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*Neil A. Abrams*



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## **Nationalist Mobilization and Imperial Collapse: Serbian and Russian Nationalism Compared, 1987–1991**

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*April 2003*

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During the late 1980s, Russians in the USSR and Serbs in Yugoslavia faced a set of broadly similar circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Russians and Serbs each constituted the dominant nations in their respective multiethnic countries, in terms of their numerical representation in the political elite and the population as a whole. Communist regimes in both countries faced a crisis of legitimacy amidst severe economic downturns and profound social malaise. Furthermore, in each country communist elites sought to shore up the declining legitimacy of their regimes by holding competitive regional elections. However, these elections brought nationalists to power in the non-Russian and non-Serbian republics who for the most part opposed the regimes. Furthermore, the widespread demands for autonomy and independence in these republics threatened to reduce the status of the Russian and Serbian minorities residing there.

Despite the notable similarities in their respective political environments, Serbs mobilized in support of an extreme nationalist ideology while Russians did not. Capitalizing on the widespread fears of Albanian nationalist mobilization, nationalist elites led by Slobodan Milosevic successfully used such an ideology to gain power among Serbs.<sup>2</sup> As I will document below, this ideology pointed to the dire threat posed by external enemies and the subsequent need to establish a national state which would include all nation members.<sup>3</sup> The enemies that this ideology targeted ultimately came to include other nations on the territory of the Yugoslav state in addition to the Albanians, particularly Croats and Bosnian Muslims. According to this ideology, the achievement of Serbian statehood would require tremendous sacrifices. This struggle would have to be pursued at all costs, using any and all available means.

If Serbs rallied behind an extreme nationalist ideology, the experience of Russians during this same period provides a stark contrast. While many Russians were concerned by the growing assertiveness of other nations in the empire, they hardly feared such developments to the same extent as Serbs did. As a result, pro-Russian elites promoting extreme nationalist ideologies had far less success at mobilizing support than their Serbian counterparts did. Despite facing similar circumstances, then, Russians and Serbs responded to the collapse of their respective empires in strikingly different ways. This paper will compare the contrasting experiences of Russians and

Serbs from 1987–1991 in order to determine whether, when, and against whom a given nation mobilizes behind an extreme nationalist ideology.<sup>4</sup>

First, however, it is necessary to define certain terms that will recur over the course of this article.<sup>5</sup> These terms will be used throughout this paper in strict accordance with their definitions presented in this section:

- *Social mobilization* is “the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior.” One of the new forms of socialization that occurs during this process is the formation of national consciousness.<sup>6</sup>
- The *social mobilization period* refers to the period in which the process of social mobilization for a given nation began to affect segments of the nation large enough to be considered politically significant.
- The *current period* refers to the period in which the phenomenon I am trying to explain occurred. The term is meant to distinguish this period from the prior social mobilization period; by my definition, something that happened in the current period occurred at some point in time after the social mobilization period. In this analysis, the current period refers to the years 1987–1991. Even though the phenomenon in question could have feasibly occurred in a period that is no longer so “current,” the term will nevertheless be used for lack of a better one.
- The *current state* denotes the state under which a particular nation lived in the current period as opposed to the social mobilization period.
- An *empire* is a state in which there exists some territorially-concentrated group that is different from the dominant group, conscious of these differences, engaged in an attempt to secede, yet prevented from doing so. For example, according to this definition, Yugoslavia can be considered an empire from the early 1970s onwards, when the first attempt was made (by the Croats) to break away.
- A *nation-state* is a state inhabited by some nation and which is considered by that nation to be its nation-state. Note that this definition of nation-state potentially allows for a situation in which a state is at once a nation-state and an empire; this is possible as long as the state fulfills the above conditions of an empire yet is also considered by some nation to be its nation-state.
- A *nationalist discourse* consists of the set of myths that define a nation’s folklore and that are transmitted over time and space through literature, poetry, music, oral communication, and memory.
- A *nationalist ideology* refers to the political articulation of the ideas in a nationalist discourse in such a way as to make sense to the person creating—or adhering to—the ideology. In my view, to say that *a nation has* a nationalist ideology implies that this ideology boasts

enthusiastic adherents among most members of the nation and that it mobilizes large numbers of people to take political action. In contrast to the nationalist discourse, then, not at all times can a nation be said to have a nationalist ideology. However, from the social mobilization period onwards, the nationalist *discourse* is always present. Nationalist discourses consist of the ideas from which mass-based nationalist ideologies are made.

- *Nationalist mobilization* refers to the mobilization of a majority of nation members in support of a particular nationalist ideology, whether extreme, moderate, or otherwise. Used in this sense, the term “mobilization” implies that some kind of action—such as voting, participating in a protest, taking up arms, making a public speech, etc.—is taken to express one’s support for an ideology. Nationalist mobilization should not be confused with social mobilization; as used here, the two terms denote entirely separate phenomena.

This essay will begin by examining the theories of nationalism and nationalist ideologies put forth by Anderson, Breuilly, Brubaker, Deutsch, and Gellner. I will then move on to the explanatory framework. First, I will develop in greater detail the concept of an extreme nationalist ideology. This will be followed by an examination of the nationalist discourse, the main intervening variable in this analysis. I will demonstrate the existence of fundamental differences between the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses. These differences were the most immediate factor responsible for variations in the extent to which each nation mobilized behind an extreme nationalist ideology in 1987–1991. Next, I will present the two independent variables that determined the relevant differences in the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses. The first of these variables is the extent to which the nation had an established nation-state during the social mobilization period. The second independent variable is the extent to which the nation historically lived under a singular and strong state with other nations inhabiting the territory of the current state.

The capacity of the current state serves as a third independent variable in this analysis. Unlike the other two independent variables, the strength of the current state did not affect the character of a given nation’s nationalist discourse. However, it did affect the timing of the nationalist discourse’s transformation into a mass-mobilizing, extreme nationalist ideology. In other words, it determined precisely when the nation mobilized behind an extreme nationalist ideology. The disintegration of the Yugoslav state in the 1980s set the conditions under which the



ideas in the Serbian nationalist discourse were formed into a nationalist ideology. However, the Russian nationalist discourse exhibited fundamental differences from its Serbian counterpart. Therefore, even under similar conditions of state disintegration, no mass-mobilizing, extreme nationalist ideology emerged among Russians.

From these three independent variables, one can derive three underlying factors responsible for the mobilization of a given nation behind an extreme nationalist ideology: the relative absence of an established nation-state during the social mobilization period, the historical absence of a singular and strong state, and the disintegration of the current state. I will argue that each of these three factors was essential in the transformation of the Serbian nationalist discourse in 1987–1991 into a mass-based, extreme nationalist ideology. For purposes of comparative analysis, the absence of any one of these factors should be sufficient to avert this type of nationalist mobilization.

## **THEORIES OF NATIONALISM AND NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES**

While scores of theorists have dealt with the rise of nationalism and nationalist ideologies, I will specifically evaluate certain claims made by Breuilly, Anderson, Brubaker, Gellner, and Deutsch. Some of these authors—the latter three in particular—might not directly address the propensity of a given nation to mobilize behind a particular nationalist ideology. Nevertheless, this question is a sub-category of a broader subject with which each of these authors is concerned: the conditions under which nationalism arises. To the extent that nationalism is the political articulation of a set of ideas that people hold about their nation and its relationship to the outside world, this phenomenon amounts to a nationalist ideology to which a majority of nation members subscribe. In other words, whether or not they frame their arguments in this way, all of these authors are concerned with the conditions under which a majority of members in a community adopt a nationalist ideology. To be sure, I am directly concerned with the more specific question of the conditions that cause nation members to *mobilize* behind a nationalist

ideology—that is, their propensity to take *action* in support of the ideas contained within this ideology. Nevertheless, Anderson, Breuilly, Brubaker, Deutsch, Gellner, and I are addressing the same broad question: what are the conditions under which most nation members adopt a particular set of ideas about the nation?

In answering this question, these authors focus on a range of separate processes. Anderson highlights the rise of print capitalism and its role in promoting the idea of the nation in Western Europe and then spreading the concept to Europe's overseas colonies.<sup>7</sup> Breuilly points to the rise of the modern state and the nationalist opposition generated by this development.<sup>8</sup> Deutsch ties the emergence of nationalism to the growth of mass communications systems, communities built around shared socio-economic preferences, and the social processes unleashed by industrialization.<sup>9</sup> Gellner explains nationalism in terms of the imperatives of industrialization and its role in creating “standard high cultures.”<sup>10</sup> Brubaker examines how the institutionalization of nationhood along with the conflictual interplay between competing nationalisms established the conditions for nationalist mobilization in the post-communist region.<sup>11</sup>

All of these theories may very well explain why nationalism came to being; the rise of print capitalism, the modern state, mass communications, and industrialization may indeed be preconditions for nationalism to emerge. Nevertheless, the factors involved in these frameworks are far too wide-ranging in their effects to sufficiently explain important variations between cases. These arguments fail to account for three types of variation in particular. The first instance involves variations in the tendency of different nations to support nationalist ideologies. The theories of Gellner, Anderson, Deutsch, and Breuilly focus on conditions that, by the second half of the twentieth century, were operating in nearly all regions of the world. As a result, they do not adequately account for variations across nations that were affected by these universal processes. In attributing nationalist mobilization to the institutionalization of nationhood, Brubaker highlights a factor that existed throughout much of the post-communist region. Like the other theories, then, his too falls short when confronted with the task of explaining why

Serbs, Croats, Lithuanians, and Chechens exhibited a greater degree of nationalist mobilization than Macedonians, Belarusians, Buryats, and Chuvash. Furthermore, his framework cannot explain why the nationalist ideologies supported by the former nations were more extreme than those adopted by the latter.

If the above theories are marked by an inability to account for differences between nations, they fail to address variations within nations as well. In particular, they cannot explain why a given nation's nationalism will be directed against certain groups but not others. By focusing on a nation's sense of relative deprivation towards groups that are culturally and linguistically different, Gellner attempts to provide an answer to this question. Nevertheless, Gellner's account hardly explains why Russian nationalism is to a greater extent directed against Germans than Lithuanians or why Croatian nationalism affords a greater amount of hostility to Serbs than Bosnian Muslims or Slovenians. After all, both Russians and Croats would have reason to believe that they are linguistically and culturally distinct from all of these groups.

