Dangerous Diasporas: Émigré Nationalism and Ethnic Violence

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Abstract

The number of exceptionally brutal ethnic confrontations that followed the end of the Cold War brought with them the question of diaspora contributions to violence. The unwritten assumption was that diaspora compatriots were natural allies, sharing a strong sense of nationalism and standing at the ready to support their cousins abroad. Indeed, members of ethnic diasporas have shown a propensity to get involved in homeland wars. This study focuses on the extreme elements of these communities, tackling the question of why diaspora nationalists persist in advocating for maximalist solutions to home country conflicts when rationality suggests that they should do nothing or assume a compromise position.

The dissertation argues that such hard line positions are the result of strong and enduring emotions. It lays out a model whereby emotions serve as the mechanism through which destructive nationalistic feelings come to dictate diaspora leaders’ political positioning. This dynamic results in unyielding stances that are hostile and aggressive. Noteworthy about such reactions is that the primary operating emotion—humiliation—is, in fact, anchored in past episodes of trauma and dishonor that remain significant to certain members of the diaspora community. It endures in the everyday lives of diaspora individuals as a type of potential energy—simmering under the surface but not leading to any kind of extreme action. Only in the face of a specific triggering event does this emotion reactivate and become a vehicle for the expression of zealous ethno-nationalism.

While the focus of this dissertation is fairly narrow—diaspora reaction to homeland violence—the work done on framing a theory of emotional causality can provide a launching point off of which a more general theory of emotions and radicalization can be built. While not directly stated, emotions are often assumed in most explanations of errant or radical behavior. Whether it be frustration, humiliation, anger, or alienation that drives people to action that harms themselves and others, it is obvious that a greater understanding of the causes will need to heavily rely on theories of emotions and how, and under what conditions, they lead to extreme behavior.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I. Purpose of the study

This study focuses on explaining the persistence of fierce ethno-nationalistic positions in diaspora communities – stances that are often harmful to diaspora leaders and their causes, and that therefore seem to make little sense. I am specifically concerned with explaining why diaspora nationalists advocate for extreme solutions to home country conflicts when rationality suggests that they should do nothing or assume a compromise position. Because diaspora groups are commonly seen as ethnic co-conspirators to war, the militancy of these groups is often taken as a given. Contrary to popular belief, however, conflict in the homeland is not necessarily a sufficient trigger to mobilize a transnational ethnic response, let alone the do-or-die nationalism that diaspora leaders at times exhibit.

In the past, the hawkish stances of were of little concern. The means and opportunity of transnational political engagement, however, have become more accessible, and diaspora activism is now more relevant. Whether tapped by cash-strapped governments or rebel groups for their massive fundraising potential, or co-opted by these same actors to lobby world governmental and public opinion on their behalf, ethnic communities abroad have demonstrated their ability to directly influence the course of events back home.

A heightened sense of nationalistic bias during times of war is not unusual. Research has shown that during periods of change, especially if these periods are marked by devastating warfare, individuals will revive or strengthen their identification to their
Identity becomes more rigid and less nuanced, hardening ideas of right and wrong and making extreme stances more likely.²

Within certain diaspora populations, such hawkish nationalistic sentiments persist even when rational calculation suggests it would be more prudent to moderate. This constitutes a puzzle. My aims are specific: to identify the mechanisms that cause fiercely ethno-nationalistic positions to persevere in émigré communities and while accounting for the variation in response between different diaspora communities and within a singular grouping. The major hypothesis of this study is that during times of ethnic strife in the homeland, long-lasting, destructive nationalism in the diaspora is driven by the emotional dynamic of humiliation-based anger. Diaspora groups whose set a high value on defending group honor and status will be more likely to cling to past insults and react more aggressively to set right these injuries. Groups with weaker honor beliefs will act less aggressively. This holds true within communities, as well as between them, and accounts for the variation witnessed in diaspora response.

This study proposes a new theory on how long-distance nationalism can take on an extreme tenor in response to hostilities and tensions back home. I try to explain how non-rational outcomes can plausibly result from a specific emotional dynamic that manifests in a remarkably similar way across groups. By specifying as precisely as

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³ This point is repeatedly emphasized by Sheffer in his study of the different determinants of diaspora political action. Gabriel Sheffer, Diaspora Politics, at Home Abroad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Its legitimacy is further bolstered by the literature on social movements, especially those of a transnational nature, which explores how a group's solidarity is built and sustained. See Robin Cohen, Transnational Social Movements: An Assessment [Working paper WPTC-98-10] (Economic and Social Research Council, Transnational Communities Programme, 1998).
² Social psychologist Volkan labels this occurrence as group regression. He explains that all groups go through this process at various times but that for most, it is relatively short lived. Vamik Volkan, Blind Trust (Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing, 2004).
possible the different ways that humiliation can negatively impact behavior, the process by which it endures over long periods of time in diaspora populations and the variation between and within groups, my theory provides a first insight into the role of emotions and radicalization.

Emotions are not the only determinants of extreme behavior and, in some cases, may not be the primary drivers. I challenge my approach with the more developed rational explanation of extremism that focuses on the manipulation of ethnicity by governing elites. This is by no means the only alternative explanation. However, its explanatory strengths make it a good comparison theory.

I find that plausible support for my theory that humiliation can drive destructive nationalism. Significant about my findings is that the humiliation felt by diaspora radicals is past-focused rather than present-day generated. The emotion is a long-standing one, based on a specific episode of status reduction, that has become a part of ethnic identity in the diaspora. While not overt, the sense of humiliation is perpetuated through narratives and personal stories repeated over and over within the community. Rather than diminishing, the feeling of humiliation becomes more reified, more potent and more relevant in shaping political outlooks. Humiliation, and its associated feeling of anger, comes to the fore in the face of events that remind one of the original injury. This linking explains why diaspora reaction most often seems to be as much a reaction to earlier trauma as it is a response to current conflict. In this way, emotions are critical for understanding how destructive feelings about a group’s past can link with a current crisis to significantly affect modern-day diaspora politics.
A. An emotional reaction to upsetting events

Violence is upsetting. Even for those individuals loosely tied to the groups in conflict, the horrors of war provoke an emotional reaction. This effect is magnified by the unprecedented access now available to the frontlines of battle and the people who endure war. The suffering – whether it is of family, friends, casual acquaintances, or even those connected simply through a shared identity – provokes a wide range of feelings that include anger, anxiety, fear, and outrage, and it creates an impetus to act forcefully and definitively. This is especially true when the group in question is not simply suffering but perceived to be under direct attack.³

Emotionally-driven action over an extended period of time is rare. Emotions have a limited half-life. They arrive forcefully but dissipate just as rapidly.⁴ Only under particular conditions do emotions retain their power. When they do, the result is a dangerous form of diaspora nationalism that is as zealous as it is long-lasting.

Emotionally-driven expressions of ethno-nationalism in diaspora populations often follow a typical trajectory. What is commonly observed is initial anger and dismay in the diaspora community over the harm being inflicted against their ethnic group. These emotions serve to temporarily unite the ethnic community in support of their

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³ Intentionality is central to understanding the rise of destructive emotions, such as anger, in the face of trauma and loss. Victims of natural disasters rarely exhibit the level of anger or the need for retribution as do the victims of conflict. This is because loss due to natural disaster cannot be directly attributed to mal-intent against those who have suffered. This is not the case during times of war when atrocities are often committed specifically with the intention of inflicting harm and trauma on the perceived enemy.
besieged compatriots: money is given, letters to one’s congressman are written, rallies and protests are attended and membership in ethnic organizations is renewed. After a period of time, however, the active engagement of the larger community declines. This is not to say that diaspora members do not remain concerned with the events taking place back home. Simply, they become less actively involved in following what’s happening ‘over there’ and return to their more immediate reality of what’s taking place ‘over here’.

This general decline in interest, however, is not shared by more engaged, and often more militant, diaspora nationalists. Contrary to their peers, this population becomes more invested in the conflict and events taking place in their homeland as time passes. Early solidarity hardens into more rigid notions of ethnic identity with greater precision applied to defining what it means to be part of the ethnic group and what is considered acceptable behavior. Accordingly, national pride is elevated to the sacred and becomes one of the dominant reasons for fighting; feelings of anger expand to include not only current injuries but a litany of historical grievances and humiliations suffered by the ethnic group over the ages. The combination of elevated feelings of national pride, vivid memories of past suffering, and a hardened sense of ethnic identity justifies diaspora activists’ migration toward extreme measures and no-compromise positions.

The purposeful and intense focus on painful periods of the group’s past goes a long way to explaining the forceful and lasting reaction of individual diaspora members. Narratives of victimization contain within them the core emotion of humiliation. Research has shown that humiliation can often account for unreasonable and enduring
displays of anger. It follows that the more vibrant an ethnic group’s historical grievances remain, the more likely its members are to react with anger when their community is threatened and the more likely this attitude will persist. It should not be surprising, then, that during times of violent conflict, when the particular emotions of anger and humiliation are visibly aroused, we witness ferocious behavior that is immune to restraint, resistant to moderation, and resilient over time.

It is not just any past suffering that matters. All groups have tragedy in their history; events that have left them feeling helpless and humiliated. Certain episodes inevitably gain greater significance than others. The actual adversity suffered is secondary. What is important is the meaning that this event is given by the group. The lessons learned, the tragedy suffered, and the destructive emotions associated with the episode all become a defining marker of group identity and remain in a group’s collective memory over many generations. In socio-psychological literature, such events are called chosen traumas, defined as “the collective mental representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic common losses, to feel helpless and victimized by

7 Clinical investigations of members of groups that have suffered a massive trauma at the hands of an enemy group reveal that although each individual has his or her own unique identity and personal reaction to the trauma, all (or almost all) group members have developed injured self-images as a result. Studies of second and third generations of a group that has suffered such a trauma (such as children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors) clearly show that the mental representation of the shared tragedy is transmitted to subsequent generations in varying levels of intensity. Since all the injured self-images that various parents in a traumatized group transmit to their children refer to the same event, a shared image of the tragedy develops. By sharing this image of their ancestors’ trauma, a new generation of the group is unconsciously knit together. Over time, the mental representation of the original tragedy becomes a crucial marker of large-group identity. Vamik Volkan, Gabriele Ast, and William Greer, The Third Reich in the Unconscious: Transgenerational Transmission and Its Consequences (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002).
another group, and to share a humiliating injury." More commonly they are known as ancient hatreds and have been credited by pundits with not only lingering throughout the ages but for igniting much of the violence in the Balkans in the 1990s. Whatever the label, the key to the persistent power of historical traumas is that the feelings of humiliation—however that is represented for the group—remain vibrant.

While they can be defining elements of large-group identity, the humiliation and anger associated with a traumatic event can remain dormant for generations, making little difference to the everyday functioning of the larger group or the lives of its individual members. They exist in the form of simmering resentment that is incorporated as part of the identity of the group through narratives of grievance, victimization, loss and entitlement. Such emotions become important during times of crisis when a group perceives itself to be threatened in a historically similar manner. It is in these situations that recollections of past traumas are revived and dormant emotions reignited. Feelings, perceptions, and expectations associated with these past episodes heavily contaminate those connected to current events, creating a regressed mindset that is prone to emotional decision-making and destructive behavior.

B. Self Interest

8 Volkan, Blind Trust. I develop a more detailed description of chosen traumas and how they operate in the next chapter.
9 Core identity is defined as a person’s “deep, personal sense of sameness…and of continuity between past present and future.” One of the reasons large group affiliation can be so powerful is because an individual’s sense of ethnic, religious or national identity is so closely tied to his or her core identity. Ibid.
10 Large-group regression after a society has faced a massive trauma—including loss of life, property, or prestige, and sometimes humiliation by another group—reflects the efforts of a group and its leaders to maintain, protect, modify or repair their shared group identity. Regression is not an all-or-nothing experience and is typically accompanied by attempts to adapt.
An alternative argument suggests that self-interest rather than emotion is largely responsible for the extreme positions exhibited by diaspora nationalists. It is hardly a new observation that hard line nationalistic positions can result from intense political competition between émigré elites. Conflict provides many advantages to diaspora leaders. Nationalist causes can revitalize interest and membership in flagging organizations, increase fundraising potential, re-establish and strengthen ties between diaspora leaders and home country officials, and raise the political profile of representatives of ethnic groups in their resident countries. Diaspora leaders are not immune to these positive externalities and inevitably develop a stake in maintaining the success, validity and relevance of their organizations.

Inevitably, however, successful social movements create competition within the community over control and leadership. This is especially true in an already fragmented community. Current leaders jockey to firmly establish themselves as the legitimate representatives of their revitalized ethnic group, while emerging contenders can challenge the ethnic bona fides of the old guard in their own personal bid for power. The result is a spiral of ever-increasing hard line nationalist rhetoric that is often difficult to abandon.

Ethnic diasporas are particular in their exclusivity. To qualify as a member, an individual must share a historical attachment to the group through their parental lineage. Leaders of such collectives, however, are challenged not only to assert this connection but also to demonstrate their loyalty to the community on a consistent and overt basis. This loyalty, above all else, is the basis of their legitimacy. Under this view, the loyalty also makes them more likely to adopt hard line nationalistic positions that champion their
ethnic group when their authority is contested. Not doing so leaves diaspora leaders susceptible to accusations of disloyalty and betrayal of a group or a nation.\textsuperscript{11} Aspiring leaders can claim greater ethnic authenticity simply by being more nationalistic. This produces a non-rational strategy where community leaders promote jingoistic programmes even when such a strategy leads to sub-optimal outcomes for themselves and their communities.

II. The Importance of the Issue

The ethnic component of many armed conflicts is now very well established. Ethnic violence, whatever the intensity, is likely to continue in both the long- and short-terms. Such clashes are no longer confined to the populations in the direct line of fire. Revolutions in information and communication technologies, not to mention the ease and accessibility of inexpensive travel, have lowered the barriers of entry. Ethnic violence can now involve not only those in the immediate area of fighting, but also the vast numbers of ethnic compatriots living abroad. Understanding the factors that contribute to the perpetuation of such conflicts may help political elites and policy makers prevent such fatal outcomes more effectively, or at least reduce their destructiveness when they do happen.

Despite the significance accorded diaspora communities in American foreign policy, political science literature has been slow to consider the importance of non-state actors in the perpetuation of violent civil conflict. Diasporas, when considered at all, are thought to be marginal players in the larger dynamics of state-centered international

\textsuperscript{11} Yossi Shain, \textit{The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State} (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).
relations. As Adamson points out, this viewpoint "ignores the important role that transnational communities play as conduits for the flow of information and resources between migration-receiving and migration-sending states."\textsuperscript{12} Understanding more fully the source of intense ethno-national loyalty in the diaspora, and the different routes by which such intractable stances emerge, is just the beginning step in the larger project of assessing the importance of transnational support for violence-generating programmes. Currently, popular opinion holds that diaspora groups are significant drivers of conflict. This may or may not be the case. The data simply does not exist. This project begins to address this larger question by looking at what leads to extreme nationalism in diaspora populations.

Similarly, by focusing on emotions I address a long-neglected area in the international relations fields. Emotions obviously have an effect on behavior. This is especially true during times of crisis. And yet, emotions have been only marginally or indirectly included, if at all, in the important theories of nationalism and international relations.\textsuperscript{13} There is surprising resistance in academia to understanding the role that emotions play in contemporary global politics. Others involved in the everyday execution of political policy tend to give emotions greater consideration. Perceptions of humiliation—and the desire for honor and respect—are already recognized as significant determinants of behavior in international negotiations, for example. Diplomats at the table are well-versed in the psychology of ‘getting to yes’. The need to allow certain


parties to ‘save face’ as a prerequisite to agreement is not a revolutionary idea. As part of the larger dynamic of international conflict, emotions are also getting more press from those reporting from the frontlines. Thomas Friedman pinpoints ‘humiliation’ as being the big issue in international politics: “If I’ve learned one thing covering world affairs, it’s this: The single most underappreciated force in international relations is humiliation.” The study of emotions can add nuance to predictions of behavior and account, to a great extent, for the variability in reactions. At a time when a number of the world’s important challenges seem to be defined by extremist claims, the study of the effect of powerful emotions has become more relevant and more needed.

III. The Literature

The recent growth of diaspora involvement in homeland violence should be seen as part of an overall increase in immigrant mobilization around a wide variety of political and economic issues. In breaking with past understandings of migrant political activity—which largely portrayed immigrants as choosing between home and host countries—recent scholarship now recognizes that many ethnic communities maintain dual loyalties. As a result, research has moved away from studying the impediments to

16 The literature on transnationalism emphasizes this dual engagement by many immigrant communities. Scholars researching this area point to the myriad of reasons why and different ways how people remain closely connected to their places of origin while, at the same time, making a permanent home in another country. Work has been done on both first- and second-generation migrants in order to assess the strength and nature of these ties. For an excellent study of the Dominican community in Boston see Peggy Levitt, The Transnational Villagers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Levitt also pioneered a study on the attitudes of second-generation immigrants in her edited volume Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, eds., The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002). Other work has tried to take stock of the field of transnationalism with all its different components. Al-Ali and Koser’s edited volume is a good overview of how the study of transnationalism is developing. See Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser, eds., New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home (London: Routledge, 2002).
assimilation and now focuses on such issues as the different ways that communities remain tied to their countries of origin, why these ties remain strong, and why such connections occur only in some communities and not in others.  

This more nuanced understanding, however, has not penetrated the study of diaspora groups and conflict. The attentiveness of the diaspora to the homeland is treated as a given and their nationalism is assumed to be strong. Much of the scholarly debate, therefore, has centered on the motives for their behavior. These are divided into two dominant orientations: affective vs. instrumental.

Affective considerations focus on the non-rational ties that émigrés maintain toward their groups and homelands. Diaspora leaders, like their constituencies, are also swayed by nationalist passions and sentiments. Support for ethnic violence is not simply the result of strategic calculations of benefit and cost, and may actually be due to non-rational factors—e.g. anger, outrage, and feelings of injustice. The stronger the emotion that is roused by an external event, the more influence it is likely to exert. Ethnic conflict, which touches a core identity, is likely to produce a strong emotional response. Diaspora leaders privilege their ethnic identity. Unlike other members of the émigré community for whom ethnicity is a more fluid concept, these elites actively choose to favor their ethnic group and constitute the ‘core members’ of the ethnic community abroad. As such, they avidly and openly maintain their identity and are ready to act on their behalf. In doing so, they cultivate an affective attachment to their group and sense

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17 Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers.*
of loyalty to their homeland. Such an awareness creates an obligation toward the collective, even if it provides little direct benefit to the individual.18

Alternatively, the instrumental version explains in largely functional terms the persistence of ethnic identification while living abroad. This view argues that diaspora leaders maintain their ethnic affiliation because doing so allows them to more easily achieve practical individual and collective goals.19 The decision is a calculation of benefit and cost. Much of the early scholarship on immigration in the United States largely stressed the useful role of ethnic identity in helping new and old migrants assimilate into their adopted country, organize for employment rights, and lobby for better housing.

A more extreme variant of this explanation paints diaspora elites in purely strategic terms.20 It argues that there is little reason to assume that diaspora elites are dissimilar to leaders of other organizations; all are interested to a large extent in protecting their positions of influence and power.21 It follows that if ethnic violence abroad allows group leaders to promote, consolidate, and expand their influence, support should be forthcoming. Succinctly put, “nationalist conflict is...the product of deliberate

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19 This explanation is a compilation of two different but related views of nationalism—the instrumentalist approach and the constructivist explanation. Both focus on identity affiliation as being something that is chosen out of many different competing identity choices that people have. Sheffer, Diaspora Politics, at Home Abroad.
21 This point is made forcefully by Michael Brown who attributes bad leaders as a predominant cause of civil war. See Michael Brown, ed., The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict (Cambridge, MA: MIT Center for Science and International Affairs, 1996).
elite efforts to mobilize latent solidarities behind a particular political program. The greater the benefit, the more substantial the support.

Crisis provides an exceptional opportunity for individuals to gain status because of their position within their ethnic group. Nationalist causes can revitalize interest and membership in flagging organizations, increase fundraising potential, re-establish and strengthen ties between diaspora leaders and home country officials, and raise the political profile of representatives of ethnic groups in their resident countries. Whether leaders are more interested in promoting local goals in their host society or have a more expansive agenda geared to their country of origin, violence can provide the means by which these actors increase their importance.

As strategic actors, elite leaders will set priorities and assess their actions according to how deeds affect their standing with the particular communities they value the most. Some leaders, for example, may be more concerned with maintaining a base level of support in their country of residence than securing personal influence with decision-makers in their home countries. Others, in contrast, may see greater prestige emerging from involvement in events back home rather than a focus on domestic émigré politics. At times, skillful entrepreneurs may be able to operate successfully across groups without compromising their standing in either. More commonly, however, they must choose the primary arena in which they wish to operate and calibrate their actions to suit that environment. Either way, encouraging ethnic identification and mobilization in the diaspora is rational behavior, designed to maximize power within the group.

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Diaspora leaders' actions are no different than those of their home-country counterparts who invoke ethnicity as a way to promote a particular political agenda. Because of war's unparalleled ability to awaken passions and a heightened sense of identity, elites will capitalize on such an event to advance their interests.

But while the above explanations provide the rationale for why immigrant leaders would engage in homeland-oriented politics, they do not explain the persistent extremism that so often categorizes diaspora nationalism. An affective attachment to one's ethnic group, for example, does not automatically transform into chauvinism when conflict breaks out. Ethnic community leaders living abroad may be equally driven to prevent conflict and the atrocities that often accompany it as they are to excuse violence committed in the name of the cause. Additionally, the popular argument that diaspora members will automatically back the position of their home country during times of war is questionable. It takes for granted the compliance of diaspora leaders to home country agendas. In reality, while morally supporting their ethnic kin, diaspora leaders are as likely to disapprove of violence as the chosen method of resolving differences as they are to embrace it. Living abroad, diaspora leaders are influenced by the culture, values and mores of the country in which they reside. As explained by Shain in his seminal work on exiles and democracy, rather than being blind followers, diaspora groups often act as a positive influence for their less-than-open homelands.23

Finally diaspora must always negotiate the environment in which they live. Their political interests, therefore, are not solely guided by homeland concerns. Rather, the

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day-to-day concerns of many diaspora leaders are often dominated with the welfare of their community in the country in which they reside. These concerns do not automatically disappear when conflict erupts in their countries of origin. A balancing act between domestic and foreign interests must and does take place.

IV. Constructing Identity in the Diaspora

Identity when living abroad is not straightforward. I highlight below three particularities of identity construction in diasporas. First is the need for émigré groups to continually assert their ethnic identity. For themselves and for others, diaspora groups are involved in a constant exercise of defining who they are. Theirs is a highly self-conscious ethnic existence that cannot escape comparison. Second, diaspora groups are in a fight to maintain the hearts and minds of their community members. The primary threat for a diaspora is identity dilution. To maintain engagement, diasporas will focus on the dramatic events of their history and their homeland as a way to grab the attention of community members and increase their sense of ethnic identity. What results is a skewed perception of history and home that gives an inordinate amount of attention to big events with moral-historical lessons. Finally, diaspora members are detached from the reality of their homeland. Many of their ideas are stuck in antiquated and/or idealized memories of what they left behind. This results in two related tendencies. First, diaspora members have a hard time getting past the divisions and traumas that may have characterized their experience back home. These schisms remain vibrant in exile and often color how they view events taking place in the homeland. Second, sitting abroad shielded from the negative consequences of their actions, diaspora activists can more
readily call for extreme action to be taken to address perceived wrongs—past or present—while not sacrificing their safety or security.

The diaspora experience is one of constant comparison—to home country cousins (are they as authentic?), to other groups (are they as respected?), and even to their own past (why are they not as successful?). Donald Horowitz, in his well-known study of ethnic conflict in the developing world, finds that group comparison is a nearly universal phenomenon. Unlike living in the home country where national identity can, for the most part, be taken for granted, émigrés are forced to constantly assert their ethnic and national identity when living abroad. They must define, for themselves and for others, what it means to be a member of their particular ethnic and/or national group. In this sense, diaspora activists are well informed of in-group/out-group boundaries. They are also more acutely aware of expected norms and behaviors that are required in order to remain a part of the group.

Not all members of ethnic diasporas, however, feel strong connections to their heritage. Diasporas are heterogeneous groups whose members express varying levels of attachment to their ethnicity and nation. For many, these ties become watered down as people adopt the norms, values and ideas of the society in which they live. Such individuals happily create a hybrid culture which incorporates chosen elements from both societies and balances old- and new-world practices and beliefs. Some, in fact, may not

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25 The 'straight line' theory of assimilation suggest that once settled in another country, people become more like the people that are around them in characteristics, beliefs and norms. In other words they assimilate and share less in common with people from their native culture and more with the people with whom they actually live. Frank D. Bean and Susan K. Brown, "Assimilation Models Old and New: Explaining a Long-Term Process," *Migration Information Source* (October 2006).
even actively associate with their ethnic community, preferring to think of themselves primarily in terms of their professional affiliation—which has greater salience for them on an everyday basis. Ethnic identity is not abandoned; it simply becomes less important than the fact that one is a doctor, lawyer, journalist, nurse, teacher, etc. In a similar vein, economic status can come to be the defining element of one’s identity. Again, ethnic affiliation is not discarded but assumes a less important role in how a person self-identifies than where they see themselves fitting in to the economic or social strata of their new society. This fluidity in identity is not particular to people living in the diaspora and, in fact, takes place as a normal process of identity redefinition in most societies. The violence in Kenya at the start of 2008, for example, demonstrated how ethnic ties exert a variable degree of hold on different sectors of society. While much coverage was given to how the Kenyan public was divided along ethnic lines, creating an atmosphere more conducive to violence, there was an element of surprise that the level of fighting reached the extent that it did. This is because Kenya’s well-established middle class was thought to be a bulwark against the type of ethnic violence that has defined many other African countries: “[m]illions of Kenyans identify as much with what they do or where they went to college as who their ancestors are. They have overcome ethnic differences…”\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, while the tragic violence in Kenya highlighted the continuing strength of ethnicity it also pointed, in the case of the Kenyan middle class, to the validity of other identity categories as equally important to people’s self-categorization.

But for those who choose to emphasize their national identity while in exile, maintaining ties to their homeland and their history is the obvious course. In contrast to

their more casual cousins, the identity of these individuals is more firmly fixed in their national attachments. Their investment in this identity means that the well-being of their ethnic group and the fortunes of the homeland are personally relevant. This is true for events both past and present. History is a significant source of identity for those in the diaspora. Stories of the past are a valuable tool for generating a shared sense of identity and belonging—especially for those living outside the main. They offer a simple and effective way to create and sustain a common understanding of history and purpose by promoting a specific collective understanding of key events in history. They translate relevant wisdoms of the past to the present. Through shared stories that are told at home and repeated in gatherings, specific notions of identity are reproduced within the diaspora group. These ideas are a unique reflection of the émigré experience that cobble together idealized memories of home, reasons for leaving—especially if they are traumatic—and the inevitable sense of loss and displacement that comes with settling in a new society.

How diaspora members relate to their ethnicity and what they choose to highlight as vital to their identity are crucial to understanding and predicting how individuals will react to the conflict events of their generation. The more oriented an ethnic diaspora’s outlook is toward memories of pain and victimization, the greater the potential for group pathologies to develop. Referencing his work with Lithuanian Americans, Petersen explains how an emphasis on historical trauma by émigrés can readily lead to ideas of retribution and revenge. He notes that in contrast to natives talking about similar events, Lithuanian émigrés “were more likely to digress into political meta-narratives with an
angry emotional undertone."\textsuperscript{27} He attributes this divergence to the ability of the émigrés to openly discuss these past events and come to an almost ‘rehearsed’ understanding of what took place with overtones of justice and vengeance. As much as affirmative markers of identity, stories of loss and struggle generate a strong sense of unity in communities abroad. This may be because the sense of ‘work yet to be done’ for the nation is an enticing idea to those living outside the main. Continually looking for ways to assert, not only their connection but also their value to the homeland, diaspora activists are ready to rally behind a cause. When that cause is to redress a historical wrong, the impetus is much greater to act on behalf of the nation to when the opportunity presents.

