyche, and supported historically, then change in geography should not alter them in any way. In reality diaspora studies agree that ethnic antagonisms halt when refugees immigrate. Many studies explain why this is so, namely that external factors exist, such as local and strict state laws, implemented by strong rule of law. As such, good neighbor relations are true among Yugoslav refugees abroad, especially in countries like US, Canada, Sweden, Germany etc, despite their recent ethnic hostile experiences during the war. In many instances war veterans[12] who once assumed opposing sides in the trenches, now coexist in peace as if the war was just something

12 This is true for the most refugees in Dallas of the 1990s. I have personally witnessed and can attest to were at some social family gathering some identified as soldiers of opposing sides fighting at the same front-lines hence against each other, yet they were sitting at the table for a social gathering and coexisting neighborly in Dallas, Texas.

they had casually been tasked to participate in (Baubock and Faist 2009; Koinova 2017). In line with this thinking, if the emotive concepts of primordialism halt when ethnic groups emigrate from their 'homeland', could that possibly mean that the land they left had some type of ascriptive properties? And if so, could this notion be understood as such that: primordialist, ancient, biological and innate hatred becomes irrelevant concept and instead, an individual's sentiments for his/her adoptive land and adopted country now take precedence? This is something that should be further researched.

Despite structural deficiencies, primordialism can be useful in explaining at least partly the emotive dimension of ethnic conflicts, fundamentally offering some insights into the sentimentality of the 'ethno' and the ethnic group. Some of the cultural elements that comprise the ethnic identity, such as religion and feelings about one's nationality, are more often than not inner passionate dogma. To be precise, the power of ethnicity lies in its capacity to arouse vigorous feelings that some would label as "irrational euphoric liabilities" (Cornell and Hartman 1998) and if this potentially human frailty is instrumentalized by the political elites in the context of toxic nationalist fervor it, as frequently happens, can give way to violence and/or to armed conflicts such as those between Punjabis and Sikhs in 1971, the Rwanda Genocide in 1994, or the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia in 1991, to name a few. All could be assessed as cases of irrational euphoric passions in times of economic or political crisis. However, to say that the ancient animosities have the exclusivity on the causes of these conflicts is a far fetched conclusion. The primordialist concept that man is a national, not a rational animal and that at the core of nationalism lays the notion of shared blood and shared ancestry has come under heavy academic attack and rightfully so. In particular the instrumentalists' claim that modernity introduced diverse groups into a 'same frame' of human consciousness, and that it changed the meaning of ethnicity, which led to the concept of nationhood, and concludes with the concept of primordial ethno-national antagonisms as the underlying basis for conflict would be historically false (Kaplan 2003). Hence, this article reaffirms previous scholarly work which states essentially that primordialism, the genetically based argument, cannot adequately undertake to explain multiethnic conflicts such as those seen in Yugoslavia.

7. Conclusion

Research on primordialism thus far, has circumvented its puzzling strength to linger in post conflict societies and the capacity to transform itself into a political tool and this article attempted to address this line of inquiry. This lingering or primordialist capacity to evade post conflict reconcilia-

tion, stems from its core emotive character of the so called *genetic argument* of *shared blood, shared ancestry* and so forth. As such it remains powerfully appealing for the nationalist's narratives, who look to gain from maintaining and stirring the nationalist narrative and fervor. It is no longer a serious debate about primordialist power to explain the ethnic violence, however since it is so easily introduced into the society because of its emotive agency and as such very attractive and appealing to masses, by the time any attempts are taken to expel it, it is already too late and nearly impossible to purge it from the society even for the decades after the conflict. Former Yugoslavia is the prime example of this ancient hate, genealogy differences etc. Large segments of the population in Croatia and Serbia believe either that they are genetically different or that strife stems from the "ancient" times when the southern Slav tribes inherited the Balkan Peninsula in the 5th century all thanks to the primordialist narratives of the 1990s. This is where the primordialist power matters the most and to think otherwise is a mistake. Future research should focus on this point within the primordialist study.