Brubaker offers an alternative framework for understanding which group a particular nation will mobilize against. He identifies a triangular configuration of conflicting nationalisms that begins when a "nationalizing state" seeks to improve its relative status at the expense of a "national minority" residing on its territory. The nationalizing state subsequently pursues policies that provoke the minority's co-nationals in an "external national homeland" to intervene on its behalf. By providing a means of determining which groups a given nation will orient its actions against, Brubaker's theory represents an improvement over the other accounts. Nonetheless, this argument fails to explain why Serbian nationalism was aimed against Croats rather than Macedonians or Montenegrins, both of whom had nationalizing states that potentially threatened Serbian minorities in their domain. Nor can it explain why Armenia intervened to protect its national minority in Azerbaijan but not in Georgia. A successful theory of nationalism should be able to explain not only why nationalism exists, but also why a particular nation's nationalism will be oriented against some groups more than others.

Apart from the outgroups that a nationalist ideology targets, Gellner, Anderson, Breuilly, and Deutsch also fail to explain temporal variations in the intensity of nationalism among a given nation. As noted above, the onset of industrialization, print capitalism, mass communications, and the modern state may indeed have been preconditions for nationalism and nationalist mobilization to occur. Yet these factors alone do not explain variations over time in the extent to which a particular nation might support a nationalist ideology. The above arguments tend to assume that, once a nation is formed, members' attitudes about the nation and its relationship to the outside world are static and unchanging. By highlighting the tendency of nationalism to subside once the goal of statehood has been achieved, Breuilly is an exception. Nevertheless, Breuilly's framework still cannot explain temporal fluctuations during the twentieth century for nations that, as late as 1991, did not possess their own state. Among these one can include Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Chechens, Armenians, Georgians, and Azerbaijanis, among others.

In many instances, a nation's propensity to adhere to a nationalist ideology does indeed vary over time. For example, a mass-based Albanian nationalism first emerged in the years preceding World War I, gained momentum during the war, subsided during part of the interwar period, intensified during World War II, only to decline again during the 1950s and most of the 1960s. In the late 1960s, Albanian nationalism re-emerged as a political force and has continued to mobilize large segments of the Albanian population to this day. Similar temporal variations have characterized Serbian nationalism, which gained force as a mass-based movement in the early twentieth century,<sup>12</sup> intensified during World War I, declined to an extent during the interwar period,<sup>13</sup> emerged once again during World War II, and receded again until the late 1980s, when Milosevic's radical nationalist ideology successfully mobilized large numbers of Serbs.<sup>14</sup> The intensity of nationalism and nationalist mobilization among other nations in the post-communist region, including those listed in the previous paragraph, has also varied temporally. Yet, by focusing on factors that are static and unchanging over time, Anderson, Breuilly, Deutsch, and Gellner cannot explain these temporal fluctuations.

Indeed, the sudden emergence of nationalism as a mobilizing force in the post-communist region has refocused the attention of scholars towards the question of timing; why, after having largely disappeared in the region during the post-war era, did nationalism re-emerge in the 1980s as a mass-mobilizing phenomenon? By showing how nationalism arose in this period when “the political space expanded,” Brubaker offers a means of explaining the timing of nationalist mobilization.<sup>15</sup> In this important respect, Brubaker’s framework marks an advance over previous accounts of nationalism which focus on factors that tend to be unchanging over time. Nevertheless, the following analysis will demonstrate how the opening of political space was part of a broader process of state disintegration, a process which provided the crucial condition for nationalist mobilization.

The framework put forth in the following pages offers a means of correcting the shortcomings in the above theories. It can determine not only whether a nation will support a particular nationalist ideology but also at which point in time nation members will adopt such an ideology in large numbers. Apart from explaining whether and when a nation will adopt a nationalist ideology, this framework can identify which group, or groups, this nationalist ideology will be directed against. The task of explaining any social phenomenon requires, in the first place, that a frame of reference be established for comparing broadly similar cases. In the second place, it requires an explanation of relevant variations among the cases situated within this frame of reference.<sup>16</sup> By addressing such factors as modernization, the rise of the modern state, and institutions, the scholars examined here set down such a frame for understanding the rise of nationalism as a general phenomenon. However, they cannot adequately explain relevant variations within and between nations located within this frame. In order to understand these variations, it is not sufficient to focus on large-scale processes and institutions alone. One must also look at the particular ideas comprising a nation’s nationalist discourse, the historical forces that shape the character of this discourse, and the factors that cause it to change over time.

## EXTREME NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES

What is an “extreme” nationalist ideology, and how does it differ from a “moderate” nationalist ideology? Whether a particular nationalist ideology should be classified as extreme or moderate depends on the answer it provides to the following questions:

- Is the nation’s very existence under threat? Extremist ideology: Yes. Moderate ideology: No.
- To what extent must the nation maintain national unity at the expense of internal divisions? Extremist ideology: All internal divisions must be subordinated to the national cause. Moderate ideology: Accepts to a certain extent the presence of politically relevant divisions that crosscut national lines.
- Should the nation restrict the rights (political, economic, cultural) of other nations that reside in its domain? Extremist: Yes. Moderate: Give equal rights to other nations.
- Must the nation have an independent state that includes all nation members? Extremist: Yes. Moderate: Willing to tolerate deviations from this principle.
- Should the nation pursue its objectives through any available means, including violence? Extremist: Yes. Moderate: Violence should not be used.
- To what extent should our nation consider other nations residing within the boundaries of the current state to be enemies? Extremist: Our nation faces a dire threat from enemies residing within the borders of the current state. Moderate: Ambiguous as to whether neighboring nations should be considered “enemies” as opposed to “competitors.”

For the purpose of classification, an ideology should hold an extremist position on at least five of the above six questions to be considered an extreme nationalist one; an ideology that fulfills only one or two of these conditions does not qualify. As I will demonstrate below, the nationalist ideology that gained mass support among Serbs from 1987–1991 took an extremist stance on all of the above issues. However among Russians, it is not possible to say that a moderate ideology mobilized a majority of nation members. In fact, no single ideology—nationalist or non-nationalist—gained the support of Russians to the same extent as the nationalist ideology that mobilized Serbs. The ideology that did gain the most adherents among Russians from 1987 to 1991 was not a nationalist one. Rather, its content focused primarily on socioeconomic and anti-communist themes. The relevant point for the purpose of this paper is that, among Russians, an

extreme nationalist ideology *did not* take hold.<sup>17</sup> The concept of a moderate nationalist ideology is introduced here only for the purpose of better specifying what an extreme nationalist ideology consists of. So, to reiterate, I am simply asking why an extreme nationalist ideology succeeded in mobilizing Serbs during this period but failed to mobilize Russians.

## **THE NATIONALIST DISCOURSE**

Differences in the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses were the most immediate factor accounting for why, during 1987–1991, Serbs mobilized behind an extreme nationalist ideology while Russians did not. The nationalist discourse thereby serves as the intervening variable in this analysis. Among Serbs, the nationalist discourse served as the material from which political elites formed an extreme nationalist ideology capable of gaining widespread popularity. However, the different character of the Russian nationalist discourse prevented a similar outcome from occurring among Russians during the same period.

The nationalist discourse of a given nation arises sometime during the social mobilization period as large numbers of people begin to develop a national consciousness. The discourse is a permanent—although not unchanging—feature of national life. Most of the basic ideas in this discourse are generally accepted among those nation members who are familiar with it. However, for any given nation, the political relevance of the nationalist discourse can vary over time. In other words, nation members are more concerned with the ideas in this discourse in some periods than in other periods.

Apart from time, nationalist discourses also vary across nations in terms of their content and familiarity to nation members. Serbs are much more familiar with their nationalist discourse than Russians are. Nationalist literature, poetry, art, and theatre—even those works produced as far back as the mid- to late-nineteenth century—have a mass audience and are well-known to the average Serb.<sup>18</sup> Nationalist themes dominate the Serbian arts. As Mihailovich explains, “If one were to take away all the works dealing with Kosovo in one form or another, Serbian literature

would be greatly impoverished...No other event in Serbian history has had such immense power to move entire generations of writers, indeed an entire people, over such a long time.”<sup>19</sup>

However, national traditions tend to be much less familiar to Russians than they are to Serbs.

Surveys of Russian youth reveal that nearly 75 percent have a poor knowledge of Russian “folk traditions.”<sup>20</sup> In addition, nationalist themes are hardly as dominant in the Russian arts.

Apart from their familiarity to nation members, the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses also differ in terms of content. In contrast to its Russian counterpart, the Serbian nationalist discourse provides decisive answers to the question of who the Serbs are and what their mission is. A prominent theme in this discourse is the nation’s weaker position vis-à-vis outside groups. Referring to their Turkic overlords, one popular folk song asserts that “If all the Serbs were changed to grains of salt/We could not even salt one dinner of theirs.”<sup>21</sup> The permanent threat posed by these external enemies constitutes a second theme of this discourse. Constant references to the tenuousness of the nation’s very survival are made in the Serbian arts. Serbian literature, for example, is preoccupied with the ability of more powerful enemies to “destroy completely our nation and our country.”<sup>22</sup> Maintaining national unity in the face of these threats is imperative. A predominant message in the Serbian nationalist discourse holds that the Serbs prospered when united and suffered when divided. According to Serbian popular thought, the demise of the medieval Serbian state following the Serbs’ historic defeat at the legendary Battle of Kosovo in 1389 owed much to internal “disloyalty and discord.”<sup>23</sup> Nationalist Serbian leaders have long exploited the popular myth that “internal schism provoked the downfall of the medieval state,” to use the words of a prominent nineteenth century colonel.<sup>24</sup>

If the Serbian nationalist discourse warns against the dangers posed by external enemies, it also justifies taking all means necessary to ensure the nation’s survival against these outside threats. All Serbs must be prepared to undergo the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the nation. “Here I am, O my poor Serbian country,” remarks Popovic, the nineteenth century writer, “ready for a dreadful sacrifice for your happiness” to avoid “seeing the downfall of the Serbian lands.”<sup>25</sup> Personal sacrifice on behalf of the nation is not simply a virtue but an obligation, the failure to



fulfill which is considered a deplorable act. One of the most famous poems in the Serbian literary tradition sets down this duty:

Whoever is a Serb, and of Serbian blood/And he comes not to fight at Kosovo/May he never have any progeny/His heart desires, neither son nor daughter/Beneath his hand let nothing decent grow/Neither purple grapes nor wholesome wheat/Let him rust away like dripping iron/Until his name shall be extinguished!<sup>26</sup>

The surest way to maintain the nation's survival is to build a national state that contains all Serbs within its borders. The misery of losing a state, the task of constructing a state, and the glory of obtaining a state constitute the defining points of departure in the Serbian nationalist discourse. Three epochs in Serbian history, all considered by Serbs as critical junctures in the nation's long quest for its own state, serve as the main reference points in practically all epic poetry and historiography: the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the uprisings of 1804–1805, and the wars of 1912–1918.<sup>27</sup>

Another aspect of the Serbian discourse that proved particularly crucial in the rise of an extreme nationalist ideology during the late 1980s is collective memory. Most Serbs can remember repeated instances of past victimization suffered since the late nineteenth century at the hands of Croats, Albanians, and Bosnian Muslims.<sup>28</sup> These memories inform a large part of popular culture. For instance, Vuk Draskovic's famous book, *The Knife*, graphically depicts Muslim and Croat massacres of Serbs during World War II.<sup>29</sup> Such memories would later become manifest in Serbian nationalist movements led by Milosevic, Draskovic, Vojislav Seselj, and Radovan Karadzic which warned against the threat to Serbs posed by Croats, Albanians, and Bosnian Muslims.<sup>30</sup> These movements were able to draw upon a popularized nationalist discourse that stressed the threat posed to Serbs by external enemies, the need to remain united in the face of such threats, and the imperative of building a national state at all costs to ensure the nation's continued survival.