Finally, diaspora groups are also shielded from the everyday difficulties that those who remained at home must endure. Suspended from life in the homeland, they are not required to test their ideas. Shielded from challenge, these ideas become reified with each retelling of their story, making them more real with the passing of time. Additionally, unlike people in the home country, they need not worry about the negative effects of belonging to a group during times of war. Safely ensconced abroad, they are shielded from the day-to-day worries that accompany conflict, such as security and material well-being. This environment makes it more likely that diaspora leaders will demand strong action, as they can optimistically count on remaining secure and may, in fact, underestimate the consequences of taking confrontational stances.\textsuperscript{28} In addition to

\textsuperscript{27} Roger Petersen, "Memory and Cultural Schema: Linking Memory to Political Action," in Memory and World War II: An Ethnographic Approach, ed. Fracesca Cappelletto (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 142.

\textsuperscript{28} Benedict Anderson describes the long-distance nationalism of transnational communities as: “a serious politics that is at the same time radically unaccountable. The participant rarely pays taxes in the country in which he does his politics; he is not answerable to his judicial system ... he need not fear prison, torture, or death, nor need his immediate family. But, well and safely positioned in the First World, he can send money and guns, circulate propaganda, and build intercontinental computer information circuits, all of which have incalculable consequences in the zones of their ultimate destinations.” Benedict Anderson,
the safety of distance encouraging action on the part of diaspora leaders, being physically removed from the home country also allows émigré elites to be more radical in what they propose, as they do not have to contend with the consequences of promoting extreme viewpoints. Prevented from having to actually act on their rhetoric, or from the more negative effects of war when action is taken, few concrete checks and balances temper these ‘armchair generals’.

V. Clarifying Definitions

In this study a diaspora is defined as a people with a common origin who live on a permanent basis outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland. The homeland can be real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control. Diaspora members are considered, by themselves or by others, as part of the homeland’s national community, and as such, are often involved with homeland-related affairs. Members of a diaspora are commonly divided into three categories: core, passive and silent members. Core members are the organizing elites and those community members intensely active in diasporic affairs. They are instrumental in mobilizing the larger community and take the lead in defining both the internal priorities of the population and representing the group to the outside. This group is the primary object of this study. Passive members are that part of the community likely to mobilize when called upon.

29 Shain and Barth point out that “it is important to remember that the notion of a homeland (and a hostland) is theoretically useful but not a precise term that carries connotations of loyalty, belonging, and obligation.” Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," International Organization 57, no. Summer (2002), 452.
30 Ibid.
31 Prominent scholars on diasporas use these categories and I follow suit. See Cohen, Global Diasporas: An Introduction, Shain and Barth, “Diasporas and International Relations Theory”, Sheffer, Diaspora Politics, at Home Abroad.
They tend not to lead in thought or action but follow the agenda that others set. Silent members are the larger pool of individuals who are generally not involved in diasporic affairs, but who may mobilize in times of crisis.²²

Diasporas cannot be understood without reference to ethnic groups and nations. An ethnic group shares five key traits: a group name, a belief in common descent, collective historical memories, a shared culture, and an attachment (even if only historical or sentimental) to a specific territory or homeland.³³ A nation, by contrast, is a socially mobilized group that seeks political self-determination. Ethnic groups and nations often overlap, although they are not the same.

Ethnicity is intimately tied to group narratives. Narratives are stories about the collective history of an ethnic group. They provide meaning to the series of events that make up the collective experience. Narratives almost always include stories of greatness and heroism, victimhood and suffering. The fact that they may not be factually accurate is irrelevant. Their principal purpose is to serve as a lens through which the past can be explained, the present interpreted and the future created. As such, narratives can provide unparalleled insight into the set of enduring beliefs that define a particular group and guide their actions. One kind of narrative is a myth. A myth is a story that is “held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning. Myths are often deemed sacred for their ability to communicate fundamental truths about life.”³⁴ They reflect the most important concerns of a people and they help preserve a

²² Cohen, Global Diasporas: An Introduction.
culture’s integrity. “A symbol is an emotionally-charged shorthand reference to a narrative or myth.”35 The confederate flag, or ‘Southern Cross’, remains a vibrant symbol for southern Americans. It represents “what their country stood for and what their suffering during the [Civil] war was meant to accomplish…sacrifice, defense of community, and treason.”36 Considered a proud emblem of Southern heritage, for many years several Southern states flew the Confederate flag over their state houses along with the American flag. The flag, however, holds a different meaning for many African-Americans who see it as a symbol of slavery, segregation and degradation. To them, honoring such a symbol by giving it a place of prominence in public buildings is offensive and insulting. In South Carolina, the last state to continue to display the Confederate flag in its capitol, the battle continued to rage. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in effect, enacted an economic boycott of the state until the legislature agrees to remove the Confederate flag from all public and government buildings.

Finally, as this study focuses so intently on emotions, a definition of what is meant by the term is required. Since there is no universally agreed upon definition of an emotion, the clearest way to explain the term is to talk about its composite parts. Nico Frijda breaks down emotions into six features: psychological arousal, physiological expression, valence, cognitive antecedent, intentional object and action tendency.37 I follow his structure but place greater emphasis on cognitive antecedents and action

35 Ibid.
tendencies. Cognition refers to how an event or occurrence is appraised as relevant to an individual—important/not important—good/bad—and action tendency speaks to the impulse to act. All emotions are, in essence, impulses to act. Specific emotions, however, generate the urge to act in certain ways. Fear, for example, is defined by the cognition of a situation of danger and the action tendency of fight or flight. Anger combines the cognition that an object or agent has committed a negative action against oneself and the action tendency is to punish or even attack the blameworthy object or agent.

VI. Method

A. Case Selection

The thesis documents the responses of the major diaspora organizations of the Serbian and Croatian communities in the United States during their homeland conflicts. These cases were chosen for ease of comparison and the ability to control for external influences. First, the two groups have organized and active diaspora communities in the United States. Second, they are directly linked to populations that were involved in shared and overlapping conflicts during the 1990s. By choosing these groups I reduce the possibility of type of conflict being a source of variation. Third, the variation in the behavior of the elites in these three groups toward similar issues in several shared conflicts makes them good cases to consider. Finally, the response of each diaspora group not only varies between cases but within each case as well. Such variation in the commitment of each group and within each group to a radical nationalist agenda allows for greater precision in identifying the reasons behind why extreme nationalist projects persist with certain groups or factions and not with others.
I contrast these major cases with examples of diaspora groups that showed more restraint in their engagement. I first look at the Slovenia diaspora which, in contrast to the émigré populations of its Southern neighbors, adopted a more measured stance to the happenings back home. Than pull from history and consider the case of German Americans during the First World War. While indisputably proud of their German heritage, German Americans clearly separated the cultural from the political—openly celebrating the former while carefully balancing the latter.

To compare the level of nationalism of a diaspora group across time, the stances of each group are benchmarked against the dominant nationalist position in their home country. In each of the cases chosen, a dominant nationalist discourse can be clearly identified. In Croatia, the benchmark will be the position of the Tudjman government. Milosevic’s regime will serve as the yardstick against which the Serbian-American response will be judged. The politics of Slovenian Americans are compared to the policies of then-Prime Minster Lojze Peterle and his Christian Democrat party. Nationalism in the German case is measured against attitudes prevalent in Kaiser Wilhem II’s Germany. By benchmarking the stances of the diaspora groups to their nationalist or in-power home-country counterparts, I establish an independent measure that can gauge the level of nationalism of each group over time and observe whether the diaspora groups are more or less maximalist in their demands. In this way for each group, I track how stances change or persevere.

I look at the activities of these groups in the United States. A 2002 study by the World Bank concludes that “by far the strongest effect of war on the risk of subsequent
war works through diasporas. After five years of post-conflict peace, the risk of renewed war is six times higher in societies with large diasporas in America than in those without American diasporas.  

Additionally, looking at only the United States allows me to control for local conditions and events and thereby eliminate these variables as possible explanations for diaspora political action or non-action. Equally important, the political environment of the United States, in comparison to many other societies, is tolerant of immigrant communities retaining and expressing their ethnic affiliation. It is not uncommon for people living in the United States to proudly and openly label themselves Irish-American, Italian-American, Polish-American, Armenian-American, etc. As well, the openness of U.S. society offers a number of different ways in which immigrants can engage in politics. For example, diaspora organizations can legally lobby the U.S. Congress in favor of policies to support their interests. They can contribute money to members of Congress who are sympathetic to their cause, encourage members of their larger community to vote certain ways during election years, or even support one of their own in a run for office. The accessibility of the US political system to ethnic lobbying groups has often led to criticism that US foreign policy is being led by the interests of others. Economically, diaspora organizations have the freedom to fundraise for causes they deem important without much interference or regulation from government bodies. Such opportunities do not necessarily exist in societies that are hostile to immigrant groups, making observation of these groups’ activities more difficult.

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B. Data and Analysis

I used three main strategies to collect data for this study. First, I conducted over 30 individual, semi-structured interviews with members of the Croatian and Serbian communities studied over a period of 3 years in the United States. As I use the Slovenian case as a comparison to the dominant cases of Serbia and Croatia, fewer interviews were conducted with this community. In many cases, I was able to speak to respondents more than once, revisit some of the responses they had given in earlier encounters and ask for greater clarification and precision with regard to specific issues. Secondary sources were used to research the German case.

For the Croatian case I chose to focus predominantly on four organizations: The National Croatian American Association (NCAA), the Croatian Association of America (CAA), the Croatian Federalist Union (CFU) and the Bosnian-Croats of America (BCA). The first three groups were chosen because of their large membership, wide appeal, and national focus. All three of these groups also have well-articulated mission statements allowing for ease of study. The Bosnian-Croats of America was included as a comparison case. The organization’s highly regional focus, overt nationalism and distinctive priorities make it a good contrast to the other more mainstream groups. In addition to these four organizations, I also worked with the Croatian Ethnic Institute and conducted a series of less-formal conversations with activist members of the diaspora, such as radio hosts, members of the business community, academics, religious leaders and students. To find people to speak to me in this latter group, I used a snowball sample, asking each respondent to recommend other people who might also be willing to share their experiences and opinions.
The focus of the Serbian case was on three organizations: The Serb Federation of America (SFA), The Serbian Unity Congress (SUC) and The Serbian National Defense Fund of America (SNDA). These groups were selected based on similar criteria used for Croatia. In addition to these three primary groups, I also spoke with representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Washington, DC., as well as students and activist members of the Serbian community.

The Slovenian case relied on material from the Slovenian American Heritage Foundation, the American Slovene Club and the American Slovenian Catholic Union.

Second, I relied heavily on written material published by the organizations. Where available, I systematically reviewed relevant print and on-line newspapers of the different organizations. These reviews scanned a period from 1970 to 2000. The purpose of such an exercise was to document the occurrence of specific beliefs expressed through narrative that, I claim, serve as the underlying basis of emotional expressions of extreme and persistent nationalism. Narratives provide excellent insight into what are the enduring beliefs of a group. Groups in conflict, or different factions within a group, often subscribe to dissimilar versions of historical narratives. Whereas one group may emphasize certain events, the other may not even include them in its set of collective memories. By including or omitting certain historical events and processes from the collective memory, a group characterizes itself and its historical experiences as unique and exclusive.
A central assertion of this study is that certain deeply held attitudes—namely ingrained ideas of victimization and lingering feelings of humiliation over a significant real or symbolic loss—emotionally prime certain diaspora activists to react aggressively when episodes of conflict occurring in their homeland remind them of these past injuries. While these beliefs have deep roots in the past, they are maintained in the active repertoire of stories that significantly influence how diaspora members view the world in which they live and the current conflicts that their ethnic group faces. In this way such attitudes are essential in determining both the intensity and valence of emotional responses seen in response to present-day hostilities. The existence of such a specific catalogue of historically-determined beliefs is critical in determining the likelihood that an ethnic leader will exhibit unreasonable expressions of nationalistic fervor.40

Within the written material of diaspora groups, then, I looked for evidence of such deep-seeded attitudes in both the identity and conflict narratives that are told and retold by the two émigré communities. I began with narratives of identity which give a sense of how the community defines itself. Such narratives generally deal with the collective history of the ethnie, as seen from the particular vantage point of the diaspora, and include, but are not limited to, elements such as: the centrality of the homeland to the diaspora experience, what is defined as a collective triumph, what is seen as a defeat, and how these events are celebrated or mourned; who is venerated as a hero or identified as a friend and who is condemned as a villain; the importance of certain symbols and their

meanings; the obligations of members to the group, and, most importantly, how ethnic esteem is defined for that particular group.

Throughout this rather extensive review of a group’s collective definition, specific markers were sought that indicated the presence of well-developed and persistent beliefs about the ethnic group as the ethnic victim. I looked for the repetition of similar stories of humiliation, persecution and injustice. In this review it was not sufficient for one or two specific historical episodes to be mentioned as periods of loss or group decline. While I expected the narratives of victimization to, indeed, be anchored in a rather limited collection of historical events labeled by the diaspora as traumas, I also required that the plot lines of these narratives follow a similar causal chain and share common characteristics. For example, the narratives needed to depict the tragedy as a gross injustice committed against the ethnic group. I looked for use of a specific type of vocabulary in the description of such events that included but was not limited to words and phrases such as: ‘injustice’, ‘treachery’, ‘humiliation’, ‘victimization’ and ‘innocence’, ‘peace-loving’. Causally, I focused on phrases that assigned blame for the humiliation of the group and laid out the progression of events that lead to the ethnic community’s demise. Important in this exercise was the consistency in temporal sequencing across the retelling of narratives—first x occurred, then y, then z—as well as identification of similar enemies and motives.

I also looked for positive narratives that would challenge my claim that trauma, victimization and humiliation were dominant in the Croatian and Serbian diasporas’ national self-definition. Specifically, I searched for narratives built on the “high points of
national memory” that celebrated what the nation “could do best” rather than mourned what it had lost. 41 The lack of victim language was significant, but not sufficient. What was necessary was the repeated use of constructive and optimistic descriptions of the groups and their histories. In particular, I focused most intently on the descriptions of trauma. I noted the presence or absence of stories that were “high in closure and redemptive imagery.” 42 I coded ‘high closure’ to be language that “demonstrated an emotional conclusion or a coherent resolution of a difficult event.” 43 The idea being that the event long exerted an emotional influence on group memory. Redemptive imagery is the idea of something positive coming out of something negative.

A second strand in analyzing the identity narratives was the identification of those central components that are equated with collective ethnic esteem for the particular group under study. In this exercise I concentrated on statements that essentialized Croatian and Serbian identity. These statements were usually prefaced by such introductions as “Croatians/Serbians/Slovenians/Germans always had” or “Croatia/Serbia/Slovenia/Germany always was”. In the Croatia case, to cite one example, state sovereignty was unequivocally present as the gold standard of Croatian-ness. 44 Throughout the different historical periods that were considered—peaceful and

41 I modeled positive national narratives largely on the British. “Every so often, Britons like to measure their present against a past that time has in some ways overtaken as doughty, imperial folk with a reach far beyond their island shore, suffused with a backs-against-the-wall fighting spirit, conjuring victory against all odds. From Shakespeare’s Henry V rallying his troops against the French at Agincourt in 1415 to the English soccer team beating the West Germans in the 1966 World Cup, to coming out on the winning side of two world wars, this is a narrative built on the high points of national memory, a connect-the-dots guide to an old land’s sense of what it has done and what it can do, best.” Alan Cowell, "In War and Hardship, Relishing a Taste of Nostalgia," The New York Times September 21, 2009, A8.
43 Ibid.
44 While there is unified agreement within the Croatian émigré community that Croatian sovereignty is of paramount importance to all Croatians, there is less consensus as to what the borders of Croatia should

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more conflictual—the theme of Croatian independence and its 1,000 year legacy of historical statehood was repeatedly presented as the defining element of Croatian identity. Similarly, for Serbia, control over Kosovo was repeated as one of the defining components of what it meant to be Serbian. Consistently referred to as the Serbian “cradle of civilization”, the separation of Kosovo from Serbia proper was depicted as a dilution of Serbian identity. In identifying these types of self-defining group traits linked to ethnic esteem, I looked for repetition across time of such claims, a semblance of the meanings given to ethnic symbols, and uniformity in the reasons given for why such elements were important to the group. The expectation was that during periods of strife, when issues of pride become more pronounced, such portrayals would be more prominent and occur with greater frequency. However, such characterizations were also expected to appear during periods of relative peace.

A third strand focused specifically on idea of individual obligation to the group. I looked for data that emphasized beliefs in group loyalty, unity and action. The goal was to establish some measure of expectation of individual sacrifice or action for the protection or defense of ethnic group honor and reputation. I tagged content which contained phrases and stories that centered on ‘honor’ and ‘loyalty’. I was also interested in how episodes of defeat were treated—if they were described in terms of ‘lack of unity’ or some other language that suggested a failure of the group members to act in the best interest of their ethnie. Finally, I noted with particular interest how obligation toward the current crisis was framed, and the rationale that was given for the diaspora call-to-arms.

Some members of the diaspora hold an expansive view of Croatian territory, including parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina as Croatia. Others have a more limited ambition and are satisfied with Croatia’s current borders. Maps of these two models are included in the Croatian chapter of this study.
A similar approach was applied in the analysis of narratives of conflict. Conflict narratives highlight the logic behind diaspora support for the homeland war. They shed light on what diaspora activists believe are the causes, purpose and goals of fighting, their ranking of priorities, perceptions of the enemy, the appropriateness of the fighting strategy, and their obligation toward the homeland.45 When considering the streams of these different stories, I looked particularly for links and direct references to past events of humiliation. Words and phrases that captured the argument, ‘they did this to us before so we can expect them to do this now’ were of particular importance. Similarly, the claim ‘remember how we suffered then and what we lost—it will be the same now’, was also considered a significant indicator of past-oriented beliefs coloring present-day attitudes. Reference to the past behavior of the enemy as an explanation of current goals and aims was another important marker, as well as repetition of a claim of innocence, such as: ‘we are doing this in self-defense just as we always have in the past’.

For the Croatians, I reviewed the two main publications—The Federalist and Nasa Nada. The Federalist is the newspaper of the Croatian Federal Union, the largest Croatian organization in the United States. Nasa Nada is the paper of the Croatian Catholic Union, formerly the second largest organization in the United States but recently merged with the CFU. These periodicals were looked at immediately post-WWII and then from 1970-2000. In addition to these two publications, I traced the publications of

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45 Narratives of core beliefs share some common features. First, these stories are largely shared by group members and treated by many as truthful accounts of the past and a valid history of the group (taught in textbooks). Additionally, such narratives entail both memories of past events as well as memories of more recent, conflict-related events. The more recent memories, some of them personal memories that intertwine with the collective memory pool, turn into historical memories the longer a conflict lasts. They exert a powerful force in shaping present-day attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors.
the National Association of Croatian Americans as well as the writings of the Croatian Anti-Calumny project. Finally, I also included the writings of the Bosnian Croats in the United States and journal articles taken from the Croatian Journal of Ethnic Studies.

For the Serbian case, I looked at the written material for three of the major Serbian organizations in the United States: The Serbian National Defense Council of America; The Serbian National Federation; and, The Serbian Unity Congress. The Serbian National Defense Council has published a bi-monthly newspaper, *Sloboda*-Liberty, since 1951. Similarly, the Serb National Federation has published *Sbrobran*-America since the early 1900s. I researched both of these periodicals from 1970 onward, and I included a more limited review of content post-World War II when they were available. The Serbian Unity Congress, a much younger organization than the two previously mentioned groups, does not boast its own newspaper. However, the organization has kept detailed accounts of annual conventions, statements and resolutions that have been put forth by its leaders and members since its inception. These documents were considered closely. For the Slovenians case, I relied predominantly on the ethnic newspaper, *American Home*, published in Cleveland, OH.

In addition to the periodicals of the organizations, I also considered written opinion of members of the community in other newspapers and journals. From the early 1990s on, web content was also taken into account. Before this time, the Internet was not fully developed nor used in the manner that it is now. I also consulted written work of scholars and others who focus on specific communities as well as those who address the more general area of diasporas and conflict. I interviewed academics who are working on the issue of diaspora and conflict.
VII. Plan of the Thesis

Chapter 2 fills in the details of the two explanations by fleshing out the theory of my model. The heart of the study is two case studies that focus on hard line diaspora positions and support of ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia. Chapter 3 looks at the Croatian response. Chapter 4 considers the case of the Serbian response, which is often considered the stereotype for irrational extremism. Chapter 5 contrasts the Slovene American and German American responses to the prior cases. Chapter 6 sums up the lessons learned, especially about the options and prospects for diaspora involvement in war avoidance and termination. The more optimistic conclusion is that while diaspora groups often react strongly to episodes of violence in their homelands, this initial reaction quickly tempers down to more reasonable positions. The willingness of these groups to become involved in homeland affairs, however, cannot be ignored. The challenge for policy makers is to identify strategies to co-opt diaspora groups into programs of peace, recognizing that these groups have their own potential and limitations that must be respected.
CHAPTER 2: THEORY

This study looks past the initial hard-line reactions that upsetting events cause in groups and their leaders. I focus on explaining the persistence of fierce ethno-nationalistic positions, in particular the stances that seem to defy self-interest for the leaders or their causes. I am especially concerned with explaining why certain elites are willing to moderate initial strong stances while others continue to advocate for extreme solutions when rationality suggests that they should do otherwise. Conflict in the homeland need not trigger a transnational ethnic response, let alone do-or-die nationalism. Yet these positions do occur and must be explained.

The major hypothesis of this study is that long-lasting, destructive nationalism in the diaspora during times of ethnic strife in the homeland is largely the outgrowth of strong emotional reactions to such events. Because emotions are commonly understood to be brief signals that alert us for action, long-lasting emotions as the basis of protracted hostility are somewhat of a puzzle. They are often not considered legitimate drivers of action. I find, however, that certain emotions can cause virulent reactions that endure. Predominant among these is humiliation-generated anger. It is during times of violent conflict, when emotions are intensely aroused, that we are more likely to witness ferocious behavior that is immune to restraint, resistant to moderation, and resilient over time.

This chapter lays out a model whereby emotions serve as the mechanism through which destructive nationalistic feelings come to dictate diaspora leaders’ political
positioning. This dynamic results in unyielding stances that are hostile and aggressive. Noteworthy about such reactions is that the primary operating emotion—humiliation—is, in fact, anchored in past episodes of trauma and dishonor that remain significant to certain members of the diaspora community. It endures in the everyday lives of diaspora individuals as a type of potential energy—simmering under the surface but not leading to any kind of extreme action. Only in the face of a specific triggering event does this emotion reactivate and become a vehicle for the expression of zealous ethno-nationalism.

Victim narratives are crucial to this process. They act as a repository for destructive emotions and enable past suffering to remain relevant in the present and influence attitudes toward current conflicts.46 Victim narratives are stories about humiliation. The grander ones talk about a defeat of some magnitude where the ethnic group lost something it considers fundamental to its identity and, in the process, was significantly reduced in stature. Smaller ones enumerate a litany of lesser wrongs which keep the community struggling or at a disadvantage in comparison to others. Whether large or small, most victim narratives tend to revolve around three themes: a sense of impotency, an insistence on blamelessness and a desire for redress. Victims, by definition, are those who lack power; they see themselves at the mercy of others. In this respect, victim stories usually give face to a particular enemy—those responsible for the harm committed. The adversary is imbued with all the attributes of evil, making them

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46 As Gergan points out, the major function of a narrative is to unite the past with the present. Kenneth Gergen, Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 207.
easy to blame. Victim stories also usually have some sort of resolution—an idea of what is needed to redress the wrong and restore national pride. When framed in all-or-nothing terms, these ‘solutions’ can become quite dangerous when the right opportunity presents itself.

Because victim narratives are often instinctively incorporated into the core identity of a group, they have tremendous staying power. This enables them to transmit not only the stories but the emotions associated with the events, namely humiliation. These bitter emotions indubitably color attitudes in the present and contaminate how émigrés interpret and respond to new crises. The explosive level of aggression witnessed with some diaspora members seems to be as much an emotional reaction to earlier ordeals as it is a response to current conflict events. Emotions are critical for understanding how destructive feelings about a group’s past can link with a current crisis to significantly affect modern-day diaspora politics.

Equally important are core beliefs that emphasize group honor and create a sense of obligation for ethnic members to defend the honor of their group. Such a sense of duty assumes individual esteem is tied to the reputation of the larger group. It prescribes expectations for how ‘good’ members of the group are required to respond when the


48 This study largely follows the ‘appraisal’ theory of emotion which states that emotions result from “how individuals believe the world to be, how events are believed to have come about, and what implications events are believed to have.” Nico H. Frijda, Antony S.R. Manstead, and Sacha Bem, eds., Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts, Studies in Emotional and Social Interaction: Second Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 1. There is, however, another strand of inquiry which considers how emotions determine beliefs. This line of research looks at how emotions “influence the content and the strength of an individual’s beliefs, and their resistance to modification.” Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, eds., Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts 1.
larger collective is challenged, threatened or insulted. Beliefs of honor also seem to contribute to a defensive mindset that is sensitive to collective slights and injuries. Diasporas whose core beliefs accentuate group status, reputation, or other honor-related concepts are more likely to act aggressively to defend the position of their group or to rectify past injustices. Less honor-conscious communities will likely not feel the same obligation to avenge wrongs committed against their group.

The rest of the chapter is divided into two parts. In the first I explain in more detail the different parts of the model—emotions, past traumas, and narratives. In the second I show how these elements interconnect into a plausible explanation for the occurrence of unreasonable expressions of ethno-nationalism in diaspora groups.

I. Parts of the Model

A. Humiliation: what it does, how it works and why it lasts

1. Definition

In its most basic form, humiliation is the feeling of being brought down. It is generally thought to occur in relationships of unequal power in which one party has control over the other. Humiliation undermines one’s self-respect by negating core elements of individual, or group, pride.49 Humiliation in the social science literature tends to be used in a variety of different ways. The most common usage talks about humiliation as: feeling disrespected, a loss of stature or a fall in stature in the eyes of others, an event that reduces pride or honor, a feeling of powerlessness, being unjustly forced into a degraded position; and contemptuous treatment at the hands of others.

49 Saurette notes that for humiliation to operate, “the humiliated party must have ‘pretensions’ (in a non-pejorative sense) to a higher value or position Saurette, "You Dissin Me? Humiliation and Post 9/11 Global Politics," 506.
Most writers on humiliation agree that humiliation is an extraordinary painful emotion that vividly stays with an individual for a long period of time. Many also focus on the retaliatory impulse that humiliation elicits—the desire to take revenge on those who inflicted the original pain. The struggle to provide a precise definition of humiliation is, in part, due to the fact most definitions conflate the causes of humiliation with the emotion itself. There are many different ways to damage one’s pride and self-esteem (causes). The loss of pride or self-esteem as a result of the actions of another is humiliation (emotion).

Humiliation is not a straightforward emotion. In the categories of emotions it is considered a hybrid. Fridja writes that “[w]hile some emotions are considered to be basic emotions, other emotions are considered to be blends, such as humiliation which is considered to be a mixture of shame and anger.” Unlike primary emotions which predictably produce the same behavior when they occur, hybrid emotions can produce a range of reactions. The response to humiliation, for example, is not always retribution. Humiliation can also be a positive motivator—encouraging competition and spurring on success. Dominique Moisi makes his point in his work on emotions and international relations. He writes that, “the first Asian economic miracle in the 1980s was at least in part a victorious response to national feelings of humiliation. Countries such as South

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Korea and even Taiwan wanted to prove to Japan, their former occupying power, that they too could perform well on the global economic stage.\textsuperscript{52}

More conventionally, as has been noted, a humiliating experience can result in anger and the desire for payback.\textsuperscript{53} On the extreme end, Jessica Stern has identified humiliation as a driver of terrorism. She comments that, “[f]rom talking to terrorists and those who monitor them, I and others have learned that terrorism thrives in an atmosphere of humiliation, marginalization, and dashed expectations.”\textsuperscript{54} Others have, similarly, linked humiliation to the increased prevalence of suicide bombings in the Middle East. The spike in suicide bomb attacks in Iraq following the release of the photos from Abu Ghraib has been explained as a reaction to the general humiliation Iraqi society felt over U.S. military presence in their country. Abu Ghraib simply symbolized this humiliation in gross terms.\textsuperscript{55} Palestinian suicide bombers provide another, perhaps more prominent, example of destructive humiliation. "I feel that my people and I have been murdered in the soul by the Israeli occupation,"\textsuperscript{56} expressed Hassan Salameh, a leader of Hamas.