On the other hand instrumentalism sees the ethnicity as an instrument or a tool used by the political and ethno-entrepreneurs who polarize and subsequently manipulate the ethno part of society in process inciting conflict among ethnic groups by targeting especially ethnically heterogeneous communities. In this sense, the elites' underlying drives are their capacity, their greed and their need to acquire economic and political richness. This is one of the areas where inquiry into instrumentalism becomes thorny. Fundamentally, instrumentalism is constructed in relation to the: a) the aptitude and need to manipulate someone or something: b) to manipulate with the purpose of inciting conflict among different ethnic groups with political gain or economic riches as the ultimate reward, and c) the assumption that those who are manipulated (or who will be manipulated) will or will not resist the manipulations. Naturally, from the above assumptions instrumentalism is predisposed to bundle up the micro wars into one large conflict such as was seen in Bosnia. But overreaching assumption on the part of the elites, such as was the case, inadvertently allowed for two omissions.

Firstly, the failure to analyze the conflict in depth with the possible identification of smaller, fractionalized conflicts and the forging of ethnic alliances with time and territorial variations. This macro-micro approach would have signaled enclaves of peace such as the cities of Tuzla and Vares, and shown that the ethnic antagonism on the micro level was not what it appeared it to be on the national level. Secondly, what compounds the failure of the overreaching assumptions of the elites on the macro level is that they inadvertently neglected to address the anatomy of civil society on

the micro level, where the grass-root approach was to protect the existence of multi ethnicity and to reject nationalist calls for ethnic based violence. Lastly, a closer look at instrumentalism shows it does not clarify where elites acquire their need to engage in manipulation, and whether the elites themselves all possess the same levels of greed that foster the need to instrumentalize. This type of inquiry would aid to identify who is less and/or who is more predisposed to greed in respect to the material, ideological aspects of the conflict or some form of combination of the two. This is something that future research on instrumentalism could further investigate. This article also posited the following question: is elitist greed infinite, in other words does greed have an ending point? If the greed is perpetual without an ending point, are we to assume that the conflicts are perpetual where ethnic groups seem unable to coexist in peace? Conversely, is conflict indefinitely embedded in human nature, is it intrinsic to it? The instrumentalist concept of greed is not an ascriptive term, it is an impulse and we only have an indefinite understanding of what that is. Therefore, the question arises as to whether we know how each individual measures and understands greed, especially since greed has prescriptive rather than ascriptive properties and as such signifies different concepts to different people. In terms of instrumentalism it is one of the most important factors to clarify and understand, since it is an essential and fundamental drive in the framework itself.

The article showed that the ethno-entrepreneurship alliances were instrumental in tipping the scales of the overall conflict. Such micro interethnic alliances created the profound inner rifts that did not necessarily appear on the surface map of a larger conflict. This is relevant because these discrepancies question the *authenticity* of true motivations for the conflict in former Yugoslavia. These alliances either validate or deny the argument of pre-existing grievances extolled by instrumentalisation. The implications of this argument are that the variations in micro conflicts within one larger macro war can give the illusion that there is only one well-defined general ethnic war as some have come to conclude about Bosnia, for example. This can be misleading in understanding the real motivations for the escalation of ethnic violence in then entire former Yugoslavia and as such it may lead to an erroneous analysis of the overall conflict. Here the article provided an overview of the framework's fundamental principles: the notion of greed, and the political elitist capacity to instrumentilize. The primordialist explanation of the Yugoslav conflict initially set the popular trend of presuming long standing quarrels among the many Yugoslav ethnic groups. Hate is what majority can understand, but there were no hate in practice. Primordialism was rejected, however as a theoretical framework it is remarkably malicious in the sense that it

continues to be used indiscriminately as a tool by the the elites in perpetuating their nationalists narratives.

In summary, primordialist argument of ancient ethnic hate is rejected as irrelevant, although it continues to have substantially protracted strength to linger and transform itself into a political mechanism used by the proponents of nationalist views. This article added a nuanced assertion that primordialism does not possess an absolute transitivity properties of its basic underlying emotive principles such as fear, hate and anger. Additionally, primordialism offers almost no explanation for the accumulation of the emotive principles and for identifying the stage when these emotive factors turn into violence against the perceived out group. At the same time, certain elements of instrumentalism were also criticized, while some new distinctions in understanding of the concept were offered, mainly that of overreaching assumptions on the part of the elitists and their capacity to induce their will upon the civil society without analyzing the anatomy of it and appreciating its intrinsic strengths. Possible lines of research inquiry are offered above in relation to both theoretical frameworks discussed in order to better understand the many facets of ethnic conflict in our modern times.

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