While there exists among Serbs a singular nationalist discourse that stresses uniform themes, Russian history is characterized by the existence of several competing discourses. If nationalist discourses are the stuff from which nationalist ideologies are made, the persistence of

competing Russian discourses explains why no single ideology—much less an extreme nationalist one—successfully mobilized Russians from 1987 to 1991. Indeed, the very question of “who the Russians are” is a matter of great contention among both elite and ordinary Russians. Russian thought has traditionally been torn between a “Westernizing” discourse, which views the nation as culturally and historically part of Europe, and an alternative “Slavophile” version, which stresses the nation’s unique, non-western character. There are also differences of opinion among Russians as to whether the multiethnic *Rossiskii* or the ethnically-based *Russkii* concept of Russian nationhood best defines the Russian nation.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from differences, the competing Russian discourses share certain elements which proved instrumental in ensuring the failure of an extreme nationalist ideology to gain popularity. To begin with, the Russian discourses have traditionally been defined by themes other than external domination, the threats posed to the nation’s existence, and the need for heroic sacrifices to obtain a national state. Most of the post–World War II nationalist writers, for instance, primarily focused on corruption in society and the nation’s moral decay.<sup>32</sup> Absent is the preoccupation with the need to build and maintain a national state to protect the nation from hostile outside enemies. Indeed, the Russian discourses take the existence of a Russian national state for granted. In this important respect, the Russian nationalist discourses are distinct from their Serbian counterpart, which has one focus: the imperative of obtaining a state to ensure the nation’s very survival.

Another feature that distinguishes the Russian nationalist discourses from the Serbian discourse is the relative lack of a collective memory of victimization suffered against other nations that inhabited the current state (the USSR). Russians do conceive of themselves as having been historically victimized by outsiders. Yet this victimization occurred at the hands of the West, Islam, and/or Asia—not Estonians, Ukrainians, or Georgians. Underscoring this point is the fact that the post–World War II nationalist literature mentioned above centers around Russia’s relationship with the former three groups<sup>33</sup> and makes scant reference to the non-Russians of the USSR. To the extent that the Russian nationalist discourses do refer to

non-Russians, they are generally viewed as non-threatening. For instance, Jeffrey Brooks found that Russian popular literature before World War I took a much more tolerant and open-minded view of other nationalities in the empire than did American and British literature at the time.<sup>34</sup> “Let the Uzbeks, Tatars, and Georgians concern themselves with their antiquity, their history, let them pride themselves on their individual cultures,” exhorts one Soviet-era Russian nationalist.<sup>35</sup> Far from fear and hostility, the views of Russians toward non-Russians can even approach what Anatol Lieven labels “post-colonial guilt.” One Russian poet even laments that “I too am to blame for the occupation and enslavement of the Baltic states.”<sup>36</sup>

The lack of fear, resentment, or other negative sentiments towards non-Russians is evident among ordinary Russians as well. In October 1991, ethnic Russians in Ukraine actually favored Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union by a margin of 55 to 16 percent.<sup>37</sup> The same was true in Latvia, where 86 percent of the population voted in favor of independence in a March 1991 referendum. Given that ethnic Latvians comprised only 52 percent of the population, this result would have been impossible without significant support from ethnic Russians.<sup>38</sup> Asked about the prospect of life in an independent Lithuanian state, one Russian remarked that, “as long as Lithuania is democratic, like the West, there will be no problem for Russians here.”<sup>39</sup> Such sentiments ensured that an extreme nationalist ideology directed against other nations in the USSR failed to mobilize significant numbers of Russians from 1987 to 1991.

## **THE PRESENCE OF AN ESTABLISHED NATION-STATE DURING THE PERIOD OF SOCIAL MOBILIZATION**

Differences in the content and familiarity of the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses explain why during the late 1980s an extreme nationalist ideology mobilized Serbs but not Russians. One of the two factors that determined the variations in these nationalist discourses was the extent to which each nation had an established nation-state during the social mobilization period. This section will begin by outlining the concept of an established nation-

state. I will then proceed to demonstrate differences in the extent to which Serbs and Russians possessed established nation-states during their respective social mobilization periods. Finally, I will explain the effects these differences had on the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses.

An ideal-typical “established nation-state”, as I conceive of it, consists of the following elements:

- The nation considers the state to be its own national state.
- The nation considers all of its members to reside within the state’s borders.
- The nation believes itself to occupy a dominant position in the polity, in terms of its numerical strength and representation in the political and economic elite.
- As far as the nation is concerned, the state faces no serious threats to its existence from within (i.e. minority rebellions, for example).
- As far as the nation is concerned, the state faces no serious threats to its existence from without (i.e. rival states).
- The state has existed for a long time (25 years or more, for the purposes of this analysis).

Again, this subjective definition of “established nation-state” does not preclude the possibility that a given state may at once be a nation-state and an empire; indeed, even though the Soviet Union controlled an empire, it was still considered by Russians to be their own national state.

For the Russians, I speculate that the social mobilization period began in the late Tsarist period and was completed around the time of the second world war. For the Serbs, the social mobilization period comprised the early- to mid-twentieth century.<sup>40</sup> During their respective social mobilization periods, Russians had an established nation-state, in terms of the above-specified conditions, to a greater extent than Serbs did. To be sure, neither the Tsarist nor Soviet states perfectly approximated the ideal-typical version described above. However, each of these states fulfilled the above conditions to a much greater extent than either the pre–World War I Serbian kingdom or the interwar Yugoslav state did.

Formally established in 1878, the nineteenth century Serbian kingdom was surely considered by Serbs to be their own national state, however imperfectly it fulfilled this role. Serbs occupied

a dominant position in the country and, by the time social mobilization began to affect significant sections of the population, the state was fairly old. However, the kingdom remained externally dependent on Austria–Hungary, its much more powerful neighbor which posed a formidable threat to the state’s existence. Apart from this, there was an even more important factor that convinced Serbs that the ideal of an established nation-state remained elusive. This was the fact that large segments of the nation remained beyond the state’s borders. Indeed, the goal of uniting all Serbs under the state’s dominion served as the main legitimizing mission of the regime.<sup>41</sup>

Nor did most nation members consider interwar Yugoslavia to constitute an established Serbian nation-state. While Serbs were now united under a single state, they neither made up an absolute majority of the population nor dominated the composition of the country’s political and economic elite; the membership of this elite now included many Croats and Slovenes as well. In addition, Serbs perceived Croat and Albanian nationalism to pose serious internal threats to the state.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, with its recently created state structures and frontiers and its weak international position, interwar Yugoslavia was hardly as secure from external threats as Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union were. Despite the hopes of many Serbs that Yugoslavia would serve as their own national state, political realities continued to render these aspirations unfulfilled.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike the Serbs, Russians considered the states under which they lived since the nineteenth century to effectively constitute their own established nation-states, in the specific sense defined above. Even though the USSR was not called “Russia”, the notion of the USSR became conflated with the notion of “Russia” in the minds of most nation members. There was little doubt among Russians that they served as the “leading” nation in both the Tsarist and Soviet states, given their majority representation in the population and the elite. In addition, both states contained the vast majority of the worldwide Russian population within their borders. Furthermore, both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union were characterized by a relative lack of sub-national political mobilization by non-Russians nations. This distinguishes the Russian empires from the nineteenth century Serbian kingdom and the interwar Yugoslav state. To be

sure, the Poles and Chechens staged successive uprisings against the Tsarist state in the nineteenth century. The Soviet period also witnessed several rebellions among non-Russian nations, including the Chechens, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians.<sup>44</sup>

However, these revolts were hardly sufficient to convince Russians that they faced a fundamental threat to their survival from other nations residing within the state's borders. As far as external threats went, Western states did pose a serious challenge to Russia's interests during the social mobilization period. Yet, unlike the Serbs, few Russians perceived a real possibility that their state could be completely overrun by these countries. Finally, despite a change in regime, a long-standing state which Russians considered to be their own existed throughout the social mobilization period. The only possible exception was the first half of the civil war of 1917–1921. Both Tsarist Russia and the USSR were multi-national empires. However, given their unequivocally dominant position in each polity, most Russians considered these countries to be their own national states.

### **Nation-Building Elites and Ethnic Particularism**

The Tsarist and Soviet empires fulfilled the above conditions of an established nation-state to a greater extent than did states under which the Serbs historically lived. This difference, in turn, had two important effects on the character of each nation's nationalist discourse. The first was the incentives for nation-building elites to define the nation's identity on the basis of ethnic particularism. In the case of the Serbs, nation-building elites during the social mobilization period were still attempting to expand and consolidate an established nation-state under their control. The territorial claims of Serbs were considered by other, more powerful states (Austria–Hungary, Bulgaria) and nations (Croats, Slovenes, Albanians, Hungarians, Turks, Bulgarians) to conflict with their interests. The strong resistance these groups put forth against Serbian territorial expansion created the need for Serbian elites to legitimize their efforts in some way. The most convenient means of legitimizing their state-building attempts was to lay claim to this

yet-to-be-constructed state on behalf of the Serbian nation. Therefore, the Serbian kingdom defined its mission as the achievement of a national state that would include all nation members. Indeed, all of the political parties in the Serbian kingdom except the socialists adopted nationalist platforms that were virtually indistinguishable.<sup>45</sup> This strategy was also evident in the public speeches of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Serbian leaders. The stated mission of King Aleksandar I, for instance, was to consolidate all “territories in which Orthodox Serbs dominate because it is our historical right, and also because it is their aspiration to unite with Serbia.”<sup>46</sup> King Petar I voiced his determination to unite with Serbia “the glorious capitals of the Nemanjici Ras of Novi Pazar, Pristinia, Skopje, and Prizren. Here live our brothers by blood, customs, national consciousness, and aspirations.”<sup>47</sup>