Destructive humiliation cycles can be broken into three parts: 1) perceptions of harm, unfairness and injustice; 2) anger and indignation over the injustice; 3) impulse to


\textsuperscript{53} Dominique Moisi talks about humiliation as a loss of confidence. He says that, “humiliation is the injured confidence of those who have lost hope in the future; your lack of hope is the fault of others, who have treated you badly in the past. When the contrast between your idealized and glorious past and your frustrating present is too great, humiliation prevails.” Ibid. 5.

\textsuperscript{54} Jamie Glazov, "Symposium: Through the Eyes of a Suicide Bomber" (paper presented at the FrontPage Symposium, 2005).


punish those responsible for the affront. As the extreme case of suicide bombers demonstrates, retaliation can be costly and often irrational. That said, people do retaliate, even at a cost to themselves, to behavior they perceive to be unfair. This extends to people who observe but are unaffected by the offending behavior.57

Humiliation has a long shelf-life. It is not only the experience of emotions like humiliation, but also the memory of such emotions, that motivates aggressive behavior. Maraglit writes, "we can hardly remember insults without reliving them...The wounds of insult and humiliation keep bleeding long after the painful physical injuries have crusted over."58 Social psychological research supports the validity of this statement. Highly emotional events and particularly negative emotional events, are relatively well retained, both with respect to the emotional event itself as well as to central information in the event that elicits the emotional reaction. A number of studies have found that the process of forgetting events is slowed when the events have an emotional component, versus when the events are neutral or non-emotional.59

I focus primarily on the negative dynamic of group humiliation in émigré groups. For those living in the diaspora, the feeling of collective humiliation tends to be positively correlated with a negative assessment of one's group. Variables such as a sense of historical decline or loss, as well as an inability to successfully compete in the current environment, are particularly relevant to populations who live in a state of constant comparison. These elements can feed a vivid sense of humiliation when events

seem to openly publicize an ethnic group’s shortcomings and highlight their inability to alter their status. These negative comparisons become even more toxic when coupled with a vibrant sense of victimization. ‘Unsettled accounts’ of injustices that have been committed against one’s group have a tendency to remain vibrant with diaspora populations. They come alive in the form of destructive nationalism when events in the present remind the wounded of what they went through in the past. As Linder points out, “[m]emories of invasion, expulsion, persecution and subjugation can remain at the center of group identities for centuries…memories of humiliation do not age but stay surprisingly fresh”60

2. Some main causes of humiliation in diasporas

The diagram below tries to roughly capture the dynamics of humiliation. This section focuses on explaining the importance of these causes of humiliation for diaspora groups, without claiming that they are the only sources of humiliation. The next section deals with explaining variation in outcome. As I am particularly concerned with aggression, I focus

60 Ibid. xv.
**Sense of Historical Decline.** Decline is difficult to accept. This is particularly true for societies that once set the standard for achievement and now find themselves measurably worse off in terms of power, prestige and fortune. Often, these once-powerful nations struggle to reconcile themselves to their diminished status. Whereas before their achievements were readily recognized and their influence respected, they are now treated as poor relations and given little consideration. Undoubtedly such situations give rise to feelings of resentment, which are ready fodder for more belligerent expressions of nationalism.

Weimar Germany is a good example of such a dynamic. The German people struggled to adjust to their weakened position post World War I. Of the opinion that Germany had done nothing wrong, they were loathe to accept responsibility for the war. The harsh terms of the peace agreement, which was seen as a deliberate strategy by Germany’s enemies to render her powerless both in the near- and long-term, gave rise to strong feeling of resentment against the imposers of peace. Rather than dampening German ambition, the Weimar Republic gave rise to an even more ambitious form of...
German nationalism. Germany was not only intent on reasserting her power on the world stage but on dominating those who had sought to humiliate her.\textsuperscript{61}

Present-day Russia can be cited as a more recent example of the aggressive effect of national decline. A premier power that was respected and feared for the fifty years following the end of the World War II, the rapid demise of the Soviet Union was a shock to both the outside world and to the Russians themselves. In a dizzyingly short period of time, Russia underwent massive transformations that shook the foundations of its identity. For all the upheaval, the switch from communism to democracy and from socialism to capitalism was not nearly as upsetting to Russia and to the Russians as their country’s sudden drop in importance. In one fell swoop, they saw their empire disappear, with former satellite countries breaking free of Russian control and turning west for support. The US and Europe began talks about expanding NATO into areas formerly under Russian control. Russia was obliged to accept bailout money from the US and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ward off economic collapse and, in a further humiliating turn, needed to go back a second time to ask for more. The election of Vladamir Putin as President in 2000 came after a decade of battering.\textsuperscript{62} Putin shrewdly understood the need to rebuild national pride and took a series of actions, large and small, to reassert Russian power. The 2008 military action in Georgia, for example, has been interpreted as an attempt by Russia to flex its muscles and reassert its regional authority. As explained in The Economist, “This was no sudden response to provocation, but a long-planned move. Mr. Putin resents the West’s influence in former Soviet countries

\textsuperscript{61} Scheff, \textit{Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War.}
\textsuperscript{62} Putin became acting President of Russia at the end of 1999 when Boris Yeltsin resigned. He was elected in 2000 and then again in 2004 until 2008. In 2008 he became Prime Minister of Russia.
such as Georgia and Ukraine, and he dislikes the puckish Mr. Saakashvili intensely. He may not yet have ousted him (indeed, ordinary Georgians have rallied to support their president—so far). But by thumping down Russia’s military fist in the Caucasus, he has made clear that Russia will not tolerate excessive signs of independence from its neighbours, including bids to join the NATO alliance. 63

German near-term attempts to overcome its defeat and humiliation were successful. Russia has forced the West to treat it again as a serious power. This is not always the case. Societies can linger for decades or even longer without regaining what they lost—their efforts to reverse their misfortune unsuccessful. From the sidelines they watch as others thrive while they stagnate or decline even further. They invent stories for why they are unable to flourish, usually blaming others for their troubles. They revive past glories to remind themselves of how the group prospered before and set a formula for how they can rise again. When the opportunity presents itself, usually during times of change and/or conflict, these groups are primed to act on their ambitions. It is not unusual to witness an intensity of purpose in these actors. Their fight to reassert their position is of paramount import.

Negative comparison. Groups are not only inclined to linger on their past and what they once were, they also are very cognizant about how they measure up to others in the present day. People naturally compare themselves to others. This is true for all groups. Inter-group comparison, it has been argued, has become more significant in international politics as information about different people, societies and their cultures

has become easier to access. On the positive side, greater access to information allows groups from widely disparate backgrounds to find commonalities between themselves and others that would have otherwise remained hidden. Evangelical Christians in the United States, for example, became frontline advocates for the ‘Save Darfur’ campaign alongside Zionist organizations in Israel—both groups calling for more stringent action to be taken against the Islamic government in the North.

More negatively, closer contact between societies can illuminate differences, exacerbate tensions, reinforce stereotypes and encourage unfavorable comparisons and/or competition. The ‘Japan Bashing’ that became common in the United States during the 1990s was, in part, the result of the two societies rubbing up against each other with greater frequency. Rather than fostering better understanding, Americans developed a negative opinion of the Japanese, who they saw as presumptuous in their growing international influence. The more Japanese tourists visited the United States with their new-found wealth and expensive gadgetry, the more Americans were reminded of their own economic hardships and domestic difficulties. Japanese success contributed to the worry that United States was becoming a super-power in decline. This gave U.S.-Japanese relations a somewhat ugly and nationalistic tinge. The U.S. viewed Japan as hastening its decay while Japan accused the U.S. of wanting to keep Asia down.

Closer contact can also feed resentment in societies that see themselves as failing to measure up to the ‘global norm’ of success. Frijda points out that “[n]ot all sense of

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humiliation is caused by actual humiliation. Feeling humiliated may not come from contemptuous treatment but from resentment, inherent in one's comparing oneself with others and finding them to have superior powers or capabilities.”66 Through satellite television, computers and mobile phones it is now fairly easy for people to see what others have and what they lack. They are also privy to unflattering depictions or opinion that others may make or have of their group. The furor in the Muslim world over the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* publishing twelve cartoon drawings of Mohammad is an excellent illustration. According to Islam, it is blasphemous to make images of the prophet. The cartoons published were a satirical depiction of Mohammad—many poking fun at the stereotype of Islam promoting terrorism. What was seen in Western countries as a harmless spoof was read as a mockery of Islam by many in the Muslim community. The outrage among Muslims, both in Denmark and in the wider world, was palpable. Protests were held and an apology demanded—and refused. In a statement that seemed to capture the general mood of the Muslim community, the Danish imam Raed Hlayhel declared, “Muslims will never accept this kind of humiliation. The article has insulted every Muslim in the world.”67 The type and intensity of the reaction can, in part, be attributed to the quiet recognition that while the Judeo-Christian West arrogantly treats the Muslim world as developmentally backwards, they, as a community of nations, have not been successful in dispelling this notion. Against this backdrop, the cartoons were seen as an affront—another example of Western governments and their media trivializing Islam and its code of beliefs. The anger that rippled through the Muslim world was unsurprising. When what you value is ridiculed, especially by those who you feel disdain

you in some way, the natural reaction is to channel those feelings of humiliation into righteous anger. As ably expressed by Mahathir Mohamad, the former prime minister of Malaysia, “I will not enumerate the instances of our humiliation. We are all Muslims. We are all oppressed. We are all being humiliated...Today we, the whole Muslim community, are treated with contempt and dishonor...There is a feeling of hopelessness among the Muslim countries and their people. They feel that they can do nothing right. Our only reaction is to become more and more angry. Angry people cannot think properly.”

Societies that live with the feeling of having been ‘left behind’ and ‘powerless’ are more cognizant of the differences between them and others. They are more likely to blame others, whom they perceive to dominate or support the system, for their troubles. “Superiority of others is difficult to bear,” writes Fridja. “One is stirred to deny it, to explain it as a result of malevolent action, or to blame it on lack of justice or of consideration in respecting honor.” Feelings of dispossession are magnified by a lack of opportunity and a stifling sense of going nowhere. These factors serve as a reminder of how little control they have over their situation and compound the sense of wounded pride. Affronts can be large, very real and deliberate such as the checkpoints that Palestinians are forced to pass through to enter into Israel, or they can be more subtle, sometimes imagined or unintended such as visa quotas for certain nationalities traveling to the West or the perception of unfair treatment or condescension by those who have

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68 Quoted in Friedman, "The Humiliation Factor," 11.
Humiliation, for example, is an unavoidable externality of many international development aid programmes. "You Westerners get a kick out of our problems...You know that we need help—how glad we'd be not to need it!..We feel deeply humiliated by your arrogant and self-congratulating help!"\

Being demeaned is an ugly experience. It can lead to resentment, anger and, in more extreme cases, the desire to for revenge. Revenge, after all, "represents a solution to the particular problem of suffering offense at the hands of someone else." As a collective sentiment, societal humiliation is a destructive emotion. It generates feelings of bitterness and unjust injury, and it can prime a group to take unreasonable positions in order to redeem their honor and the honor of the nation. During times of turmoil, when old resentments are revived and used to legitimate new hostilities, this form of aggrieved nationalism can lead to damaging behavior as groups rally around the opportunity to right perceived wrongs.

*Sense of Victimization.* At the heart of every victim story is impotence—an inability to prevent someone from inflicting harm on you. But while victim stories are about pain and loss, they are also about preserving self-esteem when bad things happen.

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70 Brazil, for example, requires that all US citizens apply for a visa in order to enter the country. This is largely done to counter the US visa requirement for Brazilians to enter into the United States. Similarly, talk of the US imposing visa requirements on EU citizens caused quite a stir and led to speculation that the EU would retaliate in kind. Judith Crosbie, "Eu Citizens Face Us Visa Clampdown," in *Europeanvoice.com* (May 16, 2007). More recently, the end of the Sri Lankan war has led outside observers to question the policies of the Sinhalese government toward its Tamil population. The heavy-handed treatment of many Tamil refugees has led to feelings of resentment that they are being treated unfairly simply because of their ethnicity. Rather than dampen tensions, observers have expressed the worry that such treatment will re-ignite the flames of Tamil nationalism. Seth Mydans, "Resentments in Sri Lanka Reflect Challenges to Peace," in *New York Times Online* (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/22/world/asia/22lanka.html?scp=13&sq=sri%20lanka%20end%20of%20war&st=cse; March 21, 2009).


that negatively affect the group in some important way. Victim stories lay out a simple schema: there are good people and bad people; there is a causal series of events that culminate in harm done; and there is innocence and blame. Through the use of such a schema, a sense of collective feeling is reinforced and a common purpose is created to undo the wrong. In place of weakness, victims can feel righteous indignation and anger at having been unjustly wronged. Stories of persecution, abuse, and wrongful injury become embedded in the collective memory. Angry feelings of vengeance and retribution toward those who are held responsible for the weakening of the group are allowed to fester. It is after all legitimate and to some extent admirable to be angry if one or one’s group has been humiliated, especially if the cost to the group has been high. Anger shows strength whereas humiliation is associated with weakness. That groups reassign responsibility for their collective failures to others is neither a new nor surprising idea. Historical whitewashing and blackwashing is a common occurrence with all groups. Projecting responsibility for failure onto someone else is a powerful self-protection mechanism that allows feelings of pride and self-worth to remain intact in the face of adversity.

Excessive concern about group status and victimization is often an indicator of deep-seated feelings of entrenched humiliation. As Scheff and Retzinger note in their work on humiliation and anger, bypassed humiliation most commonly manifests itself in displays of arrogance, superiority or a ‘drive for power’. Individuals who carry around

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73 Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War."
chronic feelings of humiliation are more likely to feel the need to outwardly prove their self-worth by collecting indicators of success that are easily on display to others. They tend to be highly defensive about their status and are quick to anger when they perceive they have been wronged or slighted. Frijda points out that “[s]elf-esteem to a large extent hinges on one’s social position. That position rests on standing up to others in proving and maintaining it. It thus hinges on responding adequately to their slights.”

“Involvement of damage to self-esteem and sense of identity explains a number of aspects of vengeance,” he goes on to say. “It explains the very considerable importance of offenses to one’s group in emergence of revenge. Self-esteem and identity are closely dependent on those of the group...It also explains the duration of vengeful desire. Damage to self-esteem is like the gown that Nessos threw over Hercules. It clings, it envelops, and does not go away. It does not diminish in time...It is resuscitated by any dealing that recalls the humiliating event.”

That aggression can be driven by underlying feelings of insecurity is neither a new nor surprising idea. “Revenge can be truly instrumental in restoring self-respect and sense of identity.” Studies in psychology have well-documented this process in individuals. Work done with prisoners incarcerated for violent sexual crimes found that explosive outbursts of anger and aggression were often triggered by deep-seated feelings of humiliation and self-loathing. The demand for respect was a common theme.

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77 Ibid. 273.
78 Ibid.
expressed by many of these offenders. Their use of violence was their way to force others—mainly women—to accord them the deference they felt they deserved. Other studies have uncovered persistent feelings of humiliation as a driving factor in many seemingly intractable marital disputes. Research done by clinical psychologists has shown that enduring anger between married couples is most often driven by feelings of unreconciled humiliation. Similar to the work done with sex offenders, couples cite the lack of acknowledgement and recognition of their core needs as the principal reasons for their anger and the justification for escalating minor disputes into full-blown conflicts. Small, unintentional slights are interpreted as examples of gross disrespect and past injuries are recalled to justify angry and aggressive stances. Additional work has taken insights derived from the individual and applied them to group identity. Most notably with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the concepts of humiliation and anger have surfaced as important determinants of the conflict mindset that dominates the two sides of the struggle. Narratives of trauma, victimization and enmity control perceptions of events and ensure continual confrontation. Strikingly, with both individuals and groups, the propensity to violence is highly correlated with excessive feelings of humiliation. Aggression, it appears, is a common tool employed to compensate for feelings of weakness. To lash out against those who have harmed you gives a sense of potency and control; you establish authority over those who once took your self-esteem away.

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81 Scheff and Retzinger, Emotions and Violence: Shame and Range in Destructive Conflicts.
82 Scheff, Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War.
These three variables—a sense of historical decline that has not been halted, resentment at not being able to successfully compete with others, and a victim identity that dwells on trauma, whitewashes group failings and scapegoats others—seem to be the most common basis for feelings of acknowledged humiliation in diaspora groups. But of these three variables, only the experience of victimization seems to generate a feeling of humiliation that leaves groups primed to act in an aggressive and non-rational way. A sense of historical decline and negative comparison with others will feed a sense of victimization but do not seem to be the primary rationale for why groups react nationally. I suggest that the explanation for this can be found in the concept of ‘unsettled accounts’. Living in the diaspora demands a reliance on memory and images of what was left behind. These are not always benign. Some experiences carry with them memories and emotions that are more difficult to overcome. In abstensia, they become more acute. “Exile can produce rancor and regret as well as a sharpened vision,” writes Edward Said. 84 Not having the chance to go beyond the suffering that drove them from their homes, families, lives, it becomes an integral part of their identity when living abroad. Rather than diminish, the memories and emotions linger. The chance to put unsettled accounts to rest is a strong motivator, even decades after the event. After all, self esteem, as explained by Frijda, “hinges on responding adequately to...slights.” 85

3. Variation in behavior

Variation in aggressive behavior between and within diasporas is a function of core beliefs that place a high value on collective honor, status and reputation and set out the obligation of group members to defend that honor. This tendency is magnified by

85 Frijda, The Laws of Emotion 270.
how closely individual diaspora members relate to their ethnic group and by the propensity of some groups members, as opposed to others, to ruminate over an injury.

Core beliefs are the set of shared ideas and norms that are considered inviolable by a community. They define what is considered honorable and dishonorable behavior for a ‘good’ member of an ethnic diaspora. People reference their core beliefs both to infer how they should feel about an event and how they should respond. The suggestion of compromising a core belief is offensive. Individuals will often react with outrage and anger when they are asked to compromise a core belief or when they discover that members of their group have violated one of their central values. The right to life platform of the Christian Right movement in the United States is an example of a core belief. Members of this community strongly believe that life begins at inception. The idea that abortion is acceptable at any stage of gestation is morally offensive. To this community, an abortion is simply murder and cannot be tolerated under any circumstance. The inability of disparate groups to find common ground on this issue is testament to the centrality of this belief to this particular community. Using the Christian Right again as an example, a non-core belief of this group is the belief in abstinence before marriage. While many in the Christian community feel very strongly that young people should wait until they are married before having sexual relations, they are much

86 In conceptualizing core values, I borrow heavily from Philip Tetlock’s work on sacred values. According to Tetlock, sacred values are “those values that a moral community treats as possessing transcendental significance that precludes comparisons, trade-offs, or indeed any mingling with secular values.” He adds that “although there is variation in what groups hold sacred, sacredness seems to qualify as a functional universal across society, both primitive and modern, and that moral communities erect a variety of psychological and institutional barriers to insulate sacred values from secular contamination.” Philip E. Tetlock, “Thinking the Unthinkable: Sacred Values and Taboo Cognitions,” TRENDS in Cognitive Science 7, no. 7 (July 2003): 320.
87 Ibid.
more tolerant of 'mistakes' in this area than they would be of decisions to terminate a pregnancy.

Research has shown that group beliefs which place a high value on collective honor, status and reputation can prime members to act more aggressively and with greater anger to a perceived offense or insult than individuals whose group norms do not.88 This is because honor codes require individuals to defend their reputation in the face of insult or offense to themselves, their family or group. It is considered shameful not to do so. In their work on emotional reactions to offenses, Rodriguez, Manstead and Fisher find a strong correlation between honor concerns and the levels of anger and aggression that manifest in reaction to insult. When exposing individuals from Spain and the Netherlands to a range of insults, two cultures that they claim differ with respect to ideas and values of family honor, the Spaniards showed greater concern for group honor than the Dutch. As reported by the researchers, "Spanish participants rated injuries to family honor, such as being unable to defend one’s family reputation or allowing others to insult one’s family, as more damaging to their self-esteem than the Dutch participants."89 The Dutch, in contrast, were more likely to react more strongly to insults that "portrayed them as not being competent...or as lacking in autonomy."90 These findings suggest a

88 Research has shown that humiliations and insults have an especially strong effect in cultures of honor. Individuals are more prepared to protect their reputation by resorting to violence. The same premise extends to societies that are group oriented as opposed to individualistic. Members of a particular group were more apt to anger and become aggressive when their group honor was threatened or offended. See Goldman and Coleman, "How Humiliation Fuels Intractable Conflict: The Effect of Emotional Roles on Recall and Reactions to Confictual Encounters", Patricia M. Rodriguez Mosquera, Antony S.R. Manstead, and Agneta H. Fischer, "The Role of Honor-Related Values in the Elicitation, Experience and Communication of Pride, Shame and Anger: Spain and the Netherlands Compared," Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 26, no. 7 (2000).
90 Ibid.: 158.
significance that beliefs about honor can have in determining whether or not individuals will react aggressively in the face of insult and offense. Groups that do not place a high value on defending group honor, status and reputation are likely to anger more slowly and react less aggressively to perceived offenses committed against their group. Those who are guided by norms that privilege honor concerns will be more sensitive to insults directed at their group and more aggressive in their responses to perceived humiliations. They will also be more likely to harbor grudges against those responsible for the injury.

Not all offenses matter. Humiliating offenses are defined as actions that are identity-threatening/devaluing to the ethnic group. While diaspora that privilege honor codes are more likely to respond more aggressively, in general, to perceived honor violations, they will not anger over every issue. For them, certain issues are more relevant than others.

Additionally, the tendency to react with anger to perceived humiliation is magnified by both the strength of group affiliation and the tendency to ruminate over an injury. Tight group affiliation and the propensity to ruminate may account for the heterogeneity of reactions within a diaspora group. The assumption is that individuals whose self-esteem is more closely tied to a particular group will internalize to a greater degree the values and norms of the group. The more significant group status concerns are for the individual, the more intense their anger should be in reaction to identity-threatening offenses.

91 Ibid.
Rumination also increases angry feelings.92 I define rumination as the propensity to think obsessively over something that has caused one pain in the past.93 We readily observe in society that some individuals are more prone to stewing over slights, obsessing over injuries and holding grudges against those they feel have done them wrong. They replay events over and over in their mind, elaborating the insult, focusing intently on the harm they have suffered and crafting strategies for revenge. This same tendency is observed in diaspora groups—or certain factions within the larger group—who become stuck in a historical time warp, seething over past humiliations and defeats and nurturing dreams of retribution and vengeance. Able to ruminate over these memories with others who share their indignation, their anger becomes more prominent and more justified.

Rumination has two parts—thinking about a traumatic event and mentally rehearsing acts of revenge. The result is a positive feedback loop that increases emotional intensity. Important work conducted by Collins and Bell confirms that “higher levels of aggression are exhibited by personality types who have the tendency to harbor thoughts and feelings of vengeance with the passage of time, when presented with a provoking situation.”94 They note that individuals who are low ruminators tend to forget previous insults more easily and are less likely to harbor feelings of revenge. This remained true even when their self-esteem was threatened and they were given an opportunity to retaliate.

These three variables, then, seem to account for the variation in response to humiliating experiences. First, a group’s core beliefs set out the obligation for members to defend collective honor and define those elements of honor that are sacred. The more mentally and emotionally connected an individual is to their group, the more they will reflect these core beliefs. Additionally, the more inclined a person is to ruminate on an injury, the more hostile they will become and the more likely they will act aggressively when provoked. Variation in these variables will cause variation in diaspora group response to historic humiliations.

4. How humiliation lasts—narratives of aggression

A key element to understanding how humiliation endures across time is the role that historical narratives play in the lives of diasporas seeking to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness. A highly competitive international environment continually challenges the value of maintaining one’s ethnic affiliation. With so many attractive alternatives, diaspora groups can easily come to feel as if what they have to offer is outdated and of little use. To counterbalance these modern pressures to assimilate, ethnic communities often tend to turn to stories of their past as a way to build and strengthen a sense of community. In many respects, lauding one’s history can be a healthy exercise that instills a sense of pride in one’s heritage and a deeper appreciation of one’s roots. It can also, however, become a means for creating an exaggerated and unrealistic sense of entitlement based on past events and injuries that have little to do with present-day realities. When such is the case, the emotional attachment that individuals and their groups nurture to their past becomes dominated by historical grievances and images of victimization that create a distorted picture of the ethnic community.
As has been suggested earlier, not all past defeats, losses or humiliations matter. All groups have tragedy in their history – events that have left them feeling helpless and dishonored. The experience of historical trauma is not sufficient, in and of itself, to explain modern political extremism in immigrant communities. Certain ordeals, however, gain greater currency than others. The actual adversity suffered is secondary. What is important is the meaning that these events are given, how this meaning is kept alive through narratives that are told about the event and how this interpretation is then used to justify the belligerency of the group. Such meaning tends to revolve around ideas of victimization that emphasize group humiliation and stress anger and vengeance as appropriate responses.

In this sense, history is not only about the triumphs of a group, but also about their defeats. Most groups have specific issues about which they are defensive and which make them lash out in unreasonable ways. The most potent of these have their roots in historical humiliations that are seen as the source of the group’s diminishment and which remain to be rectified. They are open wounds and unsettled accounts that stand in the way of the group regaining its self-respect and pride. They act as flashpoints to ignite a passionate response.

The Haitian community in the United States, for example, retains a heightened sensitivity to the perception that they are natural carriers of disease and infection. Labeled as such by their American occupiers during the U.S. colonial occupation of Haiti during the early 20th century, the stigma remains current. The Center of Disease

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95 This study does not address why certain traumas remain current with particular groups and not with others. While an important area of research, it is beyond the scope of this particular piece of work.
Control’s (CDC) infamous 4(H) theory about AIDS in 1985—namely that homosexuals, heroin addicts, hemophiliacs and Haitians were the most likely to have HIV—sparked widespread protests in the Haitian community over the assertion. Later in 1990 when Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a memo advising blood banks to stop drawing blood from Haitian donors because they were likely HIV carriers, the response from the Haitian community was overwhelming. In April 1990, Haitians from all over New York’s tri-state area came out in protest. As stated by one Haitian participant, “The dignity of Haitians everywhere was affronted. The ban angered and humiliated Haitians from all walks of life.” 96 The protest was labeled a day of pride and seen as a way for Haitians to vent their anger. In New York City alone the demonstrations were so large that the Brooklyn Bridge was closed. It is doubtful that such an outpouring of protest and anger would have resulted from other labeling. The particular association of Haitian people with disease and infection struck an unwelcome chord in the community’s self-perception and reminded them of a period of their history during which they were considered objects of contempt and derision. Haiti’s continued inability to present itself as a respected and admired state in the international order, especially with reference to its former oppressor, denied Haitians abroad a source of pride that could be used to overcome their past humiliation. As remarked by Isaiah Berlin, “[t]o be the object of contempt...is one of the most traumatic experiences that individuals or societies can suffer.” 97

Narratives are powerful tools for fostering collective identity. These stories of the past give meaning and purpose to one’s identity by promoting a specific collective

understanding of key events in history. More than being simple agreed upon accounts of history, however, narratives also translate relevant wisdoms of the past to the present. They, in a sense, represent the core beliefs of a society. This ability of narratives and their messages to endure across time and remain genuine is largely due to their consistency. For while narratives of national identity can be tinkered with to a certain extent by nationalist historians and ambitious politicians, the core beliefs embedded in them are somewhat rigid. Former enemies cannot be re-written as friends, nor can sacred territory matter one day and not the next. Such rigidity also makes these narratives resistant to new and contradictory information. “Incoming information is selectively received, encoded, and interpreted according to the schemata of the narrative,” writes Rotberg. “Doing so limits the extent to which received notions can be altered by new perceptions.” The appeal to national narratives by those intent on influencing collective opinion is testament to the widespread influence that such replicated thinking can have on community members. Rotberg writes that, narratives are motivational tools. Without the legitimacy conferred by collective memory, mobilizing followers would be impossible.” It makes sense that present-day nationalist ideas pull their potency from stories of the past that talk about historic wins, defeats, friends and enemies. Peter Gries argues this point in his discussion of modern Chinese nationalism. He contends that “Chinese national identity at the dawn of the 21st century cannot be understood apart

98 The concept of national narratives can help us overcome the tension between whether the past determines the present or the present determines the past. Both are obviously true. The challenge is to determine the extent to which the past influences present-day politics and how this process occurs.
99 Rotberg, ed., Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict 5.
100 Ibid. 4-5.
from evolving narratives of China’s national past.” He points to victimization and humiliation as the prominent story lines that endure. 