This legitimizing strategy required that nation-building elites clearly define the Serbian nation on the basis of ethnic particularism; they justified their campaign on the grounds that the nation they led was *distinct* from other nations. As a result, these elites devoted considerable energy to spelling out exactly how their nation was distinct from the relevant outgroups. For example, nationalist political parties in the late nineteenth century such as the Serbian Independent Party and the Serbian Liberal Party set up their own schools, cooperatives, banks, collectives, and newspapers aimed at promoting a national consciousness among Serbs. As Miller notes, these efforts “served to segregate Serbs from their neighbors and inculcate an insular sense of community.”<sup>48</sup>

Attempts by Serbian elites to define the nation on the basis of ethnic particularism generated a nationalist discourse that provided a decisive answer to the question of what it means to be a Serb and exactly who the Serbian nation includes. As a result, during periods of political uncertainty, this discourse provided nation members with a strong sense of national cohesion. The national cohesion of Serbs was already evident by the start of the Balkan wars in 1912. Serbia was able to quickly mobilize an army of 350,000 from a population of 2.9 million that succeeded in “retaking” Kosovo in nine days.<sup>49</sup>

While Serbian leaders undertook a concerted effort to promote a sense of ethnic distinctiveness among Serbs, the need for Russian elites to do the same was not as pressing. This was true because Russian leaders, to a much greater extent than their Serbian counterparts, were already in control of an established nation-state. The fact that the Tsarist regime survived well into the social mobilization period restrained nation-building efforts even more; reluctant to replace the existing state ideology of divine right with one based on nationhood, the Tsars were by no means determined to undertake the task of nation-building. Policies designed to promote a national identity among Russians were therefore adopted in a reactive manner in response to periodic crises such as the Polish uprising of 1863.<sup>50</sup>

If the Tsars had little interest in nation-building, Soviet leaders too had little cause to promote a distinctive Russian national identity; the need to consolidate authority in a country with large non-Russian populations not only rendered such a strategy unnecessary but counterproductive as well. Until 1937, the Soviets actually pursued a nationalities policy based on cultivating national identities among non-Russians. This was a means of placating the interests of non-Russian officials at the local level. “Great Russian Chauvinism,” in fact, was deemed the “main threat” to the prospect of successful socialist development. This policy was later abandoned, giving way to a more Russo-centric policy. However, this later policy was not aimed at promoting Russian ethnic distinctiveness but rather consisted of making the notion of “Russian” synonymous with “Soviet” in education, official history, and propaganda; the existence of ethnic distinctions in the Soviet Union was simply ignored.<sup>51</sup> Since Russian leaders traditionally did not undertake concerted efforts to instill a sense of ethnic distinctiveness among Russians, the fundamental question of “who the Russians are” in the nationalist discourses remains ill-defined. As a result, Russians generally lacked a sense of national cohesion, even during periods of political uncertainty. This contrasts with the efforts of Serbian elites, who actively promoted ethnic particularism to legitimize their state-building projects. The end product of their campaigns was a nationalist discourse containing ideas about the Serbian nation that were uniform, consistent, and well-known to nation members.



### **The Relationship of the Nation to Other Groups: Dominator or Dominated?**

Apart from the role of political elites in promoting ethnic particularism among nation members, the extent to which a nation had an established nation-state during the social mobilization period had a second important effect on the character of the nationalist discourse. This was the nation's perception of its political relationship towards neighboring nations—in particular, whether the nation viewed itself as occupying a dominated position or a dominant role vis-à-vis these groups. Since Serbs lacked an established nation-state during the social mobilization period, they regarded their nation as being dominated by neighboring nations. As a result, the nationalist discourse that emerged among Serbs stressed the nation's tenuous prospects for survival and the subsequent need to maintain national unity in the face of external threats. Above all, the discourse highlighted the challenge of overcoming the nation's subjugation by forming an established nation-state that would include within its borders all Serbs.

If Serbs considered themselves to be a dominated nation, Russians did not. The reason why is that Russians, to a much greater extent than Serbs, had an established nation state during the social mobilization period. Far from regarding themselves as a subjugated group, Russians saw their nation as occupying a dominant position in the Tsarist and Soviet empires. Reinforcing this view was official propaganda which characterized Russians as the “leading nation” in the empire.<sup>52</sup> As a result, perceptions of the nation's vulnerability to external threats, a theme that permeated the Serbian nationalist discourse, were not nearly as prevalent in the Russian variants. Not only was the task of building a nation-state—as an explicit mission of the nation—largely absent from the nationalist discourses, these discourses tended to take the existence of an established Russian nation-state for granted. The characterizations of the nation in the Russian and Serbian nationalist discourses are well-documented above and need not be repeated here.

In sum, variations in the extent to which Serbs and Russians possessed established nation-states during the social mobilization period determined differences in each nation's nationalist discourse in two ways. First, Serbian nation-building elites needed to legitimize their state-

building campaigns by encouraging a sense of ethnic particularism among nation members. These efforts contributed to the emergence of a nationalist discourse that provided nation members with a definite conception of what it means to be a Serb, a conception that became universally familiar within the nation. Since Russians had an established nation-state to a greater extent than Serbs did, Russian leaders were not so compelled to promote an ethnically-based Russian identity.<sup>53</sup> As a result, the notion of “Russianness” in the Russian nationalist discourses remains ill-defined and less familiar to nation members. Second, since Russians had an established nation-state during the social mobilization period, they viewed themselves as the dominant nation in the empire. Yet the relative absence of an established Serbian nation-state led Serbs to conceive of themselves as a nation subjugated by outsiders. Consequently, the Russian nationalist discourses lack the emphasis so prevalent in the Serbian discourse on protecting the nation from hostile external enemies.

## **THE HISTORICAL STRENGTH OF STATES**

The degree to which a nation had an established nation state during the period of social mobilization was one of two main variables that shaped the character of its nationalist discourse. The second factor was the extent to which the nation in question historically lived under a singular and strong state with other nations who reside on the territory of the current state. By “historically,” I am referring to the period since social mobilization began. The term “current” is used to denote the period in which the instance of nationalist mobilization in question took place (or, in the case of the Russians, did not take place). For the purposes of this analysis, then, the “current period” refers to the years 1987 to 1991, and the “current state” accordingly denotes the Soviet and Yugoslav states in this period, respectively. Applied to the cases examined here, Russians historically lived under a singular and strong state with most of the nations who inhabited the USSR. However, with the exception of the first twenty years of communist rule, Serbs fulfilled this condition to a far lesser extent.

This factor had a particular relevance for determining the nation's tendency to mobilize in support of extreme nationalist ideologies. Weak states often (although do not necessarily) generate conditions of violent civil conflict between nations who live on the territory of that state. If states in which the nation lived with neighboring groups were historically weak, the history of relations between these nations was likely characterized by repeated instances of mutually-imposed victimization. The Serbian nation developed on the fringes of the disintegrating Austro–Hungarian and Ottoman imperial states. Serbs later inhabited Yugoslav states that were, for the most part, fundamentally weak. The presence of successive weak states on the Balkan peninsula generated conditions that embroiled Serbs in persistent and often violent conflicts with neighboring nations. Accumulated memories of past atrocities led to the emergence of nations whose nationalist discourses targeted each other as the primary outgroup. Writing in 1913, a Western correspondent reporting on the ongoing Balkan Wars remarked that “the burning of villages and the exodus of the defeated population is a normal and traditional incident of all Balkan wars and insurrections. It is the habit of all these peoples. What they have suffered themselves they inflict in turn upon others.”<sup>54</sup> Both Serbs and Croats have collective memories of extreme victimization that each imposed upon the other. During World War II, the Ustase regime, claiming to act on behalf of Croats, organized a massive, systematic genocide of Serbs living in Krajina and Bosnia. These atrocities were perpetrated in collaboration with Bosnian Muslim organizations.<sup>55</sup> In retaliation, radical bands of Serbian Chetniks responded in kind to Croats and Muslims.<sup>56</sup>

If the history of violent civil conflict between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims dates back mainly to World War II, animosities between Serbs and Albanians go back much further.<sup>57</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, Serbian–Albanian relations were defined by successive instances of mutually-inflicted, mass violence. With the outbreak of the Serbian–Ottoman war in 1876 commenced more than a century of periodically recurring violence between the two groups. During this war, Serbs expelled 30,000 Albanians and destroyed their homes and mosques. Massacres of local Serbs by Albanians in 1901 eventually led to a mass Slav rebellion in 1903

that was brutally suppressed by Albanian police. Violence began once again during World War I when members of both groups committed horrendous atrocities against one another. Violent conflict continued following the establishment of the interwar Yugoslav state, as guerilla bands of Albanian *Katchaks* staged mass raids and kidnappings on Serbian targets. Further atrocities by Albanians against Serbs took place in World War II, when the Nazi-backed SS *Skanderberg* division indiscriminately massacred Slavs. While Tito and the Partisans were attempting to consolidate the post-war Yugoslav regime, Albanians participated in mass rebellions that were subsequently subdued through brutal tactics. The government encouraged the mass immigration of Slavs to Kosovo following the war and, between 1954–1957, expelled from the region some 195,000 Albanians.<sup>58</sup> As a result of this mutually-inflicted violence, the Serbian nationalist discourse came to include over time a salient collective memory of victimization defined against other nations on the territory of the Yugoslav state.

Russians, on the other hand, generally lived under a singular and strong state with other groups on the territory of the USSR. As a result, instances of violent conflict between Russians and other nations inhabiting successive Russian empires were rare. The Russian nationalist discourses therefore contain few memories of victimization suffered at the hands of non-Russians who lived in the USSR. To be sure, during World War II, members of non-Russian nations did not complacently aid the Soviets in the struggle against Germany. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), who received backing from the Nazis, even ruled western Ukraine for a brief period. In addition, tens of thousands of Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians fought alongside the German army. Nevertheless, the threat these organizations posed to the Soviets at the time was hardly comparable to the danger the Ustase presented to Tito's partisans and Serbian nationalist organizations. In addition, their attacks were not directed against Russian civilians but rather targeted security detachments only.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the vast majority of the Russian-speaking populations in the Baltic states arrived there only after the war ended.<sup>60</sup> Western Ukraine, where the OUN was based, was scarcely populated by Russians; the majority of Russians resided in the eastern and southern regions of the republic. Therefore, most Russians

had no memory of any non-Russian repression that did take place during the war. Rather, they saw the Germans as the primary aggressors. Accurately conveying Russians perceptions of the war, one Lithuanian intellectual explains: “Lithuanians remember [the war] in every agonizing detail, and can no more stop talking and writing about it than can the Russians stop talking about their great struggle against the Nazis.”<sup>61</sup>

As the Lithuanian’s quote suggests, the Russian nationalist discourses do stress the suffering that outsiders have historically imposed upon the nation. However, the perpetrators of Russian victimization were Germans, Japanese, and other nations who resided beyond the USSR’s borders, not Lithuanians, Ukrainians, or Azerbaijanis. In this sense, the experiences of Russians stand in sharp contrast to those of Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. These Serbs have direct memories of wartime atrocities committed against them at the hands of certain nations residing within Yugoslavia. The fact that Serbian collective memory is defined against Albanians, Croats, and Muslims explains why the extreme nationalist ideology that arose in the 1980s targeted these groups specifically, and not Montenegrins or Macedonians.