Victim narratives are not unique in the sense that they are found in many groups. Cuban-Americans are a prime example of an immigrant group that has largely defined itself in terms of past suffering. In spite of the community having established significant economic, political and cultural influence in South Florida and the larger United States, the attention of many first-generation Cuban-Americans is still dominated by their experience of trauma and loss following the coming to power of Fidel Castro in 1959. Unable to move past this painful episode, they keep alive their memory of suffering through an ideology of vengeance and retribution. While Fidel Castro remains in power, they wage a war against him from their new homes 90 miles north. Tightly organized and politically active, the Cuban-American community in Florida is credited with the somewhat nonsensical positions that Washington has adopted toward the island-state over these many years. Their philosophy: “[w]ronged people have a right, even a duty, to remember their sorrows,” continues to underline their identity and serves to reinforce their beliefs in their own victimization.

Equally, the Catholic Irish-American community is another example of how narratives of humiliation and trauma can add a radical flavor to political engagement. For a quarter century, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) attracted a core of followers in the United States. The US Irish diaspora was horrified by the British crackdown on the 

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102 Ibid.
Roman Catholic civil rights movement in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. The rise of the IRA to defend Catholic nationalists was seen as defiance of the arrogant British empire. They believed force was justified to remove British influence from Ireland.

Victim narratives effectively influence behavior in conflict environments because they successfully link the past to the present. The actors, their roles, and the story are part of a familiar script that ethnic community members recognize and hold as their own. The script gives them a established template on which to base their behavior when analogous situations arise. In anthropology, such a template is referred to as a cultural schema and is described by Sherry Ortner as an external “abstract model of deeds done by ancient heroes and ritual participants,” that has been internalized to a “personal program for understanding what is happening to one right now, and for acting upon it.”

Others, focused specifically on conflict narratives, have explained the function of narratives in similar terms: “Narratives are not only responses to political events, serving to provide a comprehensible explanatory cognitive scheme; they also actively affect the events by assigning them meaning and thus shaping the political process.” A society can have various schemas relating to different elements of their identity. These schemas are not always active. As Ortner points out, “there is a distance between actors’ selves and their cultural models, in the sense that not all of a culture’s repertoire of symbolic

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frames make sense to all actors at all times.” Cultural or cognitive schemas sit in the background and only inform behavior when they are activated.

Schemas are shortcuts—quick and easy cultural and historical references that can inform understanding and guide action in the present day. As a general rule in this study, I use the term ‘narrative’ to connote the concept of a cultural schema. An ethnic group has a number of narratives that make up a part of their understanding of who they are and their place in the world. Following Bruner, Bar-Tal and Salomon define collective narratives as “social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community’s collective experiences, embodied in its belief system and represent the collective’s symbolically constructed shared identity.” While an integral part of their self-understanding, these narratives do not always have much significance in a person’s everyday life. Only under certain conditions—when present day events recall past experience—are these narratives activated. During these times, the narrative can largely determine the attitudes and behavior of the ethnic community members. Roger Petersen usefully breaks the schema concept into five components: story, actors, roles, activation mechanism, and the reason why the narrative motivates specific action. His typology makes it easy to systematically dissect victim narratives to better understand how the memory of past humiliation can motivate behavior decades later. Following Petersen’s lead, I briefly outline these concepts below.

106 Ortner, "Patterns of History: Cultural Schemas in the Foundings of Sherpa Religious Institutions ", 89.
Stories are central to the narrative concept. As Petersen reminds us, people remember things that happened as a “causal sequence of events” rather than as “isolated data points.” Mark Schudson reinforces this idea when he says: “To pass on a version of the past, the past must be encapsulated into some cultural form, and generally this is a narrative, a story with a beginning, middle and end; with an original state of equilibrium, a disruption, and a resolution; with protagonist and obstacles in his or her way and efforts to overcome them.” Narratives are not only about events, they also indicate who are the main actors in the story, whether they are good, bad or neutral and how they can be expected to act. Petersen’s fourth variable—activation mechanism—is vital for understanding when a narrative will kick in as a ‘symbolic frame’. He explains that for a narrative to activate, “some type of matching mechanism must be at play.” Matching is a form of remembering that sees similarities between present circumstances and those past events that are the subject of the narrative. Finally, Petersen explains that “[u]nder the influence of a cultural schema, the individual feels compelled to accept the role and scripted actions created by the schema. The basic source of this motivation may involve rational calculations, but the adoption of behavior probably involves something more than straightforward calculation of benefits. Under the influence of cultural schemas, action is more likely motivated by emotions and norms.”

Past trauma can color behavior in the present. As Rotberg writes in the opening pages of *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict*, “History is the reservoir of

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109 Ibid, 135.
111 Petersen, "Memory and Cultural Schema: Linking Memory to Political Action," 135.
112 Ibid, 133.
resentment, the fount of blame." The focus becomes not on simply resolving the issue at hand. Interests are guided by events from the past which have left a vibrant legacy of injury, humiliation and anger. Such a legacy contaminates how ethnic community members view the present situation and the reactions they have to events that evoke these past traumas. Feelings of humiliation and the need to re-establish group esteem provide the lynchpin for understanding how destructive feelings about a group’s past can link with a current crisis and transform diaspora politics into extreme and uncompromising expressions of ethno-nationalism. Others have made similar observations. In particular, social psychology has moved in the direction of identifying defensive and aggressive attitudes as being largely rooted in episodes of collective humiliation. For diaspora groups these episodes remain central to an ethnic group’s understanding of its history and themselves.

Through such narratives, group identity incorporates tragedies suffered, destructive emotions associated with the traumas, and lessons learned. They remain a part of the group’s collective memory and are passed down through the generations. In socio-psychological literature, such events are called chosen traumas and are defined as “the collective mental representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic common losses, to feel helpless and victimized by another group, and to share a humiliating injury.” In the ethnic violence literature, chosen traumas are more

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113 Rotberg, ed., Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict.
115 Studies in psychology show that humiliation can lead directly to “anger, insult, and aggression.” This is especially true in the case of unacknowledged humiliation. See Scheff, Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War.
116 Volkan, Blind Trust. I develop a more detailed description of chosen traumas and how they operate in the next chapter.
commonly referred to as historical grievances. While acknowledged as part of a certain group’s collective self-understanding, historical grievances are generally dismissed as an unimportant explanation of ethnic violence. I do not argue that such past traumas are the causes of war, but I find that these episodes prime certain actors to adopt radical positions and make such positions highly immovable. This is especially true for groups that place a high premium on ethnic pride and imbue each generation not only with the burden of overcoming modern impediments but with the responsibility of rectifying historical injustices as well.

5. Both the strong and the weak can feel humiliated

Humiliation is not generic. Societies are diverse and are sensitive to different types of humiliation. What causes one nation to feel humiliated while another does not largely depends on the specific ideas that the group cultivates as the basis of its national identity and pride. As Saurette notes, humiliation is able to function predominantly because it attacks “the most prized self-perceptions and most valued bases of self-respect.” Seen as such, humiliation is not a function of group strength; both strong and weak nations can be humiliated. Moreover, a powerful nation can be humiliated by a weaker one while continuing to maintain its relative superior standing.

The United States’ apology to China following an aerial collision over the South China Sea between a Chinese fighter jet and an American surveillance plane is one such example. The crisis was portrayed by some U.S. political commentators as a clear humiliation of the United States. In spite of protests from the Pentagon, Chinese fighters

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118 Emphasis added. Ibid.
had become more aggressive toward American surveillance planes flying in international waters over the South China Sea. The speculation was that China was trying to challenge U.S. authority in that area. Tensions rose when, following the collision, the American pilot landed the plane on Chinese soil. The 24 Americans in the plane were taken hostage. China demanded a formal apology from the United States as a condition of their release. Commenting on the event, Robert Kagan and William Kristol wrote “the broader purpose of the Chinese demand was to inflict upon the United States a public international humiliation.” The Chinese government “was consciously and deliberately forcing the United States to lose face, and thereby to admit its weakness. He who makes another lose face is essentially declaring himself superior and the other inferior, not worthy of respect.” They add that “[i]t is essential that the Chinese be made to pay a price for their action.”

Whether or not the United States was humiliated by the encounter, as is claimed by Kagan and Kristol, is debatable. The example illustrates, however, that challenges to concepts of national identity—in this case the idea that American power could keep American’s safe—can lead to perceptions of humiliation, even in powerful nations.

6. Emotions that resemble humiliation—shame and resentment

The term humiliation is often used loosely by scholars. Most often, it is equated with shame. In this study I distinguish between these two affiliated emotions. Both shame and humiliation are based on an unfavorable comparison to other people or groups. A key difference between humiliation and shame is that one agrees with shame

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120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
and disagrees with humiliation. People tend to believe they deserve their shame while they do not believe they deserve their humiliation. Although humiliation can include feelings of shame, as discussed earlier, it is incorrect to treat them as the same.

Resentment is a second emotion that is often used in conjunction with humiliation. It is most commonly used to describe the emotional reaction of people to having been humiliated. Resentment is persistent ill will. It is often considered a milder form of anger. Both are negative emotions but resentment is like potential energy—simmering below the surface—while anger resembles kinetic energy—forceful and active. Others define resentment in slightly different ways. Petersen in his work on emotions and ethnic violence sees resentment tied directly to status. He says that “[r]esentment stems from the perception that one’s group is located in an unwarranted subordinate position on a status hierarchy.” Solomon uses a similar framework, placing resentment in the same category as anger and contempt, with the difference between the three being the object of the emotion. Resentment is directed towards higher-status individuals, anger is directed towards equal-status individuals and contempt is directed towards lower-status individuals.

While resentment is most definitely about status disparity, I use a slightly more expansive understanding. Resentment is unexpressed anger that is focused on an unresolved injury. “It arises from an experience of humiliation and it is the humiliation that feeds the ongoing resentment.” Resentment does not arise from an accidental injury but from something that was done purposefully. Resentment lends itself to

rumination. "Vivid and precise images of past wrongs structure interpretations of the present; they guide the fantasies of retaliation that dominate thoughts of the future. Targeted resentment carries a story of grievance."\(^{125}\) Resentment has a long shelf-life. It is easily transmitted from generation to generation and can become fixed in what Avishai Margalit has called "a self-perpetuating community of resenters".\(^{126}\)

II. How the Model Works

The model I propose is captured in the following diagram.

**Figure 2**

**MODEL FOR EMOTIONS AND EXTREME BEHAVIOR**

\(^{125}\) Ibid.: 90.

\(^{126}\) Quoted in Ibid.
The model depends on two interconnected processes: the original trauma and its embedding into diaspora identity and the translation of the trauma into harmful nationalist positions.

The independent variable is a triggering event that matches a past trauma. In case of ethnic violence, the catalyst is a crisis in the home country that threatens the large-group identity and standing of the ethnic community in some fundamentally relevant way. The event can be grave and dramatic, such as a political coup or an outbreak of violence, or more subtle, such as a shift in a power balance that reallocates authority among groups at a considerable loss to one’s own community. What is most important is that the event is viewed as diminishing or degrading the ethnic group in some way that is reminiscent of past trauma about which diaspora members harbor a lingering resentment. There is a matching between present and past. It therefore causes a strong initial reaction. The need for a crisis is imperative because, as pointed out by Scheff, “[e]ven the most violent people on earth are not violent most of the time. Their violence occurs in brief, acute crisis...most of the time even they hurt no one. It only happens when an incident occurs that intensifies their feelings of being humiliated, disrespected, or dishonored to the point that it threatens the coherence of the self, or when they find themselves in a specific situation from which they feel they cannot withdraw non-violently except by ‘losing face’ to a catastrophic degree.”

The same reasoning can be applied to aggressive impulses in people. A triggering event becomes more powerful if the prior behavior of the potential antagonist was violent and degrading toward the group in the past. Horowitz explains that “people with a history of doing harm

\[\text{127 Scheff and Retzinger, Emotions and Violence: Shame and Range in Destructive Conflicts.}\]
are more likely than others to be judged as intending to do harm and are therefore more likely than others to trigger aggressive responses.\textsuperscript{128}

The dependent variable in the model is sustained, destructive nationalism. I identify emotions as the mechanisms through which upsetting events translate into fierce and immovable political stances. Important to the model are the set of core beliefs that programme a particular the particular emotional response in diaspora members. These beliefs focus on honor and group unity, create an obligation to defend group esteem, and lay out what is required to regain ethnic honor.

A necessary condition for the model to function is that the unresolved humiliation must have been incorporated into the current understanding of the group’s past and present. This emotion will be expressed in the narratives about group pride, victimization, resentment and status-recovery. The unreconciled feelings of humiliation are the open wounds, mentioned earlier, that remain flashpoints of anger for diaspora community members. Without this condition, the humiliation-anger cycle that I posit as central to how extreme stances take hold will not occur.

As my model relies heavily on how emotions affect behavior, I explain this process in much more detail below—first generally and with specific reference to the two primary emotions of this study: anger and humiliation. I then propose a set of propositions that I test later in the study.

\textsuperscript{128} Donald L. Horowitz, \textit{The Deadly Ethnic Riot} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 159.
A. How Emotions Work

It is unsurprising that the horrors of war provoke emotion. With the unprecedented access that media and technology now provides to battle and suffering, people who may be connected to those at the frontlines—through blood, friendship, or simply a shared identity—can endure a wide range of feelings such as anger, anxiety, fear and outrage. Such feeling creates motivation to do something, which is especially strong when the group in question is not just suffering but seen to be under direct attack.

Such a reaction is to be expected. Emotions, especially negative ones, are unrivaled in their ability both to focus attention around issues that have great personal significance and to generate the impetus to act. These two elements are, in fact, the key features of emotions and are commonly referred to as cognition and action tendency.\textsuperscript{129} Cognition refers to the assessment of the personal meaning of a situation or event upon which emotion is determined—one’s beliefs. The question of assessment is critical. The assessment determines the emotional relevance, both in term of degree and nature, of the event to the individual. “Events are appraised as emotionally relevant when they appear to favor or harm the individual’s concerns: his or her major goals, motives or sensitivities”.\textsuperscript{130} In the case of diasporas and ethnic violence, the cognition is the

\textsuperscript{129} Specific emotions are commonly defined and differentiated by five characteristics: arousal, expression, feeling, cognitive antecedent, and action tendency. The latter two, cognitive antecedent and action tendency, are most relevant here. It should be noted, however, that psychology has four main theoretical perspectives on emotion. This study largely follows the cognitive perspective which is explained above. The evolutionary perspective says that emotions are simply evolved impulses with important survival functions which have been selected for because they address certain problems humans face as a species. As such, we should see the same emotions, more or less, in all humans. In the Jamesian tradition, inspired by William James, emotions are considered to be more or less automatic responses to events in the environment for the purpose of survival. The body responds first and an individual’s experience of these changes constitutes what is called an emotion. Finally, the social-constructivist perspective says that emotions are cultural products that owe their meaning to learned social rules.

assessment that a significant loss to the group has taken place or that the group is under severe threat in some way that is reminiscent of a past tragedy. Reference to earlier events as means for gauging current meaning is not uncommon. As pointed out by Horowitz, “[a]nalogy is a rich source of decision-making material in such events.”

The second component of emotion, action tendency, refers to the impulse to act. All emotions are, in essence, impulses to act. Specific emotions, however, generate the urge to act in certain ways. Fear, for example, is defined by the cognition of a situation of danger and the action tendency of fight or flight. Anger combines the cognition that an object or agent has committed a negative action against oneself and the action tendency is to punish or even attack the blameworthy object or agent.

Breaking down emotion into these components enables us to observe how emotions affect behavior. The process is not random. Individual emotions, in fact, can be tracked along specific trajectories and have visible results. In the case of ethnic violence, the arousing event is usually a crisis in the home country that threatens the security of the ethnic community in a way that is reminiscent of a past humiliating tragedy. For diaspora leaders, whose identity resides at the group level, a negative change in the status or security of their group has personal significance. The appraisal

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132 Horowitz also makes the point that “powerful analogies are perilous because they foster premature cognitive closure, obscuring distinctions between the present case and the previous one.” Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 550.
134 David Laitin points out that ideas of identity change with the “level of aggregation”. People will refine their groups depending on whether they are physically located within their community, region, country, or living abroad. As people move outward, their affiliation moves to the wider group. For example, Ecuadorians living in Ecuador make distinctions between whether they are from the highlands or the coast,
of the situation will be negative, sparking a negative emotional reaction. This is true even though, living abroad, diaspora leaders do not directly experience any damaging consequences of such changes. Certain émigré leaders may in fact be more motivated to strongly react against assessed threats to their ethnic community as a way to assert their membership in that group—a membership which they hold dear and which needs to be constantly renewed in a foreign environment that offers many alternatives.

During such emotionally-distressing times, research shows that individuals tend to act in similar ways. Chiefly, collective identity becomes noticeably more significant. Group members rally behind leaders and programmes that positively assert this identity. The September 11th attacks on the United States, for example, served to arouse strong feelings of patriotism in Americans across the country. People felt distinctly more

Quito or Guayaquil. Living abroad, such distinctions become less relevant and people are more likely to label themselves simply as Ecuadorian. David D. Laitin, *Identity Formation: The Russian Speaking Populations in the near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 11.

I stress the negative emotions largely for two reasons. First, aggressive or extreme behavior is not the hallmark of positive, constructive emotions, and it is this behavior that I am trying to explain. Second, studies in psychology show that negative and positive emotions do not operate in precisely the same way. Negative emotions narrow the thoughts and behavior of an individual while positive emotion, it is argued, broadens an individual’s outlook. It is the former process rather than the latter that is the focus of this study. For a concise summary of the differences between positive and negative emotions, see Barabara L. Fredrickson, "Cultivating Positive Emotions to Optimize Health and Well-Being,” *Prevention and Treatment* 3 (2000).

The socio-psychological literature refers to this process as regression. Usually applied to describe an individual’s reaction to an upsetting event, the term is now also being applied to describe large-group behavior. Regression in an individual is a mental defense. It involves a return to some of the wishes, fears, and coping mechanisms from an earlier stage of their life. Scholars now agree that large-groups, such as ethnic, religious or national, can also be regressed. Large-group regression reflects the efforts of a group and its leader to maintain, protect, modify, or repair their shared group identity. Regression occurs after a society has faced a massive trauma involving drastic losses of life, property, or prestige, and/or humiliation by another group. As described by Vamik Volkan, one of the earlier adopters of the concept of large-group regression, “If we picture large-group identity as an imaginary “tent” over all the thousands or millions of group members in normal times and non-regressed conditions, the people living under the tent are not especially preoccupied with the canvas that covers them, nor are they intensely involved in supporting the pole (leader) that keeps the tent aloft. In their everyday lives, they are much more focused on the subgroups under the tent with which they are affiliated—of which the family, the clan, and even professional associations are the most important. When the large group regresses, group members turn their attention to the stability of the tent (group identity).” Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).
American because of the attacks. In the aftermath of the violence, American flags were seen in greater numbers as people openly and proudly asserted their national affiliation. Additionally, in-group-out-group boundaries become more pronounced. Most notably this occurs between the ethnic group and the enemy, but sharp divisions can also occur between the ethnic diaspora and its host society. Criticism of the group is not tolerated. Detractors, whether internal and external, are branded as traitors and enemies. Norms of acceptable behavior are altered. Action otherwise considered excessive is accepted to defend the collective cause. Past humiliations and triumphs are reactivated. Past suffering and humiliation remind the group of their vulnerability and tap into norms of solidarity. Glories, however, tell a story of pride and exceptionalism and provide the emotional rationale for remaining an active defender of the group.137

Such reactions are not surprising. Emotionally-charged issues dominate a person’s perception of events, at the expense of other more equivocal ideas, affecting what is considered vital.138 Under the influence of emotion, usual thinking patterns are disrupted.139 Individuals change their priorities and elevate the existing concern to a new level of importance. Most often, this new vital interest gains an inordinate amount of attention, making behavior appear single-minded and oftentimes irrational. Negative emotions, such as anger, are particularly effective at accomplishing this as “[a]nger…implies the validity of the person’s own beliefs.”140

137 Ibid.
138 Frijda, Manstead, and Bern, eds., Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts.
139 Goleman, Emotional Intelligence.
Clore and Gasper use the term “attention funnel” to explain the process by which emotions capture attention and disrupt these normal patterns of thinking. “An attention funnel is a positive feedback loop that may be created when the attentional focus produced by intense feelings reduces the active goal space, which increases the apparent importance of goal-relevant events, which in turn intensifies feelings.”

Emotional arousal naturally focuses attention on the issue or event that provoked the feeling in the first place. This is because emotions provide a signal that something of import to the individual has occurred. The more intense the emotional experience, the more significant the event is perceived to be, and the more worthy of attention it is. This process is magnified when extended across a collective rather than limited to an individual.

When responses are collectively experienced and socially shared, their appropriateness is further legitimized. As Frijda and Mesquita point out: “One hundred Mexicans can’t be wrong, in particular when one is Mexican oneself.” Research also seems to indicate that not only do emotions focus attention but judgments formed from an emotional experience are “quicker and stronger” than those resulting from reason.

Political propaganda is a benign example of how emotion directs attention to issues that would otherwise not receive substantial notice relative to other interests. Issues or events are portrayed in emotional terms in order to make them seem more

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142 Horowitz in his work on deadly riots acknowledges that “collective sentiment magnifies and distorts danger”. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 555.


important.\textsuperscript{145} As research has shown, “data presented in an emotionally compelling way may be given greater consideration and more weight than data that is statistically more valid, but emotionally neutral.”\textsuperscript{146} Propaganda does not need to be inflammatory to be effective. Even good-natured political competitors make use of emotion to draw attention to those issues, or parts of issues, which they would like elevated with the public. In the United States politicians have recently portrayed Social Security as being in crisis. Whether it is or not, such a tactic plays upon feelings of anxiety and fear, making Social Security reform a more important issue than it would be otherwise. Other issues do not become irrelevant; they simply become less urgent than those connected to the emotional appeal. This reaction is magnified in the case of ethnic violence where the collective well-being of one’s core group is at risk. In these types of highly-charged situations, it is not difficult to understand how emotion can become a powerful and dangerous tool for shaping opinion.\textsuperscript{147}

By narrowing attention around a specific sub-set of interests, emotions can have three results. First and most fundamentally, emotions heighten the saliency of a particular concern. This can occur in three different ways. First, emotions cause people to shuffle around an already active set of interests, and reallocate attention to certain priorities over others. The interests of the individual do not change. Rather, they are re-prioritized so that individuals focus more intently on certain interests than they would

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\item \textsuperscript{145} Clore and Gasper, "Feeling Is Believing: Some Affective Influences on Belief."
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otherwise.\textsuperscript{148} As Fiske and Taylor point out, "emotions...divert people from pursuing one goal and point them toward pursuing another goal that has meanwhile increased in importance."\textsuperscript{149} Petersen makes a similar point by saying that, "emotions alert the individual to heighten the pursuit of one basic desire above others."\textsuperscript{150}

Emotions not only shift emphasis between priorities but can, in more extreme cases, over-emphasize one desire to the exclusion of others. In some instances, this leads to an exclusive focus on one goal. A primary function of emotions is to "reset the processing agenda so that one attends to urgent things first and/or is able to decide among competing motivations."\textsuperscript{151} Emotionally-charged events, it is asserted, take precedence over other situations because the experience of an emotion signals that something of concern is taking place. The more intense the emotional experience, the greater significance for the event, and the more attention it will receive.\textsuperscript{152} This phenomenon may account for why extreme behavior often seems to be nothing more than an obsession with one goal; competing priorities and preferences are crowded out of consideration. Once the intensity of the emotion has subsided, however, other goals come back into view and a re-balancing of preferences often results.\textsuperscript{153}

Additionally, emotions can introduce new interests or activate latent ones.

Situations of conflict introduce a set of concerns that may not have been previously

\textsuperscript{148} "Propaganda is most effective when it taps into the audience's predispositions or when it can link a new idea to attitudes that the audience already holds." Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," 76. See also Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).
\textsuperscript{150} Petersen, Understanding Ethnic Violence 3.
\textsuperscript{151} Clore and Gasper, "Feeling Is Believing: Some Affective Influences on Belief," 34. See also Petersen, Understanding Ethnic Violence.
\textsuperscript{152} Clore and Gasper, "Feeling Is Believing: Some Affective Influences on Belief."
relevant, focusing attention on these urgent matters. Similar to the way that emotions narrow attention to a small set of interests, emotions may encourage new options to be considered or may re-inject life into formerly obsolete desires. Fear, for example, can elevate security to an overt interest. Anger can re-ignite old grievances and cause outdated ideas of revenge to resurface.

Second, emotions distort information collection. Emotions lead individuals to seek information that is in line with their pre-existing beliefs. Incoming information is selectively received, encoded and interpreted according to the schemata of the narrative or belief. By encouraging people to interpret information in ways that support what they want to be true, or to discount information that refutes their beliefs and feelings, emotions give greater importance to certain interpretations of events that may or may not be accurate. Indeed, inculcated by their narrative, group members anticipate the worst from their adversary and react accordingly. In turn, such a reaction instigates further rounds of hostility and animosity, and so on. Peace-oriented gestures are thus often rejected as political maneuvers rather than genuine efforts. Overall, strong emotions close minds to competing beliefs and stories.

Finally, emotions spur people to act. Studies in psychology have long linked emotion to motivation: "To the extent that feelings are arousing, they command attention, and to the extent that they are...unpleasant, they provide motivation."154 Kaufman observes that "[p]eople are more likely to participate in a protest rally or write to a politician on an issue that angers them or otherwise stirs them emotionally—an issue

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that stirs a 'hot cognition'—than on an issue that only involves material interests. 155

The impulse to act is encouraged by the fact that emotions lower one's assessment of risk and "distort estimates of probability and credibility." 156 Action that, in the absence of emotion, would appear foolhardy or dangerous becomes more acceptable when assessed through an emotional lens.

Emotions not only propel people to act, but specific emotions guide individual behavior toward identifiable outcomes. In other words, emotions do not lead to random behavior. Research has shown that the experience of specific emotions will result in certain behavioral tendencies. Anger, for example, often results in antagonistic behavior such as assault or opposition. This is because anger corresponds to the appraisal of a negative event, caused by another person, involving unfairness. 157 Anxiety, in contrast, leads more often to inaction and avoidance. While the appraisal of the situation is still negative, it does not include ideas of unfairness or agent blameworthiness. 158

B. From Emotional Upset to Political Extremism

In very specific ways, therefore, emotions determine behavior. With laser-like ability they focus attention on a small set of issues, highlight information that supports pre-existing beliefs and the initial emotions themselves, provide the impetus to effectively overcome barriers to action, and dictate how people will respond. However, even initially intense emotions are often short-lived and bow quickly to more reasonable determinants of behavior. An exception is the gut-wrenching nationalism of the type

156 Horowitz, The Deadly Ethnic Riot, 557.
158 Ibid.
exhibited by leaders in the diaspora. Such an occurrence is an example of a long-lasting emotional process that enables the persistence of hostile and aggressive feelings—feelings that serve as the underlying basis for ferocious and uncompromising political positions. Two emotions dominate this phenomenon: humiliation and anger. Together these emotions create a tinderbox that results in the perpetuation of extreme and obsessive behavior. Anger provides the valence and intensity while humiliation provides longevity, ensuring that people remain angry.