Yet one can accurately raise the point that, during the interwar period, Russians did not live under a singular state with Estonians, Lithuanians, and Latvians; the Baltic nations had their own independent states from 1918–1939. Considering this, should the theoretical framework developed here not predict that the Russian nationalist discourse be defined against these nations? No. The reason why lies in the nature of the political relationship between Russians and the Baltic nations during the social mobilization period. Since Russians had an established nation-state in this period, Russians did not conceive of themselves as occupying a dominated position vis-à-vis these groups. Therefore, even though Russians lived in separate states from Estonians, Lithuanians, and Latvians during the interwar years, the Russian nationalist discourse does not target the Baltic nations as primary outgroups.

However, if Russians believed they occupied a dominant position in relation to the Baltic nations, the Baltic groups saw themselves as dominated nations in relation to Russians during their respective social mobilization periods (which comprised the late Tsarist era).<sup>62</sup> In addition,

these nations experienced an extended period with independent states during the interwar years—therefore setting conditions that allowed for the flourishing of Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian nationalist discourses during this period that stressed their historical victimization at the hands of Russians.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, *both* factors—the relative absence of an established nation-state during the social mobilization period *and* the historical existence of independent Baltic states—were essential in the emergence of Baltic nationalist discourses directed against Russians. Yet the fact that only one of these two factors operated in the Russian case explains why the Russian nationalist discourses do not target the Baltic nations as their historical oppressors. However, since states in which the Baltic and Russian nations lived together were generally strong,<sup>64</sup> the history of relations between these groups is not characterized by armed conflict—at least not to the extent as the history of Serbian–Croatian, Serbian–Albanian, and Serbian–Muslim relations are. This explains why the nationalist ideologies that the Baltic nations mobilized around during the late 1980s were not *as* extreme as the Serbian nationalist ideology was.

## **FROM DISCOURSE INTO IDEOLOGY: THE ROLE OF STATE DISINTEGRATION**

Memories of past victimization, along with themes of historical domination, the need for national unity, and the imperative of confronting external enemies came to define the Serbian nationalist discourse. Accounting for why this discourse consisted of these particular themes were the relative absence of an established Serbian nation-state during the social mobilization period and the historical weakness of successive states under which Serbs lived. However, we have yet to examine how this nationalist discourse developed into an extreme nationalist ideology boasting mass support. In addition, the nationalist ideology espoused by Serbian elites in 1987–1991 contained themes that were strikingly similar to the ideologies of past Serbian nationalist leaders. Yet why did this ideology, having been deprived of mass adherence for nearly half a century, suddenly become popular again in the 1980s and not the 1970s? How did Serbian elites gain the

opportunity to employ such an ideology in defiance of the central leadership of the Communist Party? Moreover, why was it during this period that nation members suddenly became more receptive to such an ideology? The disintegration of the Yugoslav state provides the answer to these questions. State disintegration is what determined the timing of the extreme nationalist ideology's rise to political prominence.

### **State Disintegration in Yugoslavia**

The path towards the disintegration of the Yugoslav state commenced in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the nationalist mobilization of Albanians and Croats sparked a process whereby considerable central powers passed to the regions. The resulting decentralized arrangement was formalized in the 1974 constitution. The process of disintegration began to accelerate again in 1981 following the death of Tito. With him departed the only political figure capable of commanding unified authority over the military and the competing regional leaderships. The declining capacity of the central state to maintain political order forced individuals to increasingly rely on ethnically-defined social networks for security.<sup>65</sup> As one Kosovar Serb recalls, "After Tito's death nobody felt secure anymore about living in ex-Yugoslavia, and people went back to their ethnic roots."<sup>66</sup> The first sign of state disintegration and the rising importance of ethnicity among citizens appeared with the outbreak of mass Albanian demonstrations that swept Kosovo in 1981. Demanding that the province be given equal status to the other republics, scores of Albanians poured into the streets to protest the existing ethno-federal arrangement.<sup>67</sup> Many Serbs had already grown concerned as a result of the 1974 constitution, which increased Kosovo's autonomy along with the dominance of ethnic Albanians in the province's elite ranks.<sup>68</sup> Following the 1981 protests, these concerns grew into widespread fear of the possibility of renewed Serbian victimization at the hands of Albanians. State disintegration therefore upset previously stable power relationships between nations. This created an environment of political uncertainty in which nations made competing demands on

the state.<sup>69</sup> Thus, as individuals increasingly relied on the group for basic needs, the ability of the state to maintain stability in inter-ethnic political relationships declined sharply. Put simply, at the same time that the importance of nationality rose within groups, the state lost its capacity to regulate political exchanges between groups.

Apart from destabilizing inter-ethnic relations, state disintegration also weakened the institutional controls that had formerly bound political elites to regime-defined norms of political action. As the 1980s progressed, it became clear that the ability of state institutions to regulate relations between political elites was rapidly declining. For elites who were seeking out autonomous bases of support, state disintegration created opportunities to utilize nationalism as a means of mobilizing a mass following. Slobodan Milosevic undertook such an effort, embarking on a successful bid to consolidate his own power in Serbia at the expense of the central government. Beginning with his famous 1987 speech in front of an audience of Kosovar Serbs, Milosevic went on to stage over 100 anti-government, mass demonstrations throughout Serbia. He succeeded through these protests in removing the leaderships of Vojvodina and Montenegro, replacing them with his own supporters.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, the disintegration of state power caused the destabilization of inter-ethnic relations, making ordinary Serbs more receptive to the ideas contained in the nationalist discourse. This process also enabled Serbian elites to defy formal rules and procedures in attempts to openly mobilize mass support. In such an environment, the elites who ultimately gained power among Serbs were those who espoused an extreme nationalist ideology. This is because such an ideology was consistent with the themes present in the nationalist discourse. In Serbia in the late 1980s, there was virtually no difference among the political platforms set forth by competing elites; they all amounted to a single ideology that came to reflect what one observer termed “the homogenization of Serbian opinion.”<sup>71</sup> According to this ideology, the Serbian nation faced a dire threat to its very existence. Vuk Draskovic, who would become a prominent opposition leader, expressed this view quite clearly at a 1986 meeting of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU): “Can we remove the knowledge that one whole nation, the Serbian nation in Kosovo



and Metohija, are being subjected to a campaign of organized terror by their Albanian neighbors, and the government in that area, which is now only formally considered part of Serbia?”<sup>72</sup> The famous SANU Memorandum published a few months later reiterated this point more strongly: “The physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija is a worse defeat than any experienced in the liberation wars waged by Serbia...”<sup>73</sup>

The nationalist ideology called for extreme measures to confront this threat. All internal divisions would need to be suppressed in the name of maintaining national unity. The nation had to embark on a struggle to gain an independent state that would include all nation members. That objective, according to this ideology, would be pursued through any and all available means, including violence. In the words of Milosevic, “We simply consider it as a legitimate right and interest of the Serb nation to live in one state...And if we have to fight, by God we are going to fight.”<sup>74</sup> “This is no time for sorrow; it is a time for struggle,” he told a Belgrade rally in November 1988.<sup>75</sup> At the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1989, he exclaimed: “Six centuries later we are again involved in battles and facing battles. They are not battles with arms, but these cannot be excluded.” “These battles cannot be won without decisiveness, courage, and sacrifice,” he added.<sup>76</sup> Placards carried by supporters at these rallies expressed unequivocally the lengths to which the nation would go to protect itself against outside threats. Typical were slogans along the lines of “If necessary we will fight for freedom” and “We will not give up the land of Obilic without the shedding of blood.”<sup>77</sup> Practically all of Milosevic’s speeches warned of the malicious intentions of outsiders. Other nations both within Yugoslavia and beyond were not simply viewed as competitors but as mortal enemies: “We shall win the battle for Kosovo...despite the fact that Serbia’s enemies outside the country are plotting against it, along with those inside the country.”<sup>78</sup>

In accounting for the nationalist mobilization of Serbs, the analysis so far has focused mainly on intra-group factors. However, the process of state disintegration gave rise to important inter-group dynamics as well. The emergence of an extreme nationalist ideology among Serbs provoked similar reactions among Croats and Muslims—themselves having nationalist discourses

similar to that of the Serbs. As Yugoslavs witnessed the organization of elections throughout communist Europe in 1989, pressures mounted on the Yugoslav regime to follow suit. Elections subsequently held in the republics brought nationalist elites to power in Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>79</sup> By forcing republican leaderships to respond to their electorates rather than the central government, the elections destroyed the previous institutional mechanisms that linked regional elites to the central authority. In an environment characterized by increasing fears of renewed Serbian hegemony and diminishing institutional controls on regional officials, political movements boasting extreme nationalist ideologies gained power among Croats and Muslims. The rise of such movements exacerbated nationalist sentiments among Serbs, further entrenching the popular legitimacy of Milosevic and the ideology he espoused.

State disintegration thereby created the conditions in the late 1980s under which a radical nationalist ideology could mobilize large numbers of Serbs. However, this point requires some qualification. After all, this was not the first time in the post-war era that the authority of the Yugoslav state weakened from a previous position of relative strength. A similar process occurred between 1968 and 1974. Why, then, did Serbs rally behind a radical nationalist ideology only in the late 1980s? The answer, in short, is that while the Yugoslav state did weaken in the early 1970s, it had not become weak *enough*. The weakening of state power from 1968 to 1974 commenced as Tito unveiled his policy of “self-management.” Under this policy, the central government agreed to an extensive decentralization of power to the republican level. However, the Croatian leadership pushed for further decentralization than the central government was willing to permit. Moreover, they publicly sanctioned widespread, nationalist protests among students who demanded greater sovereignty for their republic. In a clear signal that the Croatian party had overstepped the bounds of permissible action, the central government intervened. It crushed the demonstrations and carried out a massive purge of prominent Croats.<sup>80</sup> Unlike in the 1980s, then, the central state in the early 1970s still retained its ability to force regional officials to comply with formal-institutional rules and regime-sanctioned norms of behavior. Therefore, a precondition for Milosevic and others to mobilize nationalist support was

not simply the disintegration of state power; state authority actually had to weaken to the point that it was no longer able to credibly threaten elites with sanctions.

### **State Disintegration in the USSR**

The onset of Gorbachev's reforms in 1986 set in motion a process in which a highly centralized party-state apparatus disintegrated and eventually collapsed with stunning speed. The introduction of *Glasnost* in 1987 coincided with greater freedoms for citizens to express nationalist sentiments and for organizations to form and mobilize these sentiments. The holding of democratic elections in 1989–1991 severed the institutional ties that had formerly bound lower level officials to higher level officials, and regional elites to officials in Moscow. These reforms thereby allowed competing political elites to pursue their conflicting agendas out in the open and without sanction from the central authority. In the absence of effective new institutions to take the place of the old ones, competing political elites sought out informal sources of support. Elites at the republican level used nationalism to secure new bases of support among the masses. In places such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, and the Baltic republics, the nationalism espoused by newly-sprouted political organizations came close to approximating extreme nationalist ideologies. Meanwhile, the destabilization of inter-ethnic relations brought about by state disintegration supplied large numbers of enthusiastic followers for these nationalist leaders.

Like in Yugoslavia, then, state disintegration created opportunities for enterprising elites to use nationalism as a political strategy. It also gave rise to conditions that generated mass receptiveness towards nationalist ideologies. The nations that mobilized behind such ideologies were those whose nationalist discourses shared similar elements to that of the Serbs; these discourses stressed the nation's historical victimization at the hands of other groups residing on the territory of the collapsing state, the imperative of maintaining national unity at the expense of internal divisions, and the need to obtain a national state.

This was not the case among Russians, however. Russians did not have a prevalent nationalist discourse that focused on the need to incorporate all nation members into a national state. Nor did any of the Russian nationalist discourses center around the nation's historical victimization by other groups in the USSR. Therefore, Russians failed to perceive the changing ethnic balance of power brought about by state disintegration to represent a threat. Even though the non-Russian republics voiced demands for more autonomy, the resistance this garnered among Russians was not nearly as great as the opposition a similar process sparked among Serbs.

However, the muted Russian reaction was not due to a shortage of nationalist policies and rhetoric issued by non-Russian leaders. The Estonian Communist Party under Vaino Väljas, to take but one example, adopted measures designed to reduce the proportion of Russians in the Party and Supreme Soviet, passed laws proclaiming the supremacy of the Estonian language in republican affairs, and restricted the voting rights of recent Russian "immigrants."<sup>81</sup> By late 1990, many voices in the Latvian Popular Front under the leadership of Romulds Razukas began calling for the encouragement of Russian-speakers to leave the country and the exclusion of Russian-speakers from citizenship in the new state.<sup>82</sup>

Yet despite the often chauvinist nationalism advanced by many non-Russians, Russian nationalist elites failed to mobilize large numbers of nation members behind an extreme nationalist ideology. At the Russian polls, nationalists suffered a humiliating defeat. In the March 1990 Russian parliamentary elections, only two out of the 79 candidates of the nationalist Patriotic Bloc secured seats in the Supreme Soviet. Meanwhile, the moderate Democratic Russia received 56 seats.<sup>83</sup> In the June 1991 presidential elections in Russia, Zhirinovsky, the most popular extremist candidate, collected only seven percent of the vote.<sup>84</sup> Pro-Russian elites fared no better in the other republics either. The Baltic "Interfronts", for example, failed miserably in their repeated attempts to organize local Russian-speakers to participate in general strikes and protests against the republican governments. Other pro-Soviet Russian elites tried to establish an "Inter-Regional Council," which was intended to serve as a parallel administration in

northeastern Estonia. Its founders ostensibly created this body to protect Russian-speakers. However, its first meeting failed to attract enough participants to reach a quorum and the plan was abandoned soon thereafter.<sup>85</sup>

These politicians failed to gain support precisely because the ideas they promoted were inconsistent with the themes present in the Russian nationalist discourses. Most local Russian-speakers simply did not fear the changing ethnic balance of power. Indeed, in the minds of Russians during 1987–1991, socio-economic issues trumped nationalism rather than the other way around. Given the character of the Russian nationalist discourses, this outcome is not surprising. For example, according to polls conducted in Estonia since independence, most Russian-speakers did not wish to reunite with Russia, whether through emigration or Russian territorial expansion. Informing these sentiments was the widespread belief that their living standards would improve by remaining in the country.<sup>86</sup> Yet perhaps the most striking display of the subordination of national to socioeconomic issues was the 1991 election to the Russian presidency of Yeltsin, who represented a far less nationalist alternative to his rivals. Instead, Yeltsin swept to power on an anti-communist platform whose main element was the promise of economic prosperity to Russians.<sup>87</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Differences in the extent to which Serbs and Russians mobilized behind extreme nationalist ideologies from 1987–1991 were due to the different character of each nation's nationalist discourses. These discourses had emerged during both nations' respective social mobilization periods, when significant numbers of people began to think of themselves as Serbs and Russians. The Serbian nationalist discourse highlights the imperative of confronting the dire threat to the nation's existence posed by hostile outsiders. This goal is to be achieved through the relentless effort to establish a Serb-dominated state, even at the expense of tremendous sacrifice on the part of the nation. The ideas in this discourse were familiar to most nation members and were

directed against other nations residing on the territory of Yugoslavia, the current state. Unlike the Serbs, Russians have multiple and competing nationalist discourses which, moreover, are less familiar to nation members. In addition, they focus on themes which are not as consistent with extreme nationalist ideas and tend to target outgroups other than those who resided on the territory of the USSR. The existence of competing discourses, and the nature of the ideas contained therein, limited the prospects that any single nationalist ideology—let alone an extremist one—could rally mass support during the Soviet collapse.

Two underlying factors account for the differences in the nature of the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses. The first was the existence of an established nation-state during the period in which the nation underwent social mobilization. The Serbs had an established nation-state in the nineteenth century kingdom and interwar Yugoslavia to a far lesser extent than Russians did in the Tsarist and Soviet empires. This compelled Serbian elites to justify their state-building efforts by promoting the ethnic distinctiveness of Serbs from neighboring nations. Since Russian elites were already in full control of a state, they did not confront the same types of nation-building imperatives faced by their Serbian counterparts. Differences in the extent to which Serbs and Russians had an established nation-state also gave rise to variations in each nation's political relationship towards neighboring groups. While Serbs perceived themselves as a dominated nation, Russians saw their role in the empire to be that of the dominant nation.

Again, the term “established nation-state” is used here in strict accordance with the six conditions that define the concept which were presented earlier in the article. The relevant point for the purpose of this analysis is that states in which Russians historically lived fulfilled those six conditions—and only those six conditions—to a greater extent than did states under which Serbs lived.

Apart from the existence of an established nation-state during the social mobilization period, a second factor shaped the nationalist discourses of Serbs and Russians. This was the extent to which each nation historically lived under a singular and strong state with other groups residing on the territory of the current state. Serbs traditionally lived alongside Albanians,

Muslims, and Croats in states that were fundamentally weak. Relations between these groups were therefore conflict-ridden and often bloody. Over time, then, Serbs developed a collective memory of substantial victimization suffered at the hands of these nations. These memories became a part of the Serbian nationalist discourse. However, since Russians generally did live under singular and strong states with other groups inhabiting the USSR, there were historically few instances of intense conflict between these nations. As a result, the Russian collective memory of victimization was not directed against other groups in the Soviet Union.

The resulting differences in the Serbian and Russian nationalist discourses shaped the way that each of these nations responded to conditions of state disintegration between 1987 and 1991. In both the USSR and Yugoslavia, state disintegration served to destabilize inter-ethnic relations. As a result, this process prompted fears among Serbs that they would witness a return of the victimization inflicted upon them in the past. The ideas contained in the nationalist discourse took on an added relevance to Serbs, making nation members available to extreme nationalist ideologies. At the same time, state disintegration opened up opportunities for elites to issue such ideologies in attempts to mobilize mass support. The elites who gained political prominence in such an environment were those espousing ideologies consistent with the themes in the Serbian nationalist discourse. However, the differing character of the Russian nationalist discourses ensured that the destabilization of inter-ethnic relations failed to provoke a strong reaction among Russians. Russians did not fear the imposition of a new ethnic political arrangement to the same extent that Serbs did. Political elites attempting to appeal to Russians through the use of extreme nationalist ideologies subsequently failed to mobilize significant levels of support.

The foregoing analysis provides a way of explaining not only why a nation will mobilize behind a particular nationalist ideology, but also when and against whom nationalist mobilization will occur. In contrast to Gellner, Anderson, Deutsch, Brubaker, and Breuilly, this framework can explain variations within and across nations in all three of these respects. While these scholars set down a frame of reference for understanding the sources of nationalism, the analysis

presented here goes further, accounting for relevant variations among cases situated within this frame.<sup>88</sup> In the cases examined here, the nature of the nationalist discourse determined the extent to which a nation would mobilize in support of an extreme nationalist ideology, and how extreme this ideology would be. In addition, a nation should be expected to mobilize against those groups who serve the role of historical victimizers in the nation's collective memory. Furthermore, the level of state disintegration determined the timing of nationalist mobilization; nations that had the appropriate nationalist discourses mobilized when the authority of the current state under which they lived collapsed. In order to fully understand variations in the particular ideologies that different nations adopt, it is not sufficient to focus on large-scale processes and institutions alone. One must also look at the ideas comprising a given nation's nationalist discourse, the forces that historically shaped the content and character of its discourse, along with the changing conditions that affect that discourse. Scholars have over the past several decades laid an effective basis for understanding the conditions that foster the rise of nationalism as a general phenomenon. The task now facing students of nationalism is to devote more attention to explaining important empirical variations in this phenomenon within and across nations.

How much of each independent variable is necessary if a nation is to mobilize around an extreme nationalist ideology in the current period? While a specific answer to this question would require a systematic comparison of a greater number of cases, the following is a rudimentary attempt to address this issue. There are three independent variables offered in the above framework: the extent to which the nation had an established nation-state during the social mobilization period; the extent to which the nation historically lived under a singular and strong state with other nations on the territory of the current state; and the capacity of the current state. I will deal with these variables in turn. First, the less the nation considered itself to live under an established nation-state during the social mobilization period, the less likely it is to mobilize behind an extreme nationalist ideology in the current period. Any nation that mobilizes behind an extreme nationalist ideology in the current period should have been thoroughly dissatisfied with the extent to which it had a national state during the social mobilization period. Otherwise, a



nation in the current period will not be receptive to extreme nationalist ideologies.

Second, if a nation is to mobilize behind an extreme nationalist ideology during the current period, states under which it has lived did not have to be weak at all times throughout its history. The nation in question should merely be able to remember past instances of severe victimization suffered at the hands of other nations who live on the territory of the current state. That is the important condition for the purpose of this framework. Weak states need not generate violent conflict. Yet violent conflict with other nations could not have occurred had the state in which these nations lived not, at some point, become very weak. If a nation does not remember past instances of victimization by any other group on the territory of the current state, its members will not be receptive to extreme nationalist ideologies that target these groups.