1. **Partners in Crime: Humiliation and Anger**

As explained earlier, humiliation results from the perception that one has been degraded in some way by another person. Humiliation is inherently a social emotion. It is a function of the social ties that people have with others and the natural hierarchies and comparisons that result from living in a socially-organized world. It is difficult to feel humiliated without comparison. The concern for how one appears to others and the need for outside approval determines a good portion of human decision-making, large and small. From deciding what kind of car to drive, to choosing what clothes to wear, to conforming to accepted societal norms, the opinion of others and the need to fit in guides a good portion of human behavior.

Normal feelings of humiliation are usually acknowledged and quickly diffused with little negative effect. A person who trips and falls when entering a job interview, for example, may blush and feel awkward at his clumsiness. This momentary feeling of

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159 I don’t claim that these are the only emotions. However, more so than other emotions, such as fear, I argue that these two are largely responsible for the level of intensity and militancy of such responses.


161 Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, eds., *Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts.*
shame at having been so inelegant when trying to make a good impression is, more often than not, put aside with little lasting effect. Research has shown, however, that humiliation can remain unresolved and have a more lasting effect. What develops is a self-perpetuating emotional-loop that leads to destructive behavior. At times the loop is recursive; that is, the emotion of humiliation feeds back on itself so that the individual feels ashamed of the original emotion and one’s self-regard is further decreased. The action tendency in such instances is to withdraw or become depressed as the individual assumes personal responsibility for not measuring up. At other times feelings of humiliation are outwardly reflected. The common course is to link up with accompanying emotions, the most frequent of these being anger, creating a more pernicious dynamic. The two emotions create a cycle of mutual reinforcement. The action tendency in this case is to become hostile and aggressive and, more importantly, to remain so. As is commonly observed, it is often easier when feeling degraded by an experience to place responsibility on something or someone else rather than admit to the feeling.

Anger is an exceptionally intense emotion and commonly dominates diaspora response to ethnic violence. Anger is the perception of unfairly and deliberately being wronged by someone else. The tendency is to punish the offender and rectify the unjust situation. Anger heightens desire for punishment against a specific actor. Under the influence of anger, individuals become ‘intuitive prosecutors’; they specify a perpetrator

and then seek retribution.\textsuperscript{163} Intentionality is central to the understanding of anger. The wrong committed is seen as deliberate rather than an outcome of uncontrollable events, such as a natural disaster, where the ensuing suffering is not the result of a premeditated attempt to damage or destroy. In contrast, with intentional injury, specific actors can be held directly accountable for the harm that is caused. The impulse is to punish the perpetrators and seek justice.

Under the influence of anger, individuals are more prone to “perceive new events and objects in ways that are consistent with the original cognitive appraisal dimensions of the emotion.”\textsuperscript{164} As such, angry subjects are prone to stereotyping. Equally important, anger is particularly good at causing individuals to lower risk estimates. Individuals under the influence of anger are more willing to engage in risky behavior, i.e. more likely to act. Anger is generally past-focused. Individuals are more often angry at things that have already happened. Most anger displays are not pure anger but alloyed with other emotions, such as disgust, contempt, or feelings of rejection or humiliation. People learn what they should be angry at.

2. Emotional Loops: Cycles of Humiliation-Anger

Unreconciled humiliation can set the stage for the dangerous dynamic of unfettered nationalism to emerge. Together with anger it supports the persistence of extreme nationalistic stances. Bitterness over historical wrongs suffered by the ethnic group, kept alive over years through the retelling of narratives of victimization and injustice, primes diaspora nationalists to seek retribution when the opportunity arises.


\textsuperscript{164} Petersen, \textit{Understanding Ethnic Violence}. 

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While the anger expressed by committed diaspora fanatics often stands out as a dominant driver of extreme forms of nationalism, such ferocity cannot be accounted for by this emotion alone. Humiliation is the hidden emotion behind zealous expressions of anger and aggression.

In her seminal study of shame and humiliation, psychotherapist Helen Lewis uncovered a mechanism linking shame to anger and violence. Later work by Sheff and Retzinger led to a theory of shame/anger loops which lead to aggression and violence. What Lewis, Scheff and Retzinger all found was that when shame is not resolved and discharged it refuses to subside and becomes pathological. Their work found that rather than admitting and dealing with feelings of degradation, individuals often become angry as a form of denial of these emotions and engage in aggressive behavior. Tracing back from anger or angry escalation, their studies and others have invariably found an incident of denied humiliation.

The idea of emotional loops provides new meaning to the familiar idea in psychology that pathological emotions are reactive rather than primary. Most theories of psychotherapy have long suggested that anger is usually not the primary emotion in conflict but is a reaction to some other emotion. This insight is only slowly being incorporated into understanding the underlying basis for extreme behavior.

Put together, these ideas present a convincing picture of why certain diaspora leaders are committed, at all cost, to support their kin during ethnic violence.

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165 Using hundreds of transcripts of psychotherapy sessions, Lewis applied the Gottschalk-Glaser scale to the words in each transcript for emotion. Although her study yielded other emotions such as grief and fear, the only pattern she found to repeat itself in all sessions was shame followed by anger and aggression.
beliefs are critical to this process and provide the link between anger-humiliation and aggressive nationalism. Certain patterns of beliefs are activated by specific sensitivities and shape the automatic interpretation of the situation. Understanding this process leads to greater understanding of how ethnic conflict can precipitate feelings of humiliation in addition to anger. A group’s experience of humiliation as part of their response to an upsetting event depends on the set of core beliefs that define their large group identity. Beliefs are the key to understanding how a group will interpret a crisis event and the response that will ensue. If such beliefs include ideas of unjust collective degradation and victimization—incidents that diaspora members blame for tarnishing their modern-day group identity and diminishing their standing in international society—then diaspora leaders are more likely to carry entrenched feelings of humiliation that are triggered when faced with contemporary events that menace their group and threaten to replicate these past failures. We should expect their response to be ferocious both as a way to rectify past weakness and avoid future humiliation. Although the outward expressions of these beliefs vary over time in intensity, content, and form, their substance forms an integral part of community identity and bias. The durability of certain types of core beliefs provides the lynchpin for understanding how destructive feelings about a group’s past can link with a current crisis and transform diaspora politics into extreme and uncompromising expressions of ethno-nationalism. What makes such behavior so difficult to deal with is that it is not vulnerable to the same combination of incentives and constraints that defines rational decision-making.

166 Beck, Prisoners of Hate: The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility and Violence.
C. Predictions

The model I propose begins with a precipitating event, which triggers a specific emotional mechanism that in turns heightens and maintains the desire for retribution, which leads to positions of persistent extreme nationalism and aggressive action. Given the central hypothesis of this study that extreme and obdurate nationalism in the diaspora is the result of a specific emotional mechanism, I propose the following set of propositions. These propositions do not refer to the tough nationalistic positions that diaspora leaders may initially adopt when they observe their ethnic group being brutalized. We can reasonably expect that diaspora leaders will rally behind their ethnic group on these occasions. What is less understood is why certain members of a group adopt unbending nationalistic positions that persist over time. Three testable propositions are presented below.

Proposition 1: Diaspora nationalists who harbor a sense of collective humiliation will maintain a clear memory of being victimized and an active list of grievances against those they blame for their suffering.

1a: Diaspora nationalists who harbor a sense of collective humiliation will cultivate a set of well-developed narratives that assert group victimization.

1b: Events in the home country that match a past experience of humiliation will reactivate narratives of the historical suffering.

1c: Diaspora nationalists who adhere to a victim narrative will tend to frame current hostilities in terms of historical grievances.

1d: Diaspora nationalists that adhere to a victim narrative will tend to absorb what fits the content of the narrative and dismiss information that opposes it.
Proposition 2: The priorities of diaspora nationalists who harbor a sense of collective humiliation will be emotionally consistent rather than strategically calculated.

2a: Political goals will prioritize undoing past harm and reasserting group standing vis-à-vis the enemy.

2b: Rational compromises that do not allow for re-establishing group esteem will be rejected.

2c: Dissenting voices that challenge all-or-nothing solutions will be labeled as unpatriotic.

Proposition 3: Diaspora nationalists who harbor a sense of collective humiliation will rationalize extreme action to redress past wrongs. They will seek vengeance against those who harmed them in the past as a way to restore group esteem.

Proposition 4: Members of groups whose core beliefs set out the obligation for members to defend collective honor, will react more aggressively to perceived or real injuries than individuals whose groups do not emphasize beliefs of honor.

4a: The tighter the affiliation that an individual has to his group, the more aggressive his reaction will be when provoked.

4b: The more inclined a person is to ruminate on an injury, the more hostile they will become and the more likely they will act aggressively when provoked.

Based on these propositions, we should expect to observe the following behavior. When current ethnic trouble is reminiscent of defeat and loss—be it because of a similar enemy, parallel issues, or analogous fighting strategies—we should expect to see
diaspora leaders begin to refer back with greater frequency to this history as a way to explain the current strife and to justify their alarm. Particularly, we should expect diaspora members to revive stories of injury, humiliation and deception. In these scenarios, the ethnic group will always be portrayed as unquestionably innocent while their foes will be demonized and delegitimized. Additionally we should also observe diaspora rhetoric becoming more strident as leaders toughen their stances around issues which resemble past crises over which their group has struggled unsuccessfully and which they claim have left them feeling unjustly injured and victimized. Using arguments of victimization, we should expect diaspora members to justify all-out measures to achieve their goals. Extreme measures used by their compatriots in the conduct of hostilities will be excused as necessary while similar tactics employed by their enemy will be fiercely condemned. Over the course of the conflict, we should observe leaders hardening their positions around issues they perceive to challenge their group standing and modifying stances when confronted with issues that they see as less central to their status.

It is worth mentioning that the predicted behavior, as laid out above, can be exacerbated by other factors that are not included in the model. Group solidarity and ethnic identification, for example, is often strengthened by outside opposition. Separate from the actual enemy with which the ethnie is in confrontation, criticism from influential outside actors of the ethnic group’s aims, goals and tactics can exacerbate the destructive emotional process already taking place. Rather than acting as a restraining influence, disapproval and opposition can actually intensify group pathologies by creating an impression of isolation and reinforcing an ‘us-them’ mentality. In such instances,
members of an ethnic diaspora are likely to defend more tenaciously their political positions—committing themselves even more to their end-goals and making compromise even less-likely.

III. From Extreme Competition to Extreme Nationalism—an alternative explanation

As an alternative to my emotion-based explanation, I propose a path to extreme behavior that is based on rational calculation. Specifically, intense competition between diaspora elites for control of their communities can create a situation of one-upmanship. To seem more legitimate and ethnically authentic than their competitors, diaspora leaders embrace highly nationalistic stances as a way to assert their ethnic bona fides. The unfortunate result is that, in doing so, elites then find themselves forced to act on their rhetoric, or risk compromising the very leadership positions they fought to preserve.

Diaspora elites are not simply loyal members of their ethnic community but political actors in their own right with their own personal agendas and priorities. Competition for power and influence within a diaspora community can result in elites championing radical solutions as a way to assert their ethnic legitimacy. I hypothesize that this strategy is more likely to occur in an environment where the diaspora community is highly fragmented into a number of competing factions or distinct organizations.167

The idea of functional identity is not new. Ethnic identification while living abroad is often explained in such terms. Accordingly, diaspora leaders maintain their ethnic affiliation because doing so allows them to more easily achieve practical

individual and collective goals. The decision is a calculation of benefit and cost. Much of the early scholarship on immigration in the United States, in fact, largely stressed the useful role of ethnic identity in helping new and old migrants assimilate into their adopted country, organize for employment rights, and lobby for better housing.

In extreme cases elites are portrayed in purely strategic terms, predominantly interested in protecting their positions of influence and power. Crisis provides a exceptional opportunity for individuals to gain status because of their position within their ethnic group. Nationalist causes can revitalize interests and membership in flagging organizations, increase fundraising potential, re-establish and strengthen ties between diaspora leaders and home country officials, and raise the political profile of representatives of ethnic groups in their resident countries. Such success, however, can create greater competition within the diaspora community for control of resources. In communities where competition between organizations and leaders is already fractious, the result is often a radicalization of diaspora politics as leaders vie with one another to capture the hearts and minds of their communities and assert their ethnic credentials.

As beneficial as such a strategy may be to the short-term goals of diaspora leaders, intense diaspora competition is limited by the environment in which they live. Immigrant groups are concerned with maintaining the goodwill of their host country. Not

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168 This explanation is a compilation of two different but related views of nationalism—the instrumentalist approach and the constructivist explanation. Both focus on identity affiliation as being something that is chosen out of many different competing identity choices that people have. Sheffer, Diaspora Politics, at Home Abroad.

169 Rogowski, "Causes and Variants of Nationalism: A Rationalist Account." See also Brown, ed., The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict.
only must diaspora groups have the liberty to freely compete amongst themselves, but they must also be able to challenge and engage with the official policies of their host governments. In open societies, such as the United States, this often results in active lobbying efforts and investment in significant public relations campaigns to alter the policy position of the state. In situations where host governments do not share a similar political leaning, however, or where the state has an interest in curtailing the activities of non-state actors, diaspora behavior will be more accommodating to the stance of the state. This variable acts to significantly limit the strength and direction of diaspora nationalism.

While extreme nationalism in any given diaspora community is most likely the combination of both emotional and rational mechanisms, only an emotional explanation provides the reasoning for how such positions remain in place even when groups and leaders are pressured to moderate. Elites acting on strategic interests will weigh the benefits and costs to their own goals of adopting radical positions in an environment that does not look favorably on such stances. This calculation will be different for every group and every leader. However, it does exist. The same calculation does not have salience for leaders who are operating primarily from emotion. Such leaders will not moderate and often end up hurting themselves and their causes because they refuse to do so.
IV. Summary

The idea that humans are rational actors whose decisions are clouded by emotions is not new. Emotions often shape what agendas people pursue. The stronger the emotion, the more influence it is likely to exert. War of any form will always elicit passionate opinions about the justness of the cause and the conduct of the different parties involved. Ethnic-based violence heightens such passions, as the compatriots of besieged groups witness from abroad the terrible suffering inflicted on their home-country communities. In such circumstances, it is difficult to conceive that ethnic kin, nationalists or otherwise, would remain emotionally immune to such events. This would seem especially true when external events not only superficially shock community members abroad, but reinforce already existing and deeply held beliefs of the society.

Certain ideas such as a strong conviction in past unjust belittlement of the ethnic group, the belief in the bellicosity of the enemy, and, even more importantly, the memory of victimization at the hands of this particular enemy can have an especially powerful

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170 This is best expressed by Anthony Smith who writes about nationalism that: “If we are to grasp the deep hold and wide appeal of nationalism, we cannot proceed from purely cognitive and interest-based models. We need to understand nationalism as a type of collective conduct, based on the collective will of a moral community and shared emotions of a putatively ancestral community.” Smith, Nationalism, 82.
171 This study does not consider in any depth how beliefs are formed and why some achieve extraordinary staying power and influence. I accept this as given and acknowledge that each community has its own collection of symbols and myths that represent certain “truths” about the collectivity and their experience in the world. History is read through the lens of these “truths” which also help to interpret the present. Epic poems for the Serbs, for example, served to keep alive many of “the great themes of Serbia’s pre-Ottoman history. The stories about the Serbian defeat at the battle of Kosovo Polje of 1389 and other events from the medical period became the cornerstone of modern Serbia’s national mythology…Through these poems and songs, modern Serbia claimed a vital continuity with a romanticized past as a means of underscoring its claims to disputed territories.” Misha Glenny, The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999 (New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2000), p.11
affective influence. When coupled with strong notions of unity and patriotism, the resulting mixture can be a particularly confrontational form of nationalism.

This chapter looks at a very specific phenomenon—extreme and lasting expressions of ethno-nationalism in diaspora populations—and asks what accounts for such responses. The model I propose focuses largely on emotions and how they are able to trigger certain types of behavior and push people to act in ways that are often destructive and seemingly nonsensical.

Anger and unreconciled humiliation are central to the process I propose. Anger is the belief that one has been intentionally wronged or harmed by someone else. When angry, the tendency is to lash out to punish the offending person. Anger is a short-lived emotion that tends to arrive with great power but dissipates fairly quickly. I find, however that anger remains in force when it is coupled with entrenched feelings of humiliation. Humiliation is defined as the feeling of being unjustly diminished or debased. Unlike anger, feelings of humiliation are not necessarily discharged and can linger over a long period of time feeding feelings of anger. As research in social psychology has shown, expressions of anger and aggression are often fueled by deep-rooted feelings of humiliation.

In the case of ethnic strife, I find that humiliation-based anger is rooted in past episodes of trauma and dishonor that remain significant to certain members of the diaspora community. Only in the face of a specific triggering event do these emotions

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173 For a good discussion on the war-causing tendencies of different types of nationalism see Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War."
reactivate and become a vehicle for the expression of zealous ethno-nationalism. Victim narratives are crucial to this process. When events of past trauma and loss are turned into narratives of victimization and blame, the emotions of humiliation and anger are allowed to fester over a long period of time. Through these emotions, past ordeals color attitudes in the present and contaminate how émigrés interpret and respond to new crises. The explosive level of aggression witnessed with some diaspora members can be said to be as much an emotional reaction to past ordeals as it is a response to current conflict events. Emotions, then, are critical for understanding how destructive feelings about a group’s past can link with a current crisis to significantly affect modern-day diaspora politics.
CHAPTER 3: CROATIA

I. Introduction

The Croatian case is notable for the overwhelming support given by the diaspora to the homeland project. The commitment by this community to the cause of independence was uncompromising. Portrayed as an existential struggle for the heart and soul of their country, the diaspora endorsed an ‘any-means-necessary’ strategy to achieve their goal. An analysis of the internal dialogue that took place within the community and their conversations with the outside world highlights the exceptionally emotive and deeply historic nature of this fight. The idea of a free and self-governing homeland was not simply a pipe-dream fostered by a few ultra-nationalists, or a set of ethnic leaders intent on increasing their popularity. It was a profound desire held by the majority of Croatians both at home and abroad. Memories of a time when Croatia was its own master remained vivid in the minds of people, the majority of which had no real experience with such a state of affairs. Yet to hear them speak, argue and fight for their country’s freedom would have one believe that decades of history had occurred only yesterday.

This chapter analyzes the Croatian response. I consider diaspora positions on both the goals and conduct of war. I focus predominantly on a number of decision-points with regard to the Homeland War.

The battle for the homeland challenged the diaspora to define both what they were willing to fight for and the sacrifices they were prepared to make. The idea of an
independent Croatia was a romantic and enticing notion to many in the diaspora. Their support was unequivocal. This over-the-top enthusiasm, however, did not cleanly translate into outrageous and irrational demands. The choices faced by US Croats broke down into the following rough categories: 1) do nothing; 2) take what was possible and trade land for peace with Serbia; 3) fight for an independent Croatian within the boundaries of the current Republic; 4) expand Croatian control to territories outside the current Republic to include former Croatian lands in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The US population largely supported option 3, with a smaller subset of the diaspora fiercely advocating for option 4. On the surface, it would appear that the majority of the US diaspora was highly rational in their determination of their demands. They neither asked for too little, nor did they push for taking too much. By adhering to the boundaries of the Republic, they defined a territory that was both historically relevant to Croatians, as well as one that would be accepted by the international community. They, in effect, seemed very reasonable.

However, Croatia was appallingly unprepared for war. Unlike their Slovenian neighbors, Zagreb had done little in the security arena to prepare for independence. Early in the fighting, US Croats acknowledged the dire state-of-readiness of Croatian forces and the overwhelming superiority of the Serb-backed Yugoslav Army. Under these conditions, the option of trading a portion of Croatian land for peace would have seemed a prudent and rational course to explore (option 2). Within the diaspora community, members briefly considered advocating to minimize Croatia’s claim to land so as to shorten the war with Serbia and contain the damage of fighting. The outcome would have still been an independent Croatia, albeit one that was somewhat truncated in size.
Such a moderate tone could have potentially benefited diaspora leaders in the U.S. by establishing them as the reasonable voice in a conflict defined by extremist claims. Yet discussions in the diaspora of this alternative were quickly shut down and the option taken off the table. As I will elaborate later in this chapter, the reasons given had little to do with a positive assessment of Croatia’s chances in the fight—in fact diaspora leaders anticipated significant damage and loss of life. The rationale was dominated by a host of non-rational arguments that included, but were not limited to, the need to ‘stand up’ to Serbia and avoid being seen as cowards.

Additionally, the attitude of the US diaspora toward the Croatian Serbian population defies rational explanation. Without a doubt, the Tudjman government’s xenophobic brand of nationalism frightened and antagonized the Serbian inhabitants of the Krajina area. Fed on stories of Croatian brutality toward the Serbian population during World War II, they understandably reacted with fear when Zagreb reinstated many of the discriminatory policies and symbols of that era. What was notable about the US diaspora position is the encouragement that they extended to these chauvinistic moves. Diaspora Croats roughly faced the following set of choices: 1) do nothing and ignore the Serbian minority; 2) positively engage with the Krajina Serb leadership; 3) actively marginalize and discriminate against Croatian Serbs. With full support of the Croatian public abroad, the Krajina Serbs were belittled, debased and terrorized (option 3). Given the already high tensions between Croatia and Serbia and the extremist rhetoric emanating from the Milosevic government, it is surprising that the diaspora did not look for ways to ease tensions with this pivotal community. But rather than co-opt them as respected partners or engage them in productive dialogue—which would have been the
more rational course—the diaspora freely went along with the policy that threatened and
intimidated the Serbian minority. This policy was not only gratuitously antagonistic, it
was also politically tone deaf—providing a ready-make justification for Serbian military
intervention at a time when Croatia could ill afford it. I argue that attitude was
inconsistent with Croatia’s need to move quickly and cleanly toward independence. It
was a deliberate and needless policy intended to hurt the Serbs. Sadly, many in the
diaspora, with their well-formed ideas of Serbian perfidy, saw such policies as
appropriate. This same attitude was replicated, but to a lesser extent, in the diaspora
support for the brutal, often punishing, methods used by Croatian troops and irregulars as
part of their fighting strategy in Croatia and later in Bosnia. Recognized as tarnishing
Croatia’s image and diminishing its support internationally, American Croats
nevertheless continued to justify these punishing and vengeful actions as necessary for
their cause.

Finally, I look at the position of the US Bosnia and Herzegovina Croats, who
largely pushed to expand the war outside of Croatia to include annexing Croatian-
inhabited territories of BiH (option 4). This is a more classic example of what we would
expect to see from political decision-making driven by emotions. While it was framed,
by some, as a vital extension of the homeland fight, others labeled it an unnecessary and
harmful military adventure. I compare the dynamic of this smaller group to the majority
opinion.

The rest of the chapter is divided into five additional parts. Section B gives
background into the Croatian diaspora in the United States. I sketch a brief history of the
U.S. community and outline some of the more active organizations. The third section focuses explicitly on the content and meaning of the major narratives that define the U.S. Croatian diaspora, as taken from the periodicals that were studied. The fourth section talks about the specific decision points. Section five analyzes how well my emotion-based theory of extremism holds up against the rational actor model I posit as an alternative. I finish with some concluding remarks.

II. Background

A. Croatian American Immigration

Estimates of the size of the Croatian population in the United States vary wildly. The 2000 US census approximates the number at being 374,241. The Croatian-American community, however, asserts that the size is closer to 2.5 million, one-half the current population of Croatia itself. The exact figure of Croatian immigration is difficult to measure because Croatia's lack of political autonomy prompted U.S. immigration and census officials to label Croatians as either Slovenes or, later, Yugoslavians.

Significant Croatian emigration to the United States began in the late 1880s and peaked in the first decade of the twentieth century prior to the First World War. Made up largely of peasants and laborers, this first wave of immigrants came for economic reasons. They settled mostly in the industrial cities of Chicago, Pittsburgh and Cleveland, although other strongholds also developed in California, New York and Washington DC. In his work, *Early Croatian Immigration to America After 1945*, George Prpić notes that approximately 3,000 Croatian organizations were founded between 1880 and 1940 in the United States. These organizations played an important

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role in maintaining Croatian cultural identity and served as a vehicle for Croatians living abroad to continue to remain connected to their home country. They were largely apolitical and focused predominantly on keeping Croatian culture and ethnicity alive among those living abroad and helping new immigrants adjust to life in America. To this end, they provided a number of very useful services: financial aid for those who needed it, a post office box for itinerant workers to send and receive mail, a graveyard plot, various kinds of insurance, and most importantly, a networking base for newcomers and old-timers to exchange business, home life and social affairs information. As pointed out by Anita Brkanic, in relation to other immigrant groups Croatian Americans were late arrivals to the United States. As such, they were a double minority—comprising a very small group in the larger American society but also fairly small in relation to other immigrant nationalities that had arrived in earlier periods. Speaking very little English and obliged to accept low-wage jobs in an unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environment, these early Croatian immigrants gravitated to organizations that provided them with a more secure sense of self and a familiar identity.

A second wave of immigrants, smaller than the first, began to arrive after World War II. Unlike their earlier counterparts, this group consisted of intellectuals and political refugees who were fleeing communist Yugoslavia. Once in the United States, they expanded the already established Croatian areas and reinvigorated the ties of these communities to the homeland. More politically oriented than earlier Croatian migrants, this second wave of immigrants was staunchly anti-communist. They were also more

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175 Ibid.
politically active, having come from the schizophrenia that was Yugoslavia during World War II. Briefly independent under the Nazi-allied Ustaše regime, they then saw their freedom and status stripped as Marshall Josip Tito and his Partisans fought their way into power. The brutal treatment they received at the hands of Tito left them with little choice but to flee their country. With Europe physically and economically devastated, the United States, Argentina, Canada, and Australia became the destinations of choice.

The period following World War II saw the last large immigration into the United States by Croatians. Later generations leaving Croatia in the 1960s and after would gravitate to Europe, most notable Germany. Unlike earlier immigrants these migrants saw their departure from Croatia in different terms. Leaving largely for economic reasons, they would view their time abroad as a temporary state, even though many of those who left would not return. Rather than attempt to wholly assimilate into the countries in which they resided, they would maintain strong links to Croatia and affiliate tightly with their ethnic roots.

B. Croatian American Organizations

There are a number of Croatian groups in the US that operate on a national scale. The largest and most political is the National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA), seated in Washington, DC, which serves as an umbrella organization linking organizations and individuals through a shared national agenda. The NFCA’s priority is to enhance the Croatian image in the United States and promote programmes that strengthen and support those activities that are most important to the Croatian American
community. This is largely achieved through active lobbying of Congress, the White House and other departments of government. By mobilizing its member organizations and individual activists, the NFCA claims it can produce results on any issue significant to the Croatian American community.

Working side by side with the NFCA, the Croatian American Association (CAA) is a separate lobbying organization of the Croatian community in the United States. Founded in 1990, the CAA has assumed primary responsibility for representing Croatian-American interests in Washington D.C. Unlike some of the older Croatian organizations in the United States who act as service providers to the US Croatian community, the CAA directs its efforts toward influencing US policy toward Croatia. To this end, the CAA works with Congress and the White House to educate the US government in matters relating to Croatia. It serves as a source of information for policy makers and crafts its own policy positions and opinions on how the United States should be engaged with Croatia.

The Croatian Fraternal Union (CFU) and the Croatian Catholic Union (CCU) are two of the oldest Croatian organization in the United States. Both trace their origin back to the late 19th century. In 2005, the CFU merged with the Croatian Catholic Union which at that time was the second largest Croatian group. The CFU functions through its various local chapters. The configuration reflects the Union’s focus on meeting the specific needs of the Croatian American community and providing services and material

177 http://www.croatianworld.net/NFCA/index.htm
support to Croats in the United States.\textsuperscript{178} The CFU was not established as a political organization. This is not to suggest that the CFU has never taken positions with regard to events taking place back in Croatia. Its size and respected place in the Croatian community has made it impossible for the CFU to remain completely disengaged. Over the period of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, it has come out with definite political opinions on the events taking place back home and has used its national reach to help organize the Croatian community in the United States around these issues. During WWII, for example, the CFU came out strongly against the Nazi-allied Croatian government and pledged its commitment to the United States and the cause for which it was fighting. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the CFU was instrumental in raising funds and humanitarian supplies to be sent to Croatia during its Homeland War.\textsuperscript{179}

The Croatian Academy of America (CAA) is one of the largest and most well-known of the Croatian groups in the United States. The CAA’s primary purpose is to educate members and the general public about Croatia. It is responsible for publishing the Journal of Croatian Studies, which tackles a wide range of topics from Croatian and Yugoslav literature and culture, including dissident Croatian writers and historical tracts on specific themes. The CAA believes that education is the best approach to fulfilling

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{178} "Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association," (2003).
\textsuperscript{179} The Catholic Croatian Union shared a similar chapter structure as that of the CFU. Its focus was also on meeting the needs of the Croatian community in the United States rather than looking to influence events back home. Similar to the CFU, the CCU was non-political except around certain issues. A review of its newspaper Nasa Nada post-WWII shows that its coverage focused predominantly activities taking place in the different lodges, such as soccer tournaments, fundraisers, women’s meetings, etc. Politics did not play a large part. Exceptions were around events like the Croatian Spring in the 1970s where a number of Croatian patriots were jailed for expressing nationalist sentiments. The paper also gave almost full coverage to the Homeland War and did not hesitate to exhort people in the United States to actively work for Croatian independence in any way they could.
\end{footnotesize}
Croatian self-determination and that this goal is best served by debates that reveal the strength of the Croatian claim for that right.

In addition to the number of nationally-oriented organizations, there are many small independent Croatian societies around the United States based on region, such as the Midwest Croats. There are also many independent cultural associations and parishes through which Croatians in the United States come together. Additionally, there are a number of groups that have formed around the regions of Croatia from where they originated. Individuals in the United States were not only Croatian but a Croat from Zagreb or Dalmatia. Chain migration contributed to the creation of settlements of Croats coming from the same regions of Croatia. They were connected through similar occupations, their social status, the Catholic religion and other bonds that were sometimes much stronger than formal organization or their national identity.

Organizations in the United States reflect, to a certain extent, this regionalism. The most notable of these regional affiliations is the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With a strong focus on the particular region of Western Herzegovina, this organization is more politically-oriented than some of the more national groups. Its agenda extends beyond Croatian independence to include the joining of Western Herzegovina to Croatia.

C. Croatian American Political Activity

To a greater or lesser extent, Croatian Americans have always engaged with the homeland in one form or another. With the onset of hostilities in the Balkans in the early 1990s, however, Croatian-Americans across the entire United States became strongly interested in events taking place back home. What was unusual about the revival of
hrvatsko (literally, Croatian-ness) during this time was that the majority of those involved in the social and political organizations were second, third and fourth generation Croats—most of whom had never seen their homeland. As news reports began to circulate of the beating Croatia was taking at the hands of the Yugoslavian Republican Army (JNA), interest turned into activism. Croatian-Americans of all sorts re-found their Croatian-ness and looked to do something to help the homeland. As stressed by a leader of the Croatian community at the time, the initial response from the US-Croatian community was “overwhelming but largely grassroots based and uncoordinated.” The unifying aspect was the desire to help Croatia win its independence. With this in mind, Croatian-Americans turned to their parishes, cultural groups and the more established fraternal organizations to channel their efforts. Such was the outpouring of support that the Croatian Federalist Union, the oldest and largest Croatian organization in the United States, was able itself to collect US $24 million worth of aid between 1991 and 1998. But it wasn’t enough. A younger generation of Croatians born and raised in the United States and savvy about the ways and means of US politics sought to bolster this initial goodwill support with a more targeted effort. They understood the need to expand their efforts beyond the humanitarian realm and politically win Washington as an ally in their struggle. To this end, a number of young professional Croatians dedicated their energies to launching robust political and public relations campaigns to influence public opinion in the United States and policy in Washington. The most prominent of these were the Croatian Association of America (CAA), the National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA), and the Croatian Anti-Calumny Project.

181 "Interview with Father Ljubo Krasic, Director, Croatian Ethnic Institute," (Chicago: March 2005).
182 Carter, "The Geopolitics of Diaspora."
Many came out and demonstrated in support of Croatian independence. The call for Croats to come out and show their support for Croatian independence saw more than 12,000 people convene on Washington on 26 July 1991. This represented the first substantial demonstration of collective action on the part of Croatian Americans for a single cause. Leaders of the Croatian American community were quick to take advantage of the movement. They understood, from the start, the need for professional and targeted interaction with Washington to promote the cause of independence. Immediately, they contracted with the public relations firm Rudder Finn. The intent was to develop a strategy for influencing “members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate as well as with officials of the U.S. government including the State Department, the National Security Council and other relevant agencies and departments of the U.S. government as well as with American and international news media.” As the war continued, the remit of the Ruder Finn increased to include “lobbying in relation to diplomatic recognition, sanctions, and embargoes, as well as briefings for officials of the first Bush administration and preparation of special background material, press releases, both reactive and proactive articles and letters to the editors to appear in major newspapers, briefings for journalists, columnists, and commentators.” Additionally, with the Croatian Association of American (CAA), events such as ‘Croatian Days on the Hill’ were instituted to bring leaders of the Croatian American community in direct contact with influential decision-makers in Washington. Such gatherings continue today. Without a doubt, the Croatian American were fairly successful in getting their voice.

185 Ibid.
heard. In his study of the Croatian American diaspora, Ragazzi cites the ‘Direct Aid to Democracies Act’ which provided direct assistance to the Yugoslav Republics, as well as the Nickels Amendment, which prohibited bilateral aid to Yugoslavia as examples of successful lobbying initiatives carried out by the Croatian community.\(^{186}\)

The Croatian diaspora is perhaps most notorious for their financial support of the Croatian war effort during the early years of the fighting. It is no secret that Croatia was militarily unprepared to confront the better equipped and better financed JNA. Tudjman had diligently courted Croatians abroad, it is alleged, to ensure their monetary backing. While it is difficult to determine the degree to which Croatian Americans were financially implicated in Croatia’s War for Independence, it is clear that they played a non-trivial role.\(^{187}\) Ragazzi finds that diaspora funds “were transferred through two public bank accounts opened by the Republic of Croatia - one in Austria, another one in Switzerland - under the name of the Croatian National Fund. It is estimated that $7 to 10 million (USD) were gathered solely from Chicago and $25-30 million was raised in the U.S. as a whole.”\(^{188}\)

Finally, in addition to their political and military activities, Croatian Americans were active on the humanitarian front. As mentioned above, the most significant effort was carried out by the Croatian Fraternal Union. However, money and in-kind donations

\(^{186}\) Francesco Ragazzi, "The Invention of the Croatian Diaspora: Unpacking the Politics Of "Diaspora" During the War in Yugoslavia," (Fairfax, VA: Center for Global Studies, George Mason University, November 2009).


\(^{188}\) Ragazzi, "The Invention of the Croatian Diaspora: Unpacking the Politics Of "Diaspora" During the War in Yugoslavia."
were also collected through many of the Croatian parishes that served as the centers of Croatian life in the United States.

While a few organizations stand out, the Croatian community was notable for the number of groups, formal and informal, that were taking action on behalf of Croatia. It would be generous, therefore, to claim that the Croatian community acted in full coordination. However disorganized they were in their activities, however, Croatian Americans were unified in their purpose. They all sought to support Croatia’s fight for independence. After the initial exuberance of participation began to wear off, however, leaders of the Croatian community were able to better assess their position and role. It was at this point that greater coordination began to emerge around a more cohesive and professional agenda.

III. Croatian Narratives of National Identity

Leaders of the Croatia diaspora in the United States claim that their communities are forward looking rather than historically oriented. The narratives that remain vibrant, however, tell a different story. In this section I lay out the identity narratives that appeared prominent with the US Croatian diaspora.

The main identity narratives can be roughly divided into four groups, all which overlap to a certain extent: historical statehood, narratives of Bosnia and Herzegovina victim narratives, and secondary narratives of Croatian pride. The historical statehood narrative is the bedrock of Croatian pride and identity—the belief in a thousand-year legacy of independence during which Croatia and Croatians flourished. Versions of the

189 “Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association.”
statehood narratives are remarkably consistent. A major point of variance, however, is the importance of certain portions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the integrity and completeness of the modern Croatian state, with some versions touting its significance and others not. In contrast to the statehood narrative, Croatian victim narratives largely speak to group humiliation. While encompassing a wide set of grievances, both large and small, the common element among the victim narratives is Croatia’s condition of statelessness—which to many Croatians represents the ultimate form of debasement.

While humiliated about their lack of statehood, Croatians nevertheless maintain a healthy sense of ethnic pride. The secondary set of narratives that continually appear within the Croatian community are testament to their high self-esteem. These accounts are uniquely about the distinctiveness of the Croatian people. They encompass how Croats are different from their Balkan neighbors, their close affiliation with Western Europe, and their essential peace-loving nature. The Croatian self-portrait is thus painted in largely positive terms.

Many in the Croatian diaspora turned to a familiar set of explanations to understand the conflict taking place in the early 1990s. The accounts borrowed heavily from the set of victim narratives that remained so prominent with the US community. The willingness of the Croatian population to rely exclusively on a particular understanding of their past to interpret this modern-day conflict is testament to the remarkable hold these beliefs have on the community.
A. Historical Statehood Narrative

The primary Croatian identity narrative paints a story of a people whose uniqueness comes from being tied to a centuries-old legacy of an independent state. While members of the Croatian community abroad are quick to point to the numerous traits that make their culture superior or to laud the many heroic deeds committed by Croatians throughout history, it is territory that remains at the heart of Croatian identity. The historical statehood narrative, therefore, is the centerpiece of Croatian collective self-understanding and remains common to all Croatians. It is this dominant narrative on which Croatian pride largely rests. As expressed numerous times in various forms, "the Croats have never renounced their aspirations toward national freedom and independence and their desire for political independence from Belgrade in their own state of Croatia." Stated even more directly, "for centuries the Croatian people dreamed about living in freedom, being independent, in a democracy...But the Croatian people never lost sight of the dream. Now within reach no one will prevent us from attaining our burning desire. We will suffer, be homeless, naked and violated. We will even die...but we will be free."

Croatians proudly claim that they can trace a continual line of political independence from the time of King Tomislav in 924 to the formation of the Kingdom of

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Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918: 

"It was in the VI and VII centuries that the Croats arrived in the lands they still possess as an organized people, and until this date they have managed to retain all their provinces without losing one square mile nor mixing with the neighboring people in spite of being surrounded by Romans, Germans, and Hungarians." 

Unlike other ethnic groups, whose claim to nationhood is based on common ancestry, most Croatian historians do not try to argue this point for the Croatian nation. They admit, in fact, to the difficulty of establishing such an ethnic antecedent. Rather, they assert that it is only with the advent of a Croatian state that it is possible to speak about Croats with any clarity. Many of the symbols used by the contemporary Croatian state, in fact, trace their heritage back to the medieval kingdom. The checkered-board coat of arms, for example, is widely thought to have been created in the tenth century. Similarly, the Kuna was also developed as a form of currency during this period. It reappeared as the Croatian currency in the 1990s when the Yugoslav Dinar was abandoned. 

The importance of an unbroken line of statehood that has existed for a millennium, then, is of paramount importance: "Croatia is one of the oldest European 

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193 Croatia became a unified kingdom in 924 when Tomislav assumed the title of King of Croatia and Dalmatia. His claim was recognized by the Pope and Croatia began a period of just under 200 years of rule by Croatian kings. The extent of Tomislav's Croatian state is not fully known. The most ambitious claim suggest that the original Croatian state included most of modern Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the coastline of modern Montenegro. A more modest assessment says that the Croatia did not extend as far south as Dubrovnik and neither Montenegro nor Istria were included. Aside from the general agreement that under Tomislav northern Croatia was united with coastal Dalmatia, there exists little consensus on the original parameters of the Croatian state. For a more thorough discussion of Croatian boarders see Bellamy, The Formation of Croatian National Identity.


196 The emphasis placed on Croatia's unbroken line of statehood by diaspora leaders and members interviewed for this study in their explanation of Croatian history was ubiquitous. More than any other issue they wanted to make sure that I understood the significance of Croatian independence for them and their community. Similarly, in his work with the Croatian population in Australia, Bellamy notes the same emphasis. See Ibid.
nations; its first king being crowned in 924. The Croatians enjoyed one of the first parliaments in Europe.\textsuperscript{197}

The magnitude of the statehood narrative for Croatian identity is illustrated by Croatia’s 1990 constitution. The preamble of the constitution is exclusively dedicated to asserting historical political sovereignty as the basis for Croatia’s modern-day rights to independence. Most notably, the preamble makes a point to address specific episodes in history where Croatian political autonomy is open to challenge. These accounts, so oddly out-of-place in a Constitution, capture the essence of Croatian beliefs about their history, independence and identity. The Hungarian-Croatian union in 1102, for example, is explained as a cooperative agreement under which Croatia, while ruled by the Hungarian monarchy, maintained its independence and political autonomy: “In their struggle against the Venetians and later against the Turks they formed personal alliance with Hungary in 1102 and in 1527 with the Austrian Hapsburgs, which lasted until the end of the First World War.”\textsuperscript{198} Croatia’s participation in the South Slav project at the end of WWI, in contrast, is described as a first-rate example of politically chicanery by the Serbs, who tricked the Croatians into joining the union. Furthermore, it is claimed that the union was illegal, and therefore cannot really be seen as an abrogation of Croatian independence as it was not given official backing of the Croatian parliament.\textsuperscript{199}

In addition to explaining such blips in Croatian history, the preamble also defends the means used by Croatian patriots to try to reestablish an independent Croatian state. The most notable defense is of the Ustaše who, allied with Nazi Germany, took control of

\textsuperscript{198} “Croatia .”, 1.
Croatia for a short period in the early 1940s. While not directly condoning the actions of the Ustaše, support for the Ustaše by the Croatian people is explained as a last-ditch effort to achieve statehood. As written by one Croatian contributor, “The Ustashes were relentless in their struggle against Yugoslavia (Greater Serbia). They were also undaunted in their revolutionary activities for the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia.” In other words, while the majority of Croatians did not support their tactics, the Ustaše were the only ones fighting for Croatian independence. For this reason, they are not condemned.

The prominence given to the statehood narrative by Croatians may begin to explain the overwhelming support given throughout the 20th century by members of the diaspora to Croatia’s various bids to reassert its autonomy. It may also account for the extreme defensiveness of Croatians when this claim is disputed, or when the methods used to try to achieve this end are challenged as ethically suspect.

B. Croatian Victim Narratives

Victim narratives not only keep alive a set of grievances but also create a claim of entitlement on the part of those who feel injured. Croatians maintain a vivid memory of the many wrongs that have been committed against them. Their true grievances however—the ones that seem to have gotten under the collective Croatian skin—all touch on, in one way or another, the theme of statehood, or in this case the loss thereof. The chief villains are remarkably consistent—the Serbs. Croatians seem desperate to believe in the answer of statehood, equating independence with prominence and lack of independence with decline. They assert that Croatians were tricked out of their country,

hoodwinked by clever Serbs intent on regional domination. Once under Serbian control, Croatian wealth and resources were diverted to bolster the Serbian state at the expense of Croatian priorities. “That which is produced in Croatia should remain in Croatia,” was and often repeated opinion. Yugoslavia was described as a “system of centralized subjugation, disguised as a voluntary agreement.” The suggestion that Croatia willingly ceded its autonomy is vehemently denied. “Croatia has never in her entire history agreed to form a Union with Serbia or any of the other nations in Yugoslavia.” To admit to such a claim would be an affront to the history of the Croatian people. “The Croat” it is claimed, “clings stubbornly to freedom which has been transmitted to him by his ancestors for so many centuries.”

Instead, a series of stories have developed that allow Croats to point the finger elsewhere. Croatia’s statehood was not ceded, but in fact stolen. The “Croatian people, without being consulted, against their own will, and by brute force, were compelled to enter into an artificial state structure labeled ‘Yugoslavia’” Through treachery, force and lies, Croatia’s enemies deftly maneuvered to take control of Croatia’s territory and wealth and in the process subjugate a trusting and innocent population. “Croatian history, even from its very beginning, presents a fresh, clear picture of just and honorable achievement, but its enemies have muddied and darkened the limpid stream of that history.” In most cases, the enemy is Serbia. This victim-centered, black-and-white

203 Lawrence R. Godtfredsen, "Corrections/Misconceptions," Naša Nada, 22.
205 Ibid.
account of history dominates diaspora reading of the past. Other versions were not widely accepted.

Croatia’s merger at the end of the First World War with Serbia and Slovenia marks the start of Croatian decline. Croats claim that they were unwilling to join in the Serbian-constructed Yugoslav project. Croatian historians argue that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was, in fact, an illegitimate union. “The People of Croatia...never had an opportunity to vote for or against a union called Yugoslavia.”

“The decision was taken by Croatian elites, a high proportion of which were actually Serbs.” These Serbs masquerading as Croat elites pushed for the Kingdom as a way for Serbia to gain control over the wealthier parts of Croatia and to take control of its strategic ports. Croats argue that “[w]hen Serbia became an independent state in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, it faced a geopolitical dilemma. A land-locked country, its borders were practically surrounded by its old enemy, the Ottoman Empire...This contributed to the development in Serbia of a ‘manifest destiny’ ideology with the goal to expand its borders to assure direct access to ports on the Adriatic and Aegean.” Through an intense propaganda campaign the naïve Croatian people were convinced that they would have a significant amount of autonomy and could flourish under such a scheme. Tragically, this did not turn out to be the case. They were completely blind to the expansionist schemes of Serbia, who “always regarded this multinational state as Greater

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\footnote{Nicholas Grego, "Like the Baltics," \textit{Naša Nada}, August 15, 1991, 6.}
\footnote{Bellamy, \textit{The Formation of Croatian National Identity} 46.}
\footnote{Bilandzic et al., \textit{Croatia between War and Independence} 24.}
\end{footnotes}
Serbia. As explained in detail by former President of the NFCA John Kraljic, “Serbia’s expansion prior to the First World War was...inspired by the ideology of Vuk Karadzic, who called for the liberation and unity of all Serbs into one state.”

Diaspora nationalists claim that proof positive of Serbia’s deception during this period lies in Croatia’s treatment at the hands of the Serbians and King Aleksander. Its economy was heavily taxed by Belgrade. Croatians claim that they unfairly paid 686 million Dinars more in tax than Serbia did despite Serbia having a population more than double Croatia’s. More bluntly, in 1929 King Aleksander dissolved the parliament and decreed that he would rule the kingdom directly. All non-Yugoslav political parties were banned, their leaders imprisoned, and the name of the kingdom changed to ‘The Kingdom of Yugoslavia’. The constituent entities—Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Serbia—were divided into nine regions which bore the names of the rivers. In one of the ultimate forms of humiliation, the name Croatia was removed from official use for the first time since it was established in the Medieval Triune Kingdom. To rub salt in the wounds, Croatia and Dalmatia were split into two entities. Diaspora nationalists are fond of pointing out that such was the appalling state of affairs that even Albert Einstein felt the need to speak out in defense of Croatia: “all countries are duty bound to shield the small, peaceful and civilized nation of Croatia.” They are also quick to lament the fact that by becoming a part of the new Yugoslav state in 1918, Croatia broke the continuity of its own statehood, which it had had for more than one thousand years and became, in effect, an economic vassal for Serbian expansion.

211 Grego, "Like the Baltics," 6.
212 Kraljic, "Belgrade's Strategic Designs on Croatia," 3.
214 Quoted in Ibid. 50.
Croatians view post-Second World War Yugoslavia under Tito with even more despair. "Yugoslavia is a symbol of slavery to all Croats, all fundamental rights are denied them and moreover the whole nation is systematically submitted to a well thought-out plan of genocide," was how one Croatian American described it. As explained by other members of the diaspora community, and as captured in a number of publications, the formation of the Yugoslav state post-WWII was yet another devious ploy enacted by Serbia to economically exploit Croatia for the purpose of its Greater Serbia project. Serbia, in effect, used Yugoslav institutions, military power and economic resources to run the Federation in ways that maintained Serbian predominance, protected Serbian interests and promoted Serbian political and economic values. Its goal was to keep "Croatia weak and profit from its subjugation." Serbia controlled all the important institutions in Yugoslavia: "The Serbs controlled the courts, central bank, schools, police and the army." They also held a majority of government jobs: "11% Serb minority held more than 60% police jobs and 17% executive and political positions." The result was a slow deterioration of Croatia into a shadow of its true potential: "If you examine our historical past, I am sure that you will be able to conclude that we Croats have done so much to advance the cause of Slavism and Yugoslavism, which has brought us nothing more than oppression and misery."

A popular belief within the Croatian diaspora is that if Croatia had been able to operate as an independent entity after the Second World War, the country would have

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“rivaled the states of Western Europe in terms of wealth, progress and importance.”

Instead, Croatians feel the sharp sting of having been “left behind” their Western neighbors. Their lack of progress is bitterly viewed as a direct result of the Serb-controlled Yugoslavian experiment. It was through this interpretive lens that much of Croatia’s history in the latter half of the twentieth century was viewed and lamented. The more the rest of the world came to know Yugoslavia and the less they recognized a separate Croatia, the deeper the wound was felt: “many still don’t know who Croatians are, let alone care.” To an extraordinary degree, the feelings engendered by the perceived humiliation of Croatia at the hands of Serbia gained expression in the Homeland War where history and the present became intimately intertwined.

The natural conclusion from a Croatian reading of modern history is that Croatia lives under the perpetual threat of the age-old “Greater Serbia Project” whose goals are to unite all Serbians into one territory and “establish [Serbia] as the premier power in southeastern Europe.” To accomplish this, Serbia needs to conquer large amounts of territory and is willing to do this at all costs, even genocide. Diaspora nationalists continue to point to a 1902 paper entitled, It’s You or Us published by Nikola Stojadinović, a militant Serbian lawyer, as hard proof of this reprehensible plan. In it, the author claims that the only accommodation possible for the Serbian and Croatian

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222 Skrtic, "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Sword.", 14.
223 Zlatko Batistich et al., Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (New York: Private Compilation, 2002) 51.
224 Ibid. 94.
225 Bilandzic et al., Croatia between War and Independence.
nations is for these two sides to fight until one side is completely exterminated. The understanding is that Serbia does not intend to lose.

Given such views, it is not difficult to understand how the fight for Croatian independence in the early 1990s against a Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army was easily framed as a struggle for survival. During high-tension periods, the Manichean us-them, right-wrong, good-bad types of divisions tend to become more pronounced. Historical ideas of victimization become more prominent and are used to validate current feelings of vulnerability. As expressed by one author, “if the Serbian forces and Yugoslav Army succeed in seizing Croatian territory and holding on to it by forming a Greater Serbia, this will become an ethnic and political nightmare.” As explained by another diaspora nationalist, “Serbs are genocidal fanatics who are constantly trying to exterminate the Croats in order to build their super-state.”

The Croatian storyline suggests a finely-tuned sense of victimization:

“Throughout history there is no example of a nation that has suffered so much, has had as many victims, and has at the same time been paradoxically labeled as the villain.” Grievances that have remained germane in the diaspora carry with them an undertone of humiliation. “Croats have been oppressed for too long and their cry for freedom was not only stifled but think of the many lives which have been sacrificed and the vast numbers driven from their homeland into exile because there was no room for them when

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226 Ibid.
227 Batistich et al., Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
228 Interview, Chicago, October 2006.
229 Quoted in Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars, 28.
they spoke the truth and sought freedom and justice!"²³⁰ Croatians don’t merely discuss the injuries they have suffered. Their stories all center around the potential of becoming irrelevant. Diaspora Croats, most especially, were highly conscious of the dilution of Croatian identity the longer Croatia remained a part of Yugoslavia. “Please, do not call me a Yugoslav,” was one entreaty. “All it does is remind me of the persecution and slavery of my nation, of the extermination and butchery the Communist dictatorship is practicing over my countrymen. So please call me by my own name: A CROATIAN.”²³¹

Overshadowed by its more powerful Serbian neighbor, Croatian identity became less significant and less recognized in the larger world. This evolution was noted with worry and remarked upon with concern. “We were so oppressed in Croatia...we couldn’t even say we were Croatian but had to say we were Yugoslavian.”²³² Rather than admit that Croatia had made bad choices in joining with Serbia and others to form Yugoslavia, Croatians have embraced a story that highlights strong Croatian resistance to the idea of any union. Furthermore, Croatians emphasize the unscrupulousness of their partnering countries, above all the Serbs. “We follow their [Croatians] struggles with neighboring territories, whose aggressive leaders were always anxious to deprive Croatia of its autonomy.”²³³ By underscoring the inherent amoral and ruthless behavior of their Serbian neighbors, the Croatian story becomes one of exploitation and heroism.

“Throughout the centuries the Croat Nation has defended itself against every invasion, and the blood of martyrs and heroes of faith, justice, and liberty will ensure finally the

Failure to thrive as an ethnicty and a nation, then, finds easy explanation in the litany of wrongs that have been committed against the Croatian people. “Unfortunately the Croat territory was annexed and forcibly included in an artificial creation—Yugoslavia.” “Croatians are persecuted by Serbian fanatics—who are exploiting their membership in the Communist party in order to annihilate as many Croatians as possible and thus create a Serbian majority in Yugoslavia.” These barriers have effectively ‘kept Croatia down’. Moreover, if Croatians are the victims, then it becomes straightforward to excuse any deviant behavior on their part as defense against their oppressors.

C. Secondary Narratives of Pride

In addition to the historical statehood narrative and its counterparts, there are a number of secondary identity narratives that remain popular within the Croatian diaspora. Many of these do not touch on core elements of identity definition but rather deal with how Croatians distinguish themselves from their Balkan neighbors. The first of these focuses on Croatia’s historically strong ties to Western Europe. Croatians like to portray themselves as a modern people who have traditionally held more in common with Western Europe than their Orthodox neighbors: “Croats were politically and culturally part of the European West; by contrast the Serbs were part of the Turkish East.”

Allied with the Hapsburg Empire in the late 19th-early 20th centuries, Croatians commonly talk about how Croatia served as the last buffer between the Christian and

235 Ibid.
Muslim worlds. Even in this portrayal, however, an element of victimization is present: "Neighboring nations, who complimented us for being the "Bulwark of Christianity", reaped the benefits of our sweat and blood, while never coming to our aid." A European-oriented Croatia has shared the same ideals and principles, it is asserted, as modern Europe and even the United States. And while WWII stands out as a gross example of Croatia being on the wrong side of history, Croatians easily explain their alliance with Nazi Germany as an unwanted but necessary evil: Nazi Germany allowed Croatia to regain its sovereignty—the number one priority of the Croatian people. "Americans remember Croatia’s history of sympathy for and collaboration with the Nazis. In a puppet government of stunning cruelty, they saw hope for their dream of independence that began in the seventh century." Through the complicated circumstances of W.W. II in Europe, the Croats fell in a ‘no win situation.’ As a whole, they were neither fascist nor Naziist in their political orientation...but nonetheless the Croatians made a valiant effort to construct a democratic state in which all citizens would enjoy equal rights and the people themselves would decide their future.”

Croatians firmly see themselves as an integral part of the European community and would like others to identify them in that way as well. Croatians write that the “Croats have lived in Western Europe, accepted Catholicism, developed their own distinctive western culture utilizing the Latin script.” Slightly offended when grouped together with their Balkan neighbors, they make a huge effort to remind others of their European leanings and their cosmopolitan outlook. According to the Croatian narrative, Croatia

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was sorely out of place in communist Yugoslavia with its backward traditions, authoritative government and economic short-sightedness.

While convinced of their victim-status, Croatians simultaneously have a deep belief in the inherent greatness of their nation. Croatians claim a history of over a thousand years. They acknowledge this history’s often turbulent course, but their conviction nevertheless stands that, given the chance at independence, Croatia will flourish as a nation and as a state: “Truly, a free and independent Croatia...would be a happy, rich, and celebrated nation in Europe and the world. It would the equal of Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, etc.” In this respect, Croatian Americans see themselves as natural allies to other great nations, such as the United States, and often stress the commonality between the two countries. “The defense of Croatia means not only the defense of the time-honored Croatian nation but also that of the West, including the United States of America.” Croatians also emphasize their close historical ties to Europe as a way to distinguish themselves from their Slavic neighbors, above all the Serbs. Both in ideology and action, Croatian Americans cling to the belief that they are somehow exceptional as a society and should be viewed as such. “Croats throughout all their history have always kept their word, and have always insisted on their rights no matter to whom, nor at what sacrifices entailed. They never yield to any force, neither do they obey anybody nor any power that has not been recognized by their own assembly which is even older than the English Parliament.”