Finally, the power of the current state must disintegrate to the extent that it casts considerable uncertainty over the future political relationships between competing nations. Otherwise, ordinary people will not be receptive to extreme nationalist ideologies. In addition, the state must unravel to the extent that it is no longer able to pose a credible threat of sanctions towards enterprising elites seeking to mobilize mass nationalist support. If not, elites will not be able to utilize nationalist ideologies in their political pursuits.

The next step is to test the hypothesis developed here against a larger number of cases. Only by undertaking a more systematic comparison would it be possible to state with some certainty which variables, and how much of these variables, lead to nationalist mobilization. If the independent variables outlined here do have a greater explanatory significance, it remains to be seen whether these variables work for a broader range of ideologies besides extreme nationalist ones.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is not to ignore significant differences between Serbs and Russians and the states in which they lived. To begin with, Serbs succeeded in gaining an independent state only in the late nineteenth century. However, by the time most Russians came to think of themselves in national terms, they could refer to a Russian state that had existed for hundreds of years. In addition, both the Tsarist and Soviet states were great powers while states under which Serbs historically lived occupied far more marginal positions in the international system. Furthermore, the disintegration of the Yugoslav state took the form of a gradual and prolonged process. This process arguably began in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the nationalist agitation of Albanians, Croats, and Slovenes for greater rights and the subsequent adoption of a confederal constitution that substantially decentralized power towards the republics. This contrasts with the experience of the Soviet Union, which retained a highly centralized structure until the Gorbachev era when the party-state collapsed with stunning speed. Nevertheless, the similarities in the conditions facing Serbs and Russians were substantial enough to warrant an investigation into the question of why the former mobilized behind an extreme nationalist ideology while the latter did not.

<sup>2</sup> To say that Milosevic promoted or espoused an extreme nationalist ideology is not to say that he necessarily believed in it. Milosevic built his political career as a communist, not a nationalist. In my view, he was interested above all in enhancing his own personal power, not in fulfilling the nationalist aspirations of the Serbian people. Yet he recognized the value of using an extreme nationalist ideology to pursue his personal ambitions and, by promoting this ideology, he became the dominant leader of the Serbs. Nevertheless, whether or not Milosevic believed in the ideology he promoted is not so relevant for the purposes of the current analysis. For I am not asking why Milosevic espoused such an ideology but rather why Serbs mobilized in support of this ideology. Therefore, the relative weight of nationalist belief, communist ideology, or sheer personal greed in driving Milosevic's actions is of little consequence for the task of answering the main question of this article.

<sup>3</sup> However, there were divisions among Serbian nationalist leaders regarding the future status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under a new political arrangement. Milosevic supported increasing the dominance of Serbs within the framework of a preserved Yugoslav state. Other nationalists, such as Vuk Draskovic and Vojislav Seselj, called for abandoning Yugoslavia altogether in favor of an expanded "Greater Serbia" that would include all Serbs within its borders. Despite these differences, every Serbian nationalist leader during this period shared the position that all Serbs must be incorporated into a single state in which they would occupy a clearly dominant role. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out these divisions between various Serbian nationalists.

<sup>4</sup> I should emphasize that this article is not a comparison of Milosevic and Yeltsin, in that the differences between these two figures are not the main subject of the analysis. In other words, I am not concerned with the reasons Milosevic and Yeltsin adopted the particular ideologies that they did. This article is rather devoted to a comparison between the actions taken by most Serbs and most Russians from 1987 to 1991—in particular, why the former mobilized in support of an extreme nationalist ideology while the latter did not. Stated differently, I am examining why elites espousing such an ideology successfully mobilized a majority of Serbs while elites advocating a similar ideology failed to achieve political prominence among Russians. Thus, I am not attempting to explain the differences between Milosevic and Yeltsin but rather the differences in the actions taken by most Serbs and most Russians from 1987 to 1991. In the ensuing attempt to answer this question, Milosevic is discussed only because he was the leader whom most Serbs supported during this period. Given that he was the most popular leader among Russians during the same period, Yeltsin is brought into the analysis purely for illustrative purposes—in particular, he is discussed only in order to illustrate that the ideology supported by most Russians in this

period was in no way similar to the extreme nationalist one adhered to by most Serbs.

<sup>5</sup> The following definitions of nation-state and empire are adapted from Ernst B. Haas, who defined these terms in a series of lectures attended by the author on August 29, September 5, and September 19, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 55 (September 1961), 493–513. Deutsch was the first to develop this concept.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1953).

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> To be sure, Serbian nationalist intellectuals were around long before the early twentieth century. However, it was only during the early twentieth century that a visible, mass-based nationalist movement emerged.

<sup>13</sup> However, it must be stressed that Serbian nationalism did not disappear altogether during the interwar period. Serbian nationalists remained active, most notably in their assassination of Stjepan Radic, a prominent Croatian parliamentary deputy and leader of the Croatian Peasant Party. The 1934 assassination of King Alexander by an extremist Croatian party also served to provoke Serbian antagonisms. Yet Serbian nationalism in the interwar period did decline in intensity, insofar as ideologies espousing the violent establishment of a Serbian-dominated state did not mobilize the same degree of support that they did during the two world wars.

<sup>14</sup> Again, the question of whether or not Milosevic actually believed the nationalist ideology he promoted is not a relevant question in this analysis. Rather, the main question is why Serbs mobilized behind the extreme nationalist ideology that Milosevic—sincerely or insincerely—espoused.

<sup>15</sup> *Nationalism Reframed*, 24.

<sup>16</sup> This is the view of Ken Jowitt, who expressed this position in a conversation with the author on 11 March 2002.

<sup>17</sup> One could counter that, even though Russians did not mobilize behind an extreme nationalist ideology from 1987–1991, they did deliver a substantial proportion of the vote to a radical nationalist party later on in the 1993 parliamentary elections, when Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) gained 23 percent of the popular vote. Considering this, can one accurately claim that an extreme nationalist ideology *failed* to mobilize Russians during and after the Soviet breakup? This is indeed a valid claim when one considers the marginalization of Zhirinovskiy's party in all elections preceding and following the 1993 parliamentary contest. Zhirinovskiy won only 5.8 percent of the vote in the 1991 presidential elections. Following its success in the 1993 parliamentary elections, his LDPR gained a far more modest 11 percent in the 1995 contest. In the 1996 presidential elections, Zhirinovskiy came in fifth place with 5.7 percent of the vote. In the 1999 parliamentary elections, Zhirinovskiy's Bloc gained 6.2 percent of the vote. Given his consistent marginalization (compared to the continuous popularity of extreme nationalists in Serbia throughout the 1990s), the success of the LDPR in the 1993 elections was clearly due to reasons other than the appeal of his extreme nationalist ideology among Russian voters; in

particular, it appears to have been a protest vote against Yeltsin and the discredited Congress of Peoples' Deputies rather than a vote in favor of Zhirinovskiy. In fact, a poll taken following the 1993 election showed that only 35 percent of those who voted for the LDPR identified with the party's election program. See Veljko Vujacic, "Serving Mother Russia: The Communist Left and the Nationalist Right in the Struggle for Power, 1991–1998" in Victoria E. Bonnell and George W. Breslauer, *Russia in the New Century: Stability or Disorder?* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 301–307. For the 1999 election results, see *RFE/RL Newslines* 21 December 1999. Meanwhile, Zhirinovskiy was the only prominent Russian nationalist during the 1990s who espoused an ideology that targeted nations on the territory of the USSR or the Russian Federation (besides Jews).

<sup>18</sup> Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 69.

<sup>19</sup> Vasa D. Mihailovich, "The Tradition of Kosovo in Serbian National Literature" in Wayne S. Vucinich and Thomas A. Emmert, *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (Minneapolis, MN: Modern Greek Studies, 1991), 141–142.

<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Chuprov and Iulia Zubok, "The Ethnic Consciousness of Russian Youth" in Christopher Williams and Thanasis D. Sfikas (eds.), *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Russia, the CIS, and the Baltic States* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 113.

<sup>21</sup> Radmila J. Gorup, "Kosovo and Epic Poetry" in Vucinich and Emmert, *Kosovo*, 113.

<sup>22</sup> Mihailovich, "The Tradition of Kosovo in Serbian National Literature" in *Ibid*, 144.

<sup>23</sup> Quotation taken from a Serbian writer writing in the 1980s. Svetozar Koljevic, "The Battle of Kosovo in its Epic Mosaic" in *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>24</sup> Dimitrije Djordjevic, "The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood in the Nineteenth Century" in *Ibid*, 323.

<sup>25</sup> Mihailovich, "The Tradition of Kosovo in Serbian National Literature" in *Ibid*, 148.

<sup>26</sup> Gorup, "Kosovo and Epic Poetry" in *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>27</sup> Djordjevic, "The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood in the Nineteenth Century" in *Ibid*, 309–311.

<sup>28</sup> These incidents will be extensively documented below in the section entitled "The Historical Strength of States."

<sup>29</sup> Judah, *The Serbs*, 79.

<sup>30</sup> For an overview of these movements and their ideological positions, see Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 133, 230–234. Also see Robert Thomas, *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 44–92.

<sup>31</sup> Chuprov and Zubok found that 80 percent of Russian youth identify more with the multiethnic conception rather than the ethnic notion of Russian national identity. "The Ethnic Consciousness of Russian Youth" in Williams and Sfikas (eds.), *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Russia, the CIS, and the Baltic States*, 115.

<sup>32</sup> For a good overview of the post–World War II nationalist literature, see Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), especially chapter six.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Mark von Hagen, “The Great War and the Mobilization of Ethnicity in the Russian Empire” in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 36.

<sup>35</sup> John B. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 140–146.

<sup>36</sup> Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Path to Independence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 180–181.

<sup>37</sup> Jaroslaw Martyniuk, “Ukrainian Independence and Territorial Integrity,” *RFE/RL Research Reports*, 27 March 1992.

<sup>38</sup> “Latvian majority vote for independence,” *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (Soviet Union)*, 4 March 1991. Hereafter referred to as “FBIS/SOV.”

<sup>39</sup> Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, 177.