244 Ibid, 18.
In a similar vein, Roman Catholic Croatia holds itself up in stark contrast to Orthodox Serbia. The Catholic Church is one of the strongest institutions in the Croatian community. In addition to acting as the spiritual caretaker of Croatian souls, the institution of Catholicism, with its churches, monasteries, and activist priests and monks has played a significant role in Croatian political life. The Catholic Church, in fact, is credited with keeping alive the spirit of Croatianism during communist rule and it is also felt to be responsible for much of the organization of Croatian collective action during times of resistance and struggle. One of the great controversies of the Ustaše period was the apparently eager compliance of the Catholic Church. The role of Cardinal Stepinac has become a focal point for different nationalist interpretations of what happened in Croatia between 1941 and 1945. Contrary to the argument that Stepinac actively supported the genocide, many Croatian historians argue that although he supported the cause of Croatian statehood he abhorred the regime and helped many people escape from it. “In the midst of World War II Stepinac was deeply concerned over the tragic plight of his Croatian people. The Croats were suffering not only at the hands of their enemies, Tito’s Communists and Mihailovic’s Chetniks, but also at the hands of their allies the German Nazis and Italian Fascists. That is why he sent special questionnaires to all the parish priests in his own and other Croatian dioceses, requesting to provide him with documented descriptions of the persecution of the Croatian people.”247 Similarly in the United States, Croatian Catholic Priests were seen as some of the more extreme voices in the Croatian community during the Second World War. Along with their Orthodox

counterparts, these religious leaders were often more radical in their views than the communities they claimed to represent.248

D. Narratives of Bosnia and Herzegovina

"The Croatians...have always wanted to achieve the reunion of Bosnia-Herzegovina with the rest of the Croatian lands. They consider them as part of their historical and ethnic territory. They have always been the geographical center of Croatia."249 Diaspora Croats assert that "many Muslim Slavs are Croatian".250 While not a dominant identity-defining claim, the statement is frequently tied to Croatian demands for Bosnian territory. During the Ottoman Empire, it is argued, Ottoman Turks aggressively attacked Croatian lands, causing tremendous damage, fragmenting the territory and subjugating the Croat population. A number of Croats living in the area, now known as Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) but then part of conquered Croatian territory, converted to Islam to escape the harsh treatment meted out to non-Muslims. As explained in one historical account, "under Ottoman rule Catholic Croats were financially and materially bled dry."251 Still other Croats remained consistent to their heritage, resisted Ottoman rule and fought to reunite with Croatia. These resisters, most especially those found in Western Herzegovina, nurtured a strong nationalist sentiment that continues to define Bosnian Croats today. "Croatia lost Bosnia in 1463, when the latter fell under the Turkish rule. The western part of the kingdom, however, remained determinedly fearless in the defense of its territory against the invasions of the Turks. It

249 "Ireland, Croatia and Bangladesh," Naša Nada, September 6, 1972, 3.
250 "Interview with Father Ljubo Krasic, Director, Croatian Ethnic Institute."
251 Personal Interview with Dr. Ante Cuvalo, March, 2003.
was through the Croatian seasoned warrior’s persistent refusal to capitulate that the
Ottomans were hampered and harassed and finally defeated. Croatia thus made a
considerable contribution to the final victory that ended the Turkish peril to Europe
forever.”252

Regardless of whether Bosnian Muslims now recognize their Slavic heritage or
not, segments of the diaspora continue to consider parts of the BiH to rightfully belong to
Croatia. They argue that while large portions of the population may see themselves as
Bosnian Muslims, they are in fact Croatian—related to those unfortunate enough to have
lived and suffered under Turkish domination. The lands that were once part of larger
Croatia should be returned. “For Croatia, we, therefore, propose that all the lands
inhabited through the centuries by Croatia be unified into a free independent Croatian
State. These lands according to historic and ethnic proofs are: the present Socialist
Republic of Croatia, Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the provinces
Srijem, Backa and Sandzak.”253 Moreover, “the Croats in Western Hercegovina and
small areas of Bosnia with a majority of the Croatian population...look upon Croatia as
their protector and real homeland.”254

IV. The Homeland War

A. The Rationality of Emotions

252 Prcela, "Cardinal Stepinac, the Immortal Croatian Patriot," 8.
253 North American Council for independence of Croats, "Memorandum of the North American Council for
Independence of Croatia to the Government of the United States of America," Nasna Nada, August 16, 1972,
4.
254 Msgr. Dr. Mato Zovkic, "After Dayton Bosnia Can Be Multiethnic and Tolerant Only If Croats Remain
In 1991 Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. The US diaspora had four choices: 1) do nothing; 2) take what was possible and trade land for peace with Serbia; 3) fight for an independent Croatian within the boundaries of the current Republic; 4) expand Croatian control to territories outside the current Republic to include former Croatian lands in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For diaspora nationalists, a do nothing strategy was not an option. They also soundly rejected the compromise of land for peace. The majority of US Croats engaged around the idea of an independent Croatia whose borders would mirror that of the Republic (option 3). A smaller faction, with closer ties to Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, pushed for more aggressive engagement. They sought to expand Croatia’s territory beyond its current boundaries to include portions of Bosnia and Herzegovina which, they claimed, rightfully belonged to Croatia (option 4).

Option 3 and option 4 were the more aggressive positions. Option 2, would have been the rational course to follow given the circumstances that Croatia faced in 1991. U.S. Croats were under no illusions as to how “poorly-equipped Croatian security forces” were to fight the Yugoslav-Serb army. Diaspora activists noted the lack of military capability with a certain amount of “alarm”. Croatia lacked “most of the essentials needed for effective fighting, including an experienced officer corps, air power, trained

255 Batisich et al., Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1. However, it is important to note that the Yugoslav Army, while formidable to under-equipped Croatia, was plagued by desertions. The initial mobilization against Slovenia set off a first wave of desertions by Croats and Slovenes still serving in the armed forces. The Army responded with the mobilization of Serbian reservist, of which an estimated 100,000 evaded the draft. See Matthew Collin, Guerrilla Radio: Rock 'N' Roll and Serbia's Underground Resistance (London: Nation Books, 2002), for a more detailed account of the number of desertions.

256 “Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association.”
troops and effective communications." 257 While Franjo Tudjman was seen as a serious counter-weight to the nationalism of Milosevic, even his strong leadership could not compensate for Croatia's lack of military wherewithal. 258 Even against poorly-equipped Serbian irregulars, the Croatian security apparatus demonstrated their inability to hold their own, losing control of portions of Croatian territory to what they referred to as "Serbian-backed guerillas". 259

It is surprising that there was no serious discussion taking place in the diaspora about alternatives to fighting. The U.S. diaspora briefly flirted with the idea of surrendering portions of the Serb-dominated Krajina region to Serbia but quickly discarded this option. Rather, émigré Croats adopted a somewhat unrealistic attitude toward military confrontation, counting on sheer will and morale to make the difference. They believed that Croatian troops, fighting to protect their homeland, would be more motivated than their Serbian counterparts. "Croats will keep fighting," wrote one diaspora member, "and although they may have problems securing enough weapons they will have no problem with morale. They are literally defending their homes and their families. The only way Croatia can stop fighting is by surrendering. This they will never do." 260 "The idea of trading land for peace was out of the question." 261 In this momentous period for Croatia, the diaspora community would not be the ones to capitulate to the Serbs and betray Croatian pride for an expedient and cowardly...

258 "Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association."
261 "Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association."
solution. Independence, it was argued, could be achieved only through liberation of
the whole of Croatia. Anything less would be a hollow victory and a poor basis upon
which to re-launch the Croatian state. “It’s a critical time for Croatia now: to defend
itself, its freedom, its own democracy, or to capitulate, [which] would be the biggest
catastrophe, because it would be saying that we are going to allow ourselves to be thrown
back into a system of totalitarianism.” As directly stated in one interview, “Any peace
that’s about the loss of Croatian territory is not the kind of peace we will accept.”
Croatian pride demanded a decisive and unequivocal win. Military action was the only
way. The commitment of the Croatian fighter, it was hoped, would buy some time until
Croatia was able to put together an effective defense. In this respect, the diaspora
calculation was correct. While Krajina Serbs demonstrated a fervent commitment to their
cause, their compatriots were less enthusiastic. Serbian fighters, many of them reservists,
seemed to have little stomach for battle. Western journalists reported seeing ‘army
reservists refusing to leave their armored personnel carriers to engage the enemy.”
Nevertheless, Croatia suffered a number of debilitating defeats. By the time the United
Nations ceasefire took effect in 1992, more than one-third of Croatian territory lay in
Serbian hands.

The rejection of the more cautious approach can most effectively be understood
by inserting emotions into the analysis. Framed in terms of emotions, the decision to
push forward to fight for complete territorial independence was rational in the “sense of

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262 Personal interview with John Krajlic.
264 "Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association."
265 Engelberg, "Brutal Impasse: The Yugoslav War a Special Report: Yugoslav Ethnic Hatred Raise Fears
of a War without an End."
266 This territory was eventually regained with the help of U.S. training and equipment. Operation Storm
which took place in 1995 was a 4-day military campaign.
the rationality of emotions." Croatia was, indeed, facing a defining moment where it could change the course of its recent history and regain what it held to be precious. "The homeland is in wounds," it was written. "Croatia is bleeding, suffering. The Croatian people are fighting for survival, for their right to live, for their cultural and national identity. They want to wipe out every trace of our existence from the face of the earth!"

"Let not a single diasporic Croat heart wane in the rhythmic beat of ethnic pride and devotion." It was inconceivable to let that opportunity slip away. It would be too humiliating to bear. Taking these emotions into account, the idealistic and somewhat impractical attitude exhibited by the diaspora is not surprising—even given the reality that Croatia was appallingly unprepared to effectively fight the Yugoslavian Army at this time, in 1991. The optimism is understandable given the strong desire to succeed.

Indeed, the reaction by Croatians in the United States to Croatia’s declaration of independence was overwhelming and unanimous support. Asserted by one diaspora nationalist: “The fight for the establishment and defense of free Croatia is and will always remain the common fight for Croatians at home and abroad.” “Croats are defending the country where they lived for 13 centuries,” expressed another. “[T]he Croatian desire for nationhood now continues its 1,500-year struggle...The very name ‘Croats’ signifies their destiny, that is ‘the nation ready to defend its home and rights,’” was the sentiment of still another. Others readily embraced the obligation of the diaspora: “Fellow Croatians, we who live outside our homeland, must do everything

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within our power to unite ourselves with our people in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina... It is our duty and responsibility to promote the cause of the Croatian people. 273 They described the period as a momentous point in history where diaspora Croats could contribute to “freeing the nation of Serb oppression and securing the control over the traditional core of our national territory.” 274 They spoke of regaining Croatian pride in the face of decades of humiliation: “We rejected the Yugoslav national identity and we found it humiliating” 275 “We were so oppressed in Croatia... we couldn’t even say we were Croatian but had to say we were Yugoslavian.” 276

B. The Homeland narrative at work

The invasion of Croatia by the Yugoslav Army (JNA) following Croatian’s declaration of independence on 25 June 1991 ostensibly triggered the diaspora Croat action. Diaspora attention, however, had been re-directed to homeland events for some years. The increasingly xenophobic propaganda emerging from Serbia since the death of Tito had produced considerable worry among those who kept close tabs on homeland affairs. From the infamous Memorandum published in 1986 by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science which, in effect, re-activated the idea of Greater Serbia, to the rise of Slobodan Milosevic with his hyper-nationalistic rhetoric, Croatians had become concerned. The familiar theme of Serbia’s expansionist tendencies began to be discussed with greater frequency in the diaspora. People talked of the “hate for Croatia perpetrated by the blinded Greater Serbian mythology.” 277 They argued that the fight did not concern

275 Ibid.
276 "From the Editor's Mailbag: So. Chicago Croats Censure Tito," 1.
277 "President Franjo Tudjman Address to Nation," 27.
the “rights of the Serbian minority living in Croatia but, in fact, the fighting is really inspired by territorial greed, aiming at the creation of a Greater Serbia.” Coupled with this fear, Croatians saw the increased vigor with which Croatian Serbs began asserting their ethnicity and heard the beginning rumbling of secessionist talk and “violent uprisings by armed Serbian extremists in Croatia that have aggravated the already tense situation.” By the time Croatia officially broke from Yugoslavia attitudes were already primed for confrontation. As publicized in one prominent Croatian newspaper: “the dream of a Croatian nation is further away than ever before this century because of the hatred of the Croats propagated through the Serb-controlled media. Instead of becoming a nation ... Croats will be extinguished.” No one believed Serbia would give up Croatia without a fight, or at least without demanding a portion of her territory. Diaspora media echoed the sentiments expressed by President Tudjman when he stated: “The wave of hostile Greater Serbian irregulars has fallen down upon us, with the intent of driving our nation back into slavery and Bolshevistic darkness, or taking away from us parts of Croatia which have always been ours.”

Independence was a ‘hot issue’ for Croatians abroad. The idea of a homeland is central to the understanding of Croatian identity. "Croatian people have been tireless

279 Likoudis, "As Croats Struggle for a Nation Can They Avoid Trial by Ordeal?" 7.
280 Ibid.
281 "President Franjo Tudjman Address to Nation," 27.
282 Researchers studying Croatian diaspora communities in Canada and Sweden have reiterated the importance of the idea of an independent Croatian homeland to Croatian identity for those living abroad. The distinction has been made, however, between long-term residents of these countries and new arrivals. As explained by Povrzanovic, “from the diasporic point of view, the war in the 1990s was the peak of Croatia’s pledge for independence: the most difficult, but decisive step toward a freedom that has long been dreamed of. The exultant exclamations of, ‘We have Croatia!’ at home and ‘We have been given Croatia!’ in the diaspora ... implied the end of history for the Croatian struggle for independence.” Maja Povrzanovic Frykman, "Homeland Lost and Gained: Croatian Diaspora and Refugees in Sweden," in New Approached
defenders of that which they have considered their most precious possession as a people—their right of independent sovereignty.” It is a symbol of Croats’ ability to dictate their own history, a symbol of their power. “The Croatian people have every right, both historical, political, cultural, social and others, to be masters of their own destinies in their own national territory.” Members of the Croatian community themselves agree that the Homeland War represented a period of intense emotional engagement and a resurgence of ethnic pride. They described the period as one of great expectation and possibility with Croats emerging from period of ‘oppression and darkness.” Others documenting the reaction of the Croats living abroad describe it as a “national awakening.”

Serbian military opposition to Croatia added a further sense of urgency and seriousness to the homeland project. Considered by many in the diaspora to be a long-standing and aggressive enemy, Serbia’s resistance to a Croatian state elevated the fight for independence to one of ethnic survival. “The war on Croatia has all the hallmarks of genocide.” “This well-planned undertaking is Serbia’s insatiable thirst for expansion...
and complete obliteration of non-Serb inhabitants and their centuries old material cultural and religious possessions...every vestige of having existed!289

It is doubtful that a different enemy would have elicited such a powerful desire for confrontation and such an unwillingness to compromise.290 Croatians are filled with stories of Serbian malevolent intent and expansionist designs. “If one studies the Serbs’ history, once can see that they were always a quarrelsome people. The idea of ethnic cleansing was proposed as early as the 1830s by a Serbian minister...who advanced the doctrine that Serbian lands must be recovered and all non-Serbs ‘cleansed’ by Orthodoxy and death.”291 Modern history is read as a series of continuing attempts by Serbia to subject its neighbors and control their territory, with Croatia being a prime target. Living next to such a domineering people has frustrated Croatia’s natural progress as a nation. While not closely tied by history, culture, or tradition to the exact borders claimed by the Tudjman government, diaspora Croats felt that this claim needed to be forcefully defended because of the particular enemy they faced. “The central belief that has sustained the Serbs during the current war is that they are in the right and that their critics (meaning virtually everyone else in the world) are either blind or malicious. This belief...has led them into a war in pursuit of an ethnically pure nation-state, a concept that most of the rest of the world calls repulsive.”292 Serbian inflammatory rhetoric and

290 Daniel Goldhagan makes a similar point with regard to German attitude toward the Jews. He says that such a level of society-wide hatred could only have been targeted toward the Jews. See Daniel Jonah Goldhagan, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).
the use of the Serbian-dominated military to prevent Croatia’s secession only confirmed suspicions of malevolent intent. Croatians were angry. Leaders and activists of the US community held the opinion that Serbian action was aggressive, unjust, self-serving, and dangerous. The fierce support for Croatia’s bid for independence, therefore, can be attributed not only to the potential of gaining a sovereign state—which in and of itself was important—but the assertion of that right against a fierce enemy with destructive intent.

The use of the ethnically-Serbian JNA against Croatia, after it had declared its independence, was seen as an act of pure aggression. From Croats all over the country, stories of the humiliation that Croatia had suffered at the hand of Serbia were revived with great force. They provided the reason for why Croatia should resist. Croatians turned to their wish of independence and the stories of humiliation, and from these two desires emerged a rationale for fighting. Independence was the ultimate goal. However, this was a proxy for pride. Without a state, Croatians felt weakened. The prestige of belonging to the group of nations represented by an internationally-recognized, territorially-linked entity was no longer theirs: “We, who for nine centuries had to explain who or what is a Croatia need not do that anymore. There are 180 sovereign nations in the UN and Croatia is one of them. Does that not make you want to shout, at the top of your voice...from atop every roof...I’M A CROAT...and damn proud of it!” This aim was a way for Croatians to regain the pride they felt they had lost with their loss of autonomy. Humiliation at the impotency of the Croatian people resonated as a theme.

The hope was that through independence Croatia would, once again, regain its prestige.

293 "Interview with Staff of Radio Croatia."
and the Croatian people could be proud. "We see initial fervor, the enthusiasm of all Croats at home and abroad, filled with joy and happiness. We see all the Croats united in spirit and body, one heart and mind, standing together willing to give everything, even their lives, to ensure a Free and Independent Croatia! All of us were proud to be Croats." The anger at the Serbians was therefore only partly about the invasion and their desire to create a Greater Serbia. What drove the anger even more were underlying feelings of humiliation and impotency that had been pent up over decades.

There is no question that diaspora Croats were whole-hearted in their support of Croatia. They viewed their role as critical, as small Croatia was seen at the mercy of Serbia with little or no support from the outside world. "People in Croatia have found themselves in a perilous situation of being under the brutal attack of an overwhelmingly superior military might from Serbia and a lack of concrete support from the rest of the world, especially the European Community and the United States."  

The U.S. community organized action along three lines: financial, political, and humanitarian, with the main thrust aimed at creating a more favorable attitude in the U.S. toward Croatia. Diaspora leaders decided early on not to politic back home. While close to the Tudjman government they did not, as a general rule, insert themselves into homeland governance. Efforts concentrated on lobbying Washington. The community

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297 There were individual exceptions. Most notably, Gojko Susak a Canadian Croat dubbed the pizza king, became Tudjman’s foreign minister. Susak strongly supported the Bosnian Croat cause and is often credited with moving Tudjman’s politics to the more extreme end. Bellamy, The Formation of Croatian National Identity.
sought full recognition of Croatia as a sovereign state under international law whose borders were consistent with those defined for the republic after World War II.

Specifically, this meant a return of all occupied territories to Croatia and payment of reparations by Serbia for economic damages incurred during the occupation. In the event that these demands were not met, the Croatian diaspora advocated for strong condemnation of Yugoslavia backed by economic sanctions, an immediate lifting of the arms embargo against Croatia, and international military action. 298 American Croats made it clear that they would use their numbers, especially in alliance with other Catholic Americans, to elect officials who represented their aims. They demanded that President Bill Clinton, for example follow through on “his campaign pledge to unilaterally lift the arms embargo.” 299 Failure to do so would result in Croat Americans throwing their votes behind the “next Presidential candidate of either party” who best supported their cause. 300

Croatia’s underdog status galvanized the diaspora to become even more engaged. Paradoxically, the more epic the struggle the greater the sense of pride and purpose associated with the sustained assertion of collective will. Indeed, it has been remarked that “a common yardstick for the measurement of a nation’s strength and tenacity is the degree to which its individual members are willing to risk all and even sacrifice themselves on its behalf.” 301 The Tudjman government unabashedly turned to Croats abroad for financing and encouraged them to lobby their resident governments to throw their support behind Croatia’s fight for independence. The diaspora’s critical role in the

300 Ibid, 20.
301 Aviel Roshwald, The Endurance of Nationalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
early phase of the Homeland War created a feeling of solidarity and involvement.

Written by one nationalist, “Let us not relax in this vital role. Let not a single diasporic Croat heart wane in the rhythmic beat of ethnic pride and devotion. Let us not succumb to the faint of heart who, wittingly or unwittingly, would have us bail out before the ‘battle is done.’” Rather than simple bystanders, they saw themselves as essential to the homeland fight. Emotionally, diaspora Croats’ feelings of pride became even more tightly entwined with Croatia’s success. Conversations with Croatian American leaders confirm that they had been willing to continue to support military engagement if the terms they sought had not been achieved. Paradoxically, as the conflict continued and the death toll rose, U.S. Croats became even more unwilling to compromise. Rather than feel disheartened, diaspora members “felt angry at the insult.” “I was f**king mad”, bluntly stated one young activist that I interviewed. He explained how Serbia had invaded their country and attacked their people. He described a number of gruesome acts committed by Serbian fighters against innocent Croats. This feeling was echoed by other nationalists who argued that “Serb-backed forces seems bent on destroying everything that bears witness to Croatia’s potent national identity.”

C. The war in Bosnia—a split in the community

Unlike other policies promoted by the Tudjman government that entailed the use of force, the Bosnian adventure was generally not well-regarded by the mainstream US Croatian community, who felt little attachment to the Croatian-dominated portions of the

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303 "Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association."
304 "Personal Interview," (Pittsburgh: July 2004).
305 Ibid.
Bosnian state and saw little logic in expending political and financial capital to wage war for this territory. As stated by Edward J. Damich, past president of the NFCA which, at the time, represented a large portion of the Croatian population: “The pluralistic, multi-ethnic, democratic sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina must be preserved under any agreement reached between the two sides. Any ethnic partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina could set a precedent for dividing Croatia the same way, and would ratify the results of ethnic cleansing.” The exception was a segment of the Croatian American community with deep ties to Central and Western Herzegovina and a strong interest in seeing this section of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) annexed to Croatia. This group split from the majority diaspora opinion and waged its own campaign to extend Croatian territory to include Croatian majority areas in BiH. The master plan was to ethnically cleanse chunks of Bosnia and Herzegovina and link them with Croatia—a plan that Tudjman and Defense Secretary Gojko Susak grandly referred to as Croatian National Policy.

The divergence between the two groups is quite remarkable. It points to how different elements within the same community can construct their identity in very dissimilar ways with radically different outcomes. The stance of the majority Croatian-American community was based on the historic statehood narrative that dominated within

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307 Asked about the support given by the Tudjman government to the Bosnian-Croats’ efforts to secede, all individuals interviewed staunchly criticized the policy as a waste of resources. There appeared to be little tolerance for the political programme of the Bosnian-Croats and disdain for the manner in which they behaved.


309 Gjoko Susak was a diaspora Croat in Canada who returned to Croatia to work in the Tudjman government. He was considered one of the more extreme voices in Tudjman’s inner circle and ferociously pushed to expand Croatia’s involvement in the Bosnian war.

310 Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars, 19.
the group. The narrative gave little support to the idea that parts of BiH should be re-incorporated into Croatia. Accordingly, the imperative for military action in Bosnia did not resonate with many diaspora Croats. In fact, many Croatian-Americans expressed a certain amount of disdain for the Bosnian-Croats and saw them as “self-serving extremists who were incapable of strategically engaging with Croatia’s post-conflict needs.”

In contrast, Croatians from BiH held another point of view. While equally committed to the goal of an independent Croatian homeland, they came with different ideas of what this would look like. To them Croatia’s struggle extended beyond the narrow issue of independence. The fight was not simply about regaining its statehood but about restoring the rightful status of Croatia’s borders and protecting the Croatian population living in Bosnia and Herzegovina—from whom they were descended and whom they felt represented one of the core pillars of the Croatian nation—until they could do so. They initially sought to carve out a distinct Croatian territory in Bosnia, called Herceg-Bosna, which would merge with the larger Croatian state at a later stage. Their belief was that this portion of BiH was an integral part of Croatia.

The commitment of the US Bosnian Croat leadership to Croatia’s involvement in BiH was largely based on the belief that Bosnia was “an old Croatian land.” Ante Cuvalo, President of the US Alliance of Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina described Croatia’s eastern border as being Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro. As stated in the introduction to his book, *Croatia and the Croatians*, “further reference to the Croats

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312 Interview with Ante Cuvalo, President, Alliance of Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lansing, IL, October 2006.
and Croatia...encompasses the territory of today’s Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The émigrés believed passionately that the Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina was an artificial construct and that most of it properly belonged to Croatia. While ethnic Croats made up only 17% of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, these émigrés believed that Bosnian Muslims were simply fallen ethnic Croats, one-time Slavs who converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule for reasons of convenience and security.

It is unsurprising that émigré Croats from Western Herzegovina would be so radical. They are a tightly knit community who are fiercely proud of being Croatian and extremely nationalistic. They espouse a unique mentality which is distinguished by “clan loyalty, recalcitrant pride, age-old superstitions, and an ethic of revenge.” Even Croats from Bosnia and Croatia proper are considered outsiders to this group. The Herzegovina region was, in fact, the cradle of the Ustaše movement and therefore put a premium on pride, territory and loyalty. As described by Hockenos, émigré Croats from the Herzegovina region formed an insular community which tried to recreate their idealized vision of Croatia while living abroad: “Here, far away from the complexity of multinational Yugoslavia, was the Croatia that the right-wing émigrés believed should exist—and would, were it not for communism, Serbs, and Western hypocrisy.”

314 Ante Cuvalo, (Croatia and the Croats).
316 Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars, 36.
317 Ibid, 38.
For many of these émigrés, the collapse of the Ustaše-led NDH was the defining event of their lives. Stuck in the mental time warp of emigration, they were unable to move beyond the anger and humiliation of losing the chance to reclaim their one dream of independence. Living abroad, they set their efforts to remedy the injustice and reestablish Croatian pride. Their commitment to Greater Croatia was uncompromising. While always active in the background, the Homeland War gave them the opportunity to aggressively pursue their antiquated political vision for their country. They did so regardless of the cost. The BiH Croats did not believe the Bosnia Herzegovina situation could be solved peacefully and without bloodshed. They sternly rejected any suggestion that a deal be made with the Serbians to carve up the territory between the two groups. Being fiercely anti-Serb, they chose war rather than a compromise with their historical enemy.

This small group of extremists gained an inordinate amount of influence with the Tudjman government. They were less successful, however, in winning over the hearts and minds of policy makers in Washington or other major players in the international community. Their virulent ideology, uncompromising positions, and willingness to pursue their goals regardless of cost earned them the well-deserved reputation of right-wing extremists. While recognized for what they were, the actions of this group hurt the overall efforts of the larger Croatian community abroad. Rather than dedicate their energies to planning for peace, they found themselves enmeshed in a public relations battle where they were forced to continually argue against the portrayal of all Croatians as militant, war-promoting nationalists.
The larger Croatian population in the US had little interest in fighting for Bosnia and wanted to devote their energies to strategizing for post-war Croatia. A top priority was to create a positive reputation for Croatia according to accepted international norms of good conduct for sovereign states. In this way, they hoped to secure financial backing from the U.S. and other states for post-war reconstruction. Most important in this respect was the perception that Croatia was non-aggressive and could abide by the norms and strictures established by the international community. Of particular concern to the U.S. Croat leaders was the tarnished image their new country was acquiring because of its involvement in Bosnia. For the first time, the Croatian people were overwhelmingly portrayed not as victims of aggression but as the aggressors themselves. Images of ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslim and Serb populations at the hands of Croatian forces brought uncomfortable comparisons between these incidents and atrocities committed by the Ustaše during World War II.\(^\text{318}\) Vigorous attempts were made by diaspora leaders to dispel this association. For instance, U.S. Croatian leaders were quick to point out that they “wrote to Franjo Tuđman arguing that the renaming of the Croatian currency to \textit{kuna} will come at a substantial detriment to the image of Croatia.”\(^\text{319}\) Additionally, U.S. Croatian leaders protested in writing to both the Croat and the Bosnia-Herzegovina Croat leadership to cease their brutal actions and bring their involvement in Bosnia to a quick close.\(^\text{320}\) Their protests targeted both the “action and inaction regarding violations of

\(^{318}\) Diaspora Croats in the US claim that the legacy of WWII created a stigma that they were forced to deal with at every turn. They complain that all Croats are unfairly branded as radical extremists because of the Ustaše’s actions. It became a common goal of almost all the émigré groups to polish the Croat image. See Batistich et al., \textit{Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.} and Hockenos, \textit{Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars.}

\(^{319}\) Batistich et al., \textit{Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.} V.