<sup>40</sup> Social mobilization can be measured by rates of urbanization and rates of illiteracy. In Russia, illiteracy levels had dropped to 50–60 percent by 1910, 35–45 percent by 1935, and 5–10 percent by 1950. The rate of urbanization rose to 7.3 percent in 1890, 9.7 percent by 1910, 16.4 percent by 1930, and 30.0 percent by 1950. In the region that would become Yugoslavia, illiteracy dropped to 52–57 percent by 1910, 44.6 percent by 1930, and 34.4 percent by 1950. However, Nicholas J. Miller documents that a majority of Croats and Serbs in what is now Croatia were literate by 1910. See *Between Nation and State: Serbian Politics in Croatia Before the First World War* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 20–21. Urbanization in Yugoslavia is estimated to have been 3.0 percent in 1910, 8.6 percent in 1930, and 12.3 percent in 1950. In France, where a mass national consciousness is known to have arisen between 1850 and 1870, illiteracy had dropped to 40–45 percent by 1850 and 31 percent by 1870. Urbanization rose to 10.1 percent by 1850 and 18.8 percent by 1870. These figures (except those specifically attributed to Miller) are taken from Peter Flora, “Historical Processes of Social Mobilization: Urbanization and Literacy, 1950–1965” in S. N. Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan, *Building States and Nations*, vol. 1 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1973), 213–258. For evidence on French nation-formation in the late nineteenth century, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

<sup>41</sup> For general information on the nineteenth century Serbian kingdom, see Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia* (New York: Praeger, 1971), chapter 1.

<sup>42</sup> Vaso Cubrilovic lays out this position quite clearly in his 1937 memorandum, “The Expulsion of the Albanians.” Re-printed in Robert Elsie (ed.), *Kosovo: In the Heart of the Powder Keg* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 400–424.

<sup>43</sup> For information on interwar Yugoslavia, see Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, chapter 2. Also see Judah, *The Serbs*, chapter 6.

<sup>44</sup> Chechen revolts occurred during the early Soviet period and during World War II. Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian nationalists staged violent rebellions after WWII when their formerly independent states were incorporated into the USSR. However, by the early 1950s the Soviet authorities had successfully put down these uprisings. For information on the post-WWII Baltic rebellions, see Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 190–203.

<sup>45</sup> Djordjevic, “The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood in the Nineteenth Century” in Vusinich and Emmert, *Kosovo*, 323–324.

<sup>46</sup> Branislav Gligorijevic, “King Aleksandar I Karadordevic” in Peter Radan and Aleksandar Pavkovi’c (eds.), *The Serbs and their Leaders in the Twentieth Century* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 147–148.

<sup>47</sup> Djordjevic, “The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood in the Nineteenth Century” in Vusinich and Emmert, *Kosovo*, 320.

<sup>48</sup> *Between Nation and State*, 20–24.

<sup>49</sup> Djordjevic, “The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood in the Nineteenth Century” in Vusinich and Emmert, *Kosovo*, 320–321.

<sup>50</sup> For an excellent analysis of the Tsars’ half-hearted Russification policies, see Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914*.

<sup>51</sup> See Simon’s excellent work, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union*, 24–88.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> As noted above, such a strategy would have also been illogical considering the multiethnic character of the established nation-states that the Tsars and Soviets ruled.

<sup>54</sup> Judah, *The Serbs*, 74.

<sup>55</sup> For an account of the wartime massacres, see *Ibid.*, 113–134.

<sup>56</sup> For a similar account from the Serbian perspective, see Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941–1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973) and Matteo J. Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement & the Yugoslav Resistance* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). For a general account of the wartime genocides, see Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), 117–42.

<sup>57</sup> This is not to overlook the numerous instances of Serbian–Albanian cooperation since the nineteenth century. For example, Serbs and Albanians often allied with one another against the Turks during the Ottoman period. In addition, Tito’s partisans fought alongside Albanian partisans during World War II. I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing these examples to my attention. Despite these instances of cooperation, much of the history of Serbian–Albanian relations is filled with mutually-inflicted violence and severe periodic conflict—enough to feed the extreme distrust that exists today between the two nations.

<sup>58</sup> Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 56–61, 88, 91, 101, 121–143, 157.

<sup>59</sup> Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union*, 190–203.

<sup>60</sup> In Latvia, Russians made up 8.8 percent of the population in 1935, 26.6 percent in 1959, 32.8 percent in 1979, and 34.0 percent in 1989. For these figures, see Nils Muiznieks, “Latvia: Restoring a State, Rebuilding a Nation” in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 380. In Estonia, Russians made up 8.2 percent of the population in 1934, 20.1 percent in 1959, 27.9 percent in 1979, and 30.3 percent in 1989. For these figures, see Toivo U. Raun, “Estonia: Independence Redefined” in *Ibid.*, 405. In Lithuania, Russians comprised a much lower proportion of the population, before and after the war (9.4

percent in 1989). For that figure, see Alfred Erich Senn, “Lithuania: Rights and Responsibilities of Independence” in *Ibid*, 357.

<sup>61</sup> Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, 89.

<sup>62</sup> I could not find figures on literacy and urbanization rates for the Baltic nations before 1930. However, since social mobilization among these nations was at a very advanced stage by 1930, one can likely conclude with some accuracy that social mobilization began to affect significant segments of the Baltic populations while they were still part of the Tsarist empire. See the figures in Flora, “Historical Processes of Social Mobilization.” Therefore, the Baltic nations did not have established nation-states during their respective social mobilization periods. This fact is consistent with the argument that the Baltic groups viewed themselves as dominated nations vis-à-vis Russians. This helps explain why the Baltic nations in the late 1980s mobilized behind nationalist ideologies that were relatively extreme while the Russians did not.

<sup>63</sup> Yet the framework offered here can explain more subtle variations between nations in the former Soviet Union in the *extent* to which they mobilized behind extreme nationalist ideologies from 1987–1991. Take the example of ethnic Ukrainians in western Ukraine. Western Ukraine (which is predominantly ethnic Ukrainian) was not incorporated into the USSR until after World War II. Thus, ethnic Ukrainians in western Ukraine did not always live under a singular state with Russians. Nor did they have an established nation-state during their social mobilization period, considering that western Ukraine was part of Poland between WWI and WWII. However, since western Ukraine was not an independent state during this period, the Ukrainian nationalist discourse did not have as much freedom to develop as did the discourses of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians—all of whom had independent states at this time. This explains why the nationalist ideology supported by ethnic Ukrainians in western Ukraine in the late 1980s was not *as* extreme as the ideologies which mobilized the Baltic nations (there was clearly less support for extreme nationalist organizations like the Ukrainian Self-Defense League, whose ideology represented a rough equivalent to the more popular Baltic citizens’ congresses). The case of Ukrainians, in turn, contrasts with those of Belarusians, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, and Uzbeks, none of whom had independent states or lived separately from Russia for extended periods before 1991. This fact explains why these nations did not mobilize behind extreme nationalist ideologies during the late 1980s; while they perceived themselves to be dominated by Russians, they had always lived under singular and strong states with Russians. The nearly continuous imposition of Russian imperial control prevented these nations’ nationalist discourses from developing to the same extent as the Baltic and Ukrainian nationalist discourses were able to develop during the interwar period. However, one can raise a valid point that in the late 1980s and early 1990s Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and Armenians supported nationalist ideologies that were more extreme than those of the Baltic nations and ethnic Ukrainians—despite having generally lived under a singular and strong state with Russians. Yet the nationalist ideologies these nations supported during the late Soviet period and afterward were to a greater extent directed against other nations than they were against Russians; the Azerbaijani and Armenian nationalist ideologies were directed against one another while the nationalist ideology most Georgians supported targeted Abkhazians and Ossetians. The framework presented here can explain these outcomes as well. From 1918 to 1921, state authority became extremely weak in the lands that now comprise Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. In addition, during this period these future republics existed as independent states. These fundamentally weak states were wracked by violent conflict that pitted Azerbaijanis against Armenians, and Georgians against Abkhazians and Ossetians. The nationalist discourses of Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and Georgians subsequently came to include memories of victimization suffered at the hands of those groups they fought against from 1918–1921. As a result, the nationalist ideologies these nations adopted during and after the Soviet collapse targeted precisely those groups who inflicted victimization upon them in the immediate post-Tsarist period.

<sup>64</sup> One might dispute the notion that interwar Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia constituted “strong” states. The important point, however, is that they were strong *enough* to maintain a monopoly of violence and thereby prevent armed conflict from erupting on their respective territories.

<sup>65</sup> This particular consequence of state disintegration is also noted in James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 90, no. 4 (December 1996), 715–735.

<sup>66</sup> Julie A. Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 61.

<sup>67</sup> For an overview of these events, see *Ibid*, 17–55.

<sup>68</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this fact.

<sup>69</sup> This particular consequence of state disintegration is also noted in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Conflict” in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (eds.), *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas, *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s*, 44–51.

<sup>71</sup> The term is Thomas’ from *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s*, 44–51.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>73</sup> Mertus, *Kosovo*, 135–136.

<sup>74</sup> Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 81.

<sup>75</sup> Judah, *The Serbs*, 163.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s*, 50.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>78</sup> Judah, *The Serbs*, 163.

<sup>79</sup> In Croatia, the anti-communist and extreme nationalist Croatian Democratic Community won a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections (and later in the presidential elections). In Slovenia, the candidate from the former communist party (by then re-named the Party of Democratic Renewal) won the presidential contest. However, the nationalist opposition coalition, DEMOS, gained 55 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections and ended up forming the government.

<sup>80</sup> For an overview of the Croatian crisis of 1970–71, see the chapter entitled “The Road to Karadjordjevo” in Ante Cuvalo, *The Croatian National Movement: 1966–1972* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 158–186.

<sup>81</sup> Väljas, the former Soviet ambassador to Nicaragua, replaced Karl Vaino in June 1988 as first secretary of the Estonian Communist Party. For information on his policies, which were notably more nationalist than those of his predecessors, see Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, 227–228.

<sup>82</sup> “Congress opens,” FBIS/SOV, 9 October 1990. “Latvian People’s Front holds party congress,” FBIS/SOV, 5 November 1990.

<sup>83</sup> Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 238–245.



<sup>84</sup> Except for the anomalous 1993 parliamentary elections, Zhirinovskiy's electoral support would remain marginal throughout the 1990s. See footnote 17.

<sup>85</sup> For an overview of the failed attempts by Soviet loyalists and Russian nationalists to mobilize the Baltic Russians against independence, see Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, 188–201.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Rose and William Maley, "Conflict or Compromise in the Baltic States?" *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 3, no. 28 (15 July 1994), 33.

<sup>87</sup> Before the fall of the USSR, Yeltsin did call for increasing Russia's economic autonomy from the central state. This aspect of his platform could, therefore, be considered nationalist. Nonetheless, Yeltsin's platform hardly evoked anything resembling the paranoid Russian chauvinism of Zhirinovskiy, the main nationalist alternative in the 1991 presidential contest—and the only major nationalist politician whose ideology targeted other nations residing on the territory of the USSR and the Russian Federation (although many nationalists, including Zhirinovskiy, did target Jews).

<sup>88</sup> See reference in footnote 16.