\(^{320}\) Ibid.
international humanitarian law and the international image of Croatia." Under no illusions about the importance of U.S. support for post-conflict Croatia, the U.S. diaspora leaders sought either to fight for U.S. interests in Bosnia, or to withdraw from the conflict altogether.

To this end, Croat Americans vigorously argued that the U.S. government should see Croatia as a viable partner in Bosnian policy. In a memo entitled, "Strong Croatia is a Substitute for U.S. Troops in Bosnia", Croatian leaders laid out a vision of how Croatia could effectively act as the implementer of U.S. policy in the Balkans. Additionally, Croatian-Americans were eager for the Tudjman government to concentrate on post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation. They felt that only by aggressive efforts in rebuilding Croatia could the state begin to leave behind its reputation as a war-torn country and legitimately establish its place as a valuable member of the international and European communities. Finally, organizations sought to find a way to maintain community involvement in home country issues. With the advent of sovereignty, interest in Croatian politics predictably declined. Lacking the emotional impetus to focus their attention, interest in remaining active in the Croatian community dissipated. Organization leaders identified prestigious milestones for the country—such as acceptance into the European Community and membership in NATO—as possible issues to maintain enthusiasm. Pride in Croatia was the strategy. What they strongly believed was that Croatian-

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321 Ibid.
322 In a brilliant piece of public relations spin, the U.S. Croatian community suggested to Washington that it should let Croatia 'do the dirty job' in Bosnia: "Let Croatia do what the U.S. is not willing to do in Bosnia." In this way, Croatians tried to win U.S. sympathy by casting themselves as potential saviors of the Bosnian Muslim community: "Without Croatia, the Bosnian Muslim community will probably cease to exist".
Americans were not interested in supporting a country in a perpetual state of war, especially a conflict that made little sense in terms of national value and served only to cast Croatia and Croatians in a negative light.

Given these priorities, most mainstream Croatian organizations publicly and privately began to distance themselves from the Bosnia conflict. The decision was based largely on an assessment of how association with the violence in Bosnia could help or hurt their agenda, which now encompassed a wider set of concerns. In contrast to earlier actions which contained only trace elements of larger political interests, this later position was defined by how actions affected a more expansive set of priorities.

D. Revenge on the Serbs

US Croats argue that they “harbored a sincere commitment to peace. Given the choice, we would have preferred a peaceful separation to the bloody one that occurred.” This claim is hard to accept given diaspora support of Zagreb’s inflammatory policies toward Croatian Serbs and their acceptance of the brutal tactics deliberately used by Croatia forces and irregulars against this population. “The Croats have the duty to use ‘any and all means necessary’ to defend and fight Serbs…to survive,” declared on activist. The brutality endorsed by the diaspora, however, went above and beyond the requirement for defense.

For all their claims to the contrary, Croatia’s xenophobic brand of nationalism radicalized its relations with its Serb minority and provided the excuse for the Serb-backed JNA to invade Croatia under the banner of protecting fellow Serbs. Croatia’s

324 Interview, Member Serbian National Federation, 2006.
600,000 Serbian minority were not, as asserted by many in the diaspora, plotting with Milosevic to “create a second Serb-dominated state, consisting of strategically and economically vital areas of Croatia.”326 Nor did they take part in a master plan to “reduce Croatia into several disjointed pieces which would have to rely on Serbian largesse.”327 This inflammatory image of Croatian Serbs, however, was quickly promoted and even more quickly accepted. From the start, this long-standing minority was treated, at best, like unwelcomed interlopers and, at worst, like a dangerous enemy.

The overtly hostile and discriminatory attitude toward Croatian Serbs is difficult to explain from a purely rational perspective. The diaspora was well aware of the fear-mongering rhetoric coming out of Serbia. They had witnessed Serbia’s re-annexation of Kosovo in 1989 under the guise of protecting fellow Serbs. They heard talk from Serbia of uniting all Serbs under one Serbian state. They keenly remembered similar arguments used in the past to justify Serbian expansion. Why then did the diaspora not advocate for a smarter policy toward the Croatian Serbian minority? An approach that demonstrated a recognition of the historical place of this population in Croatia, and a sensitivity to their fears, may have dampened the impulse of this group to split from larger Croatia.328 Such a policy would have, at least, denied Milosevic and the Serbian paramilitary gangs operating in Croatia the ammunition with which to feed nationalistic claims and perhaps bought Croatia more time to better prepare for military battle.

326 Kraljic, "Belgrade’s Strategic Designs on Croatia," 1.
327 Ibid, 5.
328 Hockenos tells a story of the young police chief Osijek Josip Reihl-Kir of Borovo Selo, an industrial suburb of Vukovar as an example that, while tensions were high and fear palpable, there was still room to dampen tempers between the Croat and Serbian communities. Fighting was not inevitable. See Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars 58.
By any account, atrocities were committed by all sides. The U.S. diaspora, however, stubbornly refused to acknowledge that their side did anything wrong. The party line, so to speak, was “Any truth-loving person can see that...the Croats were much more innocent victims than killers of others.”\(^{329}\) To state otherwise was to denigrate, in some way, the Homeland War and what Croatia was trying to achieve. Deflection was another popular response to this topic: “Why don’t you ask about the crimes committed by the Serbs against Croatia?” \(^{330}\) I was often instructed that, “Serbia is not under attack. The Serbian government initiated this dirty war of conquest against Croatia. Some Serbs...claim that by destroying Croatia they are protecting Serbs.” \(^{331}\) In my interviews, such a question was usually followed by a denial that Croatian Serbs were actually being harmed. “Not one single person of Serbian nationality, not one single Serbian family, not one single Serbian village was ever attacked by the Croatian police, which cannot be said about the Croatian villages and families since they have been attacked by Serbian terrorists,” \(^{332}\) And yet, as reported by Hockenos, the diaspora nodded with approval at the purging of Croatian Serbs:

As the Croatian Serbs left their homes on foot and by tractor, they were spat at and stoned by Croats. “They didn’t even have time to collect their dirty currency and their dirty underwear,” exclaimed Tudjman with glee, on a whistle-stop “freedom train” tour of the freshly liberated territories. “On this day we can say that Croatia stopped bearing its historical cross. This is not just the liberation of land but the creation of a foundation for a free and independent Croatia for centuries to come.” \(^{333}\)

\(^{329}\) Prcela, "Cardinal Stepinac, the Immortal Croatian Patriot," 10.
\(^{331}\) Batistich et al., Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 11.
\(^{332}\) "Serbs Have No Reason to Fear Living in Croatia," Naša Nada, 15 August 1991, 22.
\(^{333}\) Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars 100.
It is not surprising that Croatian Americans would try to gloss over some of the nastier conduct on their side, especially when speaking to an outsider. When I was able to ask about Croatian conduct, I received responses such as, “do remember that the Serbs consider the present war as the definitive battle for a Greater Serbia in a series of Balkan wars they instigated.” Or, rather than discuss specific examples of Croatian excess, talk was always redirected to wounds inflicted on Croats by Serbia: “It is clear who the aggressor is and who the victim... We only ask that you apply the same standard to Croatia that you apply to every victim of dictatorship and injustice. But while never directly answered, and most often deflected, the general sense from conversations with diaspora nationalists is that they were settling old scores. As reported by Roger Cohen in the New York Times, “For Tudjman and Šušak, the result of the military action was one they had always intimately desired: the removal of Croatia’s Serbs.” No one seemed to grieve the loss of the 500-year old Serbian community from Croatia.

E. Positive effects of emotions

The emotional engagement of Croatian Americans generated some positive externalities for the national community. The overwhelming and cohesive response of the Croatian community took even its leaders by surprise. Numerous letters from Croatian Americans to their ethnic newspapers expressed the depth of feeling that people had for their homeland. Comments such as the following were the norm rather than the exception: “We see... enthusiasm of all Croats at home and abroad, filled with joy and happiness. We see all the Croats united in spirit and body, one heart and mind,

standing together willing to give everything, even their lives, to ensure a Free and Independent Croatia! All of us were proud to be Croatians."337

Collective action on the part of Croatian-Americans for a homeland issue was a new experience.338 Contrary to popular perception, before 1990, Croatian-Americans rarely came together on a national scale. Their structure reflected "a lot of little Croatas" with numerous clubs, associations and parishes organized on a local level rather than nation-wide.339 Unsurprisingly, then, prior to the early 1990s there was little in terms of a national agenda. Local community organizations functioned mainly as cultural centers for Croats living in the area, concentrating on language, history, celebration of cultural and religious holidays, and generally providing a way for Croats living in the United States to stay in touch with their heritage. Ethnic newspapers were more likely to print the results of a local bowling tournament or to advertise the date of the next community picnic than they were to publish articles about the larger Croatian population in America or comment on the events taking place in the homeland.

Within a relatively short period of time, however, the character of the Croatian-American community changed in response to events abroad. From a diffuse cultural

337 "Fr. Paul Maskach's Reflection..." 1.
339 Before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Croatian immigrants were generally labeled Yugoslavian. The same was true for Serbian émigrés. Both Croatian and Serbian community members, however, assert that the Yugoslav label was imposed from the outside. The majority of immigrants continued to think of themselves as primarily Croatian or Serbian. This distinction was broken down further within communities. For example, not only was an individual considered Croatian but, more importantly, he or she was a Croatian from Zagreb or Dalmatia. Organizations in the United States reflected this regionalism. An exception was the Croatian National Federation which is the oldest Croatian organization in the United States and which operates on a national scale. Its activities, however, are not political, focusing on insurance provision. Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association.
community, it became a unified and substantial political force.\textsuperscript{340} As expressed by a Croatian-American journalist covering events at the time, “the struggle for independence served as a means of social cohesion. We were numerous, committed, capable, driven, and willing to sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{341} This sentiment was echoed by Croatian leaders and activists interviewed for this study, who spoke in terms of anger, worry, hope, and pride when describing their involvement with the movement and the stakes for which they were fighting.\textsuperscript{342} Most evident was pride at the chance to have their own state and anger toward the Serbs for trying to take away this opportunity. “The Croats have lived in their motherland Croatia, as an honorable and hardworking people for 13 centuries. During this period they have been through many battles in order to protect their homes and their homeland. But never before have they encountered such an unscrupulous enemy to whom nothing is sacred and who, in its demonic hate, has attempted to destroy everything that is Croatia.”\textsuperscript{343}

F. Analysis

There is no denying the highly emotive response of Croatian-Americans to homeland independence. The hostilities in the Balkans represented a watershed moment for the U.S. Croatian community. Serbian aggression against Croatia triggered an

\textsuperscript{340} Personal interview with John Kraljic, President of the CAA. Mr. Kraljic stressed that the initial response from the US-Croatian community was grassroots based. With the explosion of organizations that formed during the 1990-1991 period, it would be generous to claim that the Croatian community spoke with a unitary voice on anything. Coordination was difficult to impossible. After the initial exuberance began to wear off, however, many of the new organizations began to disappear. It was at this point that greater formal unity and coordination began to emerge on what the Croatian community should be doing, although to call the community cohesive was still a stretch.

\textsuperscript{341} Personal interview with Maria Jukic, February, 2003.

\textsuperscript{342} Povrzanović Frykman described the reaction of the Croatian community in Sweden in related emotional terms: “The Homeland War raised strong emotions—fears, worries and sorrow, but also hope and national pride. A strong consensus on the rightfulness of Croatian plight was thus reconfirmed in the 1990s” Frykman, "Homeland Lost and Gained: Croatian Diaspora and Refugees in Sweden.", 123.

\textsuperscript{343} Dr. Ruzica Cavar, "Stop the Crimes against Croatia," \textit{Naša Nada}, June 30, 1992, 14.
overwhelming reaction from those living abroad. People from all walks of life—from the politically active to those who rarely took an interest in homeland affairs—became caught up in the enthusiasm for independence and the tonic of being part of such a historical national movement. Croat Americans focused fully on Croatian independence to the exclusion of much else that was taking place in their communities. They sought Croatian-centered explanations for why fighting was necessary—turning largely to their ethnic newspapers, radio stations, parishes and organizations for information and updates on events. Media coverage that was unflattering to Croatia was largely dismissed as biased or ignored. Finally, American Croats were compelled to act. From a somewhat indifferent community, the Croatian population rallied to become an engaged, dedicated and potent force in American politics—even if only for a short time. In this respect, Croatian American nationalism provides a stellar example of how emotions can capture attention, focus interest and direct behavior toward a unitary goal. “One must not lose sight of the historical lens through which the diaspora constructed and experienced the conflict,” writes Zlatko Skrbis. “This lens predisposed the diaspora to view the opportunities associated with the conflict in terms of the one-dimensional ambition of the pursuit of independence—a pursuit to which everything else was subjugated.”

1. Croatian Humiliation

The Croatian response was undoubtedly about pride. One young Croatian American described the homeland war as “a personal vindication which granted them [Croats] co-equal standing with other ethnic groups and individuals.” Others

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345 "Interview with Staff of Radio Croatia."
expressed similar sentiments: "we who...had to explain who or what is a Croatian need not do that anymore." At the very least, Croats wanted others to know "what Croatia or a Croatian was". Written by one diaspora contributor, "the power of the Croatian diaspora has made the difference between victory and defeat—liberty and tyranny. The source of its resilient strength lies in the indigenous infrastructure rooted in the love for the Motherland and its heritage that has given the Croats in diaspora worldwide a sense of belonging and identity."

While pride was a vital component of the Croatian response, what is evident from the above comments, as well as others collected in the course of my research, is that the outpouring of Croatian pride in 1991 was a reaction to decades of debasement that Croats felt they had undergone at the hands of the Serbs. An awareness stayed with proud Croats living in America that they were not recognized as a separate people with a laudable history of their own, that they played a subordinate role to the Serbs, and that Croatia had fallen behind those nations they considered their peers. Intent on asserting their national legitimacy, they could not escape this discouraging reality.

The Croatian diaspora showed the hallmarks of a humiliated community desperately trying to recreate an image of their nation that, they believe, would restore an overt sense of pride of belonging. Focused largely on the past, the vision of this émigré society was held hostage to outdated antagonisms that were eagerly revived as tensions mounted in the homeland. Such was the hold of these ideas that little room was left for

347 Luka Missetic, The Future of America's Croatian Youth (cite 2 April 2009); available from www.cuvalo.net.
any other outcome than a renewed cycle of conflict and ill-will. Dissenting voices of moderation were discredited as unpatriotic and quickly marginalized from the mainstream debate. Baser impulses were indulged. While some in the diaspora community did protest the more horrific atrocities committed by Croatian forces and irregulars, their objections were driven by how such acts would tarnish the image of Croatia abroad. The objects of the brutality—namely the Serbs—were given little thought. This was seen most clearly in the expulsion of Croatia’s Serbian minority following Operation Storm. Serbs don’t belong in Croatia, was the general attitude.

Even more extreme were the Croat émigrés tied to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This group was the subject of Hockenos’ groundbreaking work, Homeland Calling. In contrast to the more mainstream US diaspora, this faction not only advocated even more extreme aims—carving up Bosnia and absorbing sections into an ethnic Greater Croatia—but completely eschewed any form of negotiation with Milosevic or his counterparts to arrive at a non-violent solution in Bosnia. As Hockenos writes, “Whereas Tudjman, who had lived for years in Belgrade, felt that some kind of deal with the Serbs to carve up the area was possible, the fiercely anti-Serb émigrés ruled this out as preposterous. The émigrés knew that a battle over Bosnia and Herzegovina was in store, and they were prepared to wage it.”349 The BiH Croats were also more venomous and unforgiving in their attitudes toward the Serbs. Whereas more mainstream attitudes sought to separate Croatia from Serbia, punishing those Serbs who had the audacity to believe they could remain a part of Croatia, the BiH Croat Americans took a more brutal view toward this enemy. In explaining the mentality of Croats from Bosnia and

349 Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars 46.
Herzegovina—especially western Herzegovina—Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax notes the prevalence of “[b]lood vengeance, vendettas and other forms of private justice...”\(^{350}\)

“The old tradition of warfare and revenge runs deep in Herzegovina.”\(^{351}\)

The perceived humiliation so vibrantly felt by the diaspora was able to take the shape of assertive nationalism in part because of the charged nature of the issue.

Independence was the center of Croatian identity, pride and honor. If Croatians could be said to have an honor code, it would be around this specific issue. The expectation within the U.S. Croat community was that its members, when given the opportunity, would avenge the injustice of Croatians not having their own state. What was remarkable about the Croatian case was how uniform the response was among the general population. This suggests that somehow the expectation was widely communicated, accepted and internalized by the majority. All agreed that Croatians everywhere would be lifted up by independence—regardless, it seems, of how it was achieved or at what cost.

Within the Croatian community, however, the Bosnian Croats were even more extreme than their mainland brothers. The greater emphasis placed on honor and revenge by the Bosnian Croats would seem to provide an explanation for the difference in intensity of their response. Being more insular than the general Croatian population, Hockenos suggests that the Bosnian Croat community was also more obsessive about their goals than others. This would seem to support the claim that individuals with a strong honor code who tightly identify with their group and ruminate over injury and loss will react more intensely than those with a more carefree attitude.

\(^{350}\) Quoted in Ibid. 36.
\(^{351}\) Ibid.
2. **Victimization**

As would be expected in a culture defined by humiliation, the narratives of émigré Croats are dominated by victim stories. These stories captured the sense of anger at Croatia’s historical decline and abuse by Serbia. They feature three main players with consistent roles: the Croatia people, the Serbian nation and the ‘West’. Croatians cast themselves as a nation of rugged individualists who have valiantly guarded, by themselves, the independence of their small state through centuries of conquest and empires. Christian Croatia places itself firmly in Western Europe. A courageous people, they see themselves taking on the tasks that no one else wants to do. Croatians proudly talk of having acted as the buffer between the West and two other civilizations—first the Ottoman Empire and later the Eastern Orthodox world.

The main enemy of Croatia is Serbia. In the Croatian story, the Serbs are cast as untrustworthy aggressors. Serbia is intent on controlling Croatia. There is general agreement in the narrative that there is no room in Croatia for Serbs. What differs is the perception of how to deal with their aggressive neighbors. The more moderate narrative strand sees a strong Croatian state as the answer to an expansionist Serbia. Croatia does not need to dominate Serbia or its people, just contain it. A more aggressive view advocates Croatian expansion and ethnic purification of all lands under Croatian control. Given that many Croats see the Muslim population in Bosnia as being historically Croats, ethnic purification would be aimed at the Serbs. This attitude is reminiscent of the Ustaše policy of “kill one third, expel one third, and convert one third.”

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The West plays a dual role. For the majority, Western Europe and the United States are the regions with which Croatians largely identify. They are the ideal to which Croatia aspires. Croatia is constantly seeking the approval of Western nations and acceptance as one of their own. The general indifference of Western countries to Croatia is a blow to Croatian pride. Croatians like to tell themselves that if given the chance—i.e. given their own state—they will easily gain the respect of the US and Europe and assume their rightful place in the club of these advanced nations. An alternate view, held by a minority of more right-wing Croatians, see the West as untrustworthy hypocrites. This view stems from the butchery at Bleiburg, Austria at the end of World War II. With the war coming to a quick end, NDH leaders and their Ustaše foot soldiers as well as civilians, fearing reprisals, fled the advancing Partisan forces toward the British controlled area on the Slovene border. But instead of providing asylum the British handed the refugees over to the Partisans, who immediately executed many of the prisoners. "Bleiburg became a charged symbol for the alleged Serb-Communist campaign to exterminate the Croatian nation," writes Hockenos. "Bleiburg functioned as one of the psychological keystones for the émigrés self understanding of their expatriation, their lives abroad and their political work to rescue Croatia at all costs and by all means necessary."\(^{352}\)

The main story in the Croatian narrative is familiar and recurring. Serbia has crippled Croatia. It has stolen its state, impoverished the nation and habituated Croatians to playing a supporting role to the Serbian people. Every time Croatia tries to break free, Serbia brutally ensures that it is unable to do so. Croatia has become a shadow of its

\(^{352}\) Ibid. 27-28.
former self. It is no longer respected by its peer countries and is quickly falling into oblivion. The answer is to regain its state, assert its authority and gain control of its destiny.

This general message of the narrative resonated with the larger diaspora population and was not simply the invention of the ultra-nationalistic few. These themes were written about in mainstream Croatian periodicals both during times of peace and as the homeland conflict intensified. The durability of these ideas over time suggests a certain permanence in the Croatian psyche and a level of acceptance of their truth. The homogeneity of the diaspora narratives is not surprising. Émigrés’ understanding of events tends to even out with the retelling. The stories are used to convey a specific meaning about identity rather than to simply recount an event.

3. Triggering Event

The invasion of Croatia by the Serb-backed JNA in 1991 was the trigger that ignited the diaspora response and activated the narrative. As has been shown in this chapter, Croatians clearly framed events with reference to past confrontations between Serbia and their homeland. Allusions to World War II—the last time the Croatian state had been reborn and killed—became a standard theme of discussion in diaspora periodicals. The crimes committed by the Serbs against the Croatians post-World War I and during the Yugoslav years were equally popular topics. The Serbian people were reduced to a gross stereotype (bad, nasty and aggressive), as were the Croatian people (kind, peaceful and brave). It is unlikely that had the aggressors been a group other than the Serbs, say the Slovenes, that the reaction would have been of the same. Puzzlement
would have more likely been the response had Slovenia decided to oppose Croatia’s bid for independence. Unlike the Serbs, there was no historical ‘matching’ event with the Slovenes that could serve as a template for interpreting present hostilities.

4. Croats vs. Bosnian Croats in the diaspora—internal variation

What stands out in the Croatian case is the variance in humiliation between the different diaspora factions. Diaspora Croats unquestionably felt diluted in their ethnicity. Constructed wholly in terms of statehood, their Croatian identity was missing its central piece—its honor and pride. The dominant themes in the diaspora narratives glorified Croatia’s long legacy of independence, mourned its loss, and expressed anger toward the Serbs whom they blamed for their loss. The anti-Serb hostility was firmly rooted in the experience of post-World War One Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which began as a confederation of states and quickly became a Serb-dominated political monarchy. Croatian resentment of Serbian domination found expression in the radical political programme of the Ustaše. Serbs became not only political opportunists but, “an alien, enemy people in Croatia, as traitors who betrayed Croatia to foreign interests.” 353 This image of the Serbs became cemented in the stories that émigrés told themselves and each other.

Croatian humiliation, while deeply felt, was by no means extreme. It was not lived on an everyday basis, as is the case with other groups, the Palestinians being the most prominent example. In fact, it is doubtful that most diasporic Croats even thought with any regularity about how their identity was in decline, how that made them feel or what they could do about it. These emotions lay quiet, embedded in the stories of glory,

353 Ibid. 27.
decline and blame that Croatians carried around with them as part of their understanding and definition of who they were. These stories had embedded in them expectations of how Croatians were supposed to respond should the opportunity to regain Croatian independence present itself. The turmoil of Croatian independence rejuvenated these stories and, by extension, the emotions that they embodied. It was not difficult for many Croatians to believe that Serbia intended to force Croatia back into an arrangement of servitude that guaranteed their decay. I was surprised in my research by how readily and unquestionably Croatian Americans believed that Serbia was intent on absorbing Croatia or destroying her. Croatia’s historical antecedents were powerful lenses through which to interpret events.

The antidote to Croatian humiliation and loss of honor was to reassert Croatia as a viable, successful independent state. The Croatian story is not one of grandeur, conquest or aggression. Croatians, in fact, like to portray themselves as a civilized and sophisticated people. For most, their ultimate interest was to liberate Croatia rather than defeat Serbia. To have used events in 1991 to push for expanded borders outside those currently defined by the Republic would not have resonated emotionally or mentally with the larger diaspora population. These lands had little historical and emotional significance for Croatians and fighting for them was largely seen as a waste of valuable resources.

This was not the case for all members of the diaspora. A small subsection of the diaspora did, indeed, push for a more radical approach. With the more extreme and recalcitrant nationalists, a more radical agenda was promoted that closely mirrored the
fascist programme of the World War II Ustaše. This group echoed the desire of the general population to restore Croatia’s statehood, and by extension its pride. The language they adopted, however, was seeped to a much greater extent in the imagery of injury and historical blame. The Homeland War was a time to regain Croatian sovereignty but to also vindicate the years Croatia spent in Yugoslav, i.e. Serb, captivity. The rhetoric from these nationalists was much more excessive. Serbia was not simply its current enemy, but Croatia’s historical foe. The threat from Serbia was not simply physical but existential; Serbs were not only trying to take advantage of Croatia but to wipe them out. The conflict was not about Croatian secession but the right of Croatia to exist. The United States should not just support Croatia but fiercely punish Serbia economically and militarily. The campaigns supported by this more radical voice were passionate in their desire to assert Croatian vigor but seemed equally committed to humbling the Serbs, whom they blamed for Croatia’s demise. “Serbia is not in war with Croatia,” it was claimed “but the Serbian nation is.” Serbians were described in more pejorative terms and their malintent ascribed to a deep cultural flaw rather than to political ambitions. Written by one diaspora activist, “Milošević’s malignancy can thrive because it is exploiting the whole arsenal of Serbian myths and delusions...The stuffy chamber of Serbian national mythology is full of exaggerated notions of grandeur, of military prowess, of will over matter.”

This position was echoed most often and most vigorously by Bosnian Croat members of the diaspora. Intent not just on winning independence, the Bosnian Croats were guided by three ideas: 1) destroy Yugoslavia and liberate Croatian lands from

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354 Banac, "New York Croatian Demonstration," 34.
355 Ibid.
Serbian dictatorship; 2) unify Croatian lands into the framework of one national state; 3) punish the Serbs for their hubris. Unlike other Croatian nationals, the Bosnian Croats were cut from a more extreme cloth. Their aims were not limited to those which were reasonable and fair. Their ideology went far beyond the achievement of independence and unification of the core Croatia territories (inner Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia) into the field of national purification and the desire for territorial expansion beyond the boundaries of the Croatian Republic. The Bosnian Croats considered the Serbs the biggest enemy of the Croatian people and they harbored a genuine animosity toward the Serbian nation. They felt that the Serbs had to be fully defeated otherwise they would be the turbulent enemy—always rising up to cause trouble. Additionally, the Bosnian Croats saw the Serbs as fundamentally evil. They did not simply want to defeat them but to exact revenge for the years of subjugation, terror and police rule that Croats were forced to live under for so many decades.

The Bosnian Croat faction in the United States traces its roots back to the Ustaše, which thrived in the hills of Western Herzegovina. The diaspora’s ideology, while not as extreme as the Ustaše, was as uncompromising. The Bosnian Croats cast themselves in a different role than other Croatians. They are the defenders of the Croatian people and are willing to use violence to achieve this goal. Bosnian Croats see themselves as the true Croatian nationalists and look down at their Croatian brethren who don’t share their passion and commitment to the nation. They are anti-Yugoslavia, anti-Serbia, intolerant of religions other than Catholicism and extremely chauvinistic. They do not doubt that
Croatia has a legitimate right to the lands of Bosnia and Herzegovina and consider Bosnian Muslims to be Croatia ‘blood brothers’ and ‘Croats of the Moslem faith.'

The interwar period and World War II are the historical reference points most significant for Bosnian Croat ideology. The nationalism that emerged was fierce and violent. Taking advantage of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Croatians succeeded in breaking free of Serbian control and, ultimately, re-establishing their own state. The brutality of the Ustaše state was horrific. At the center were two main beliefs: 1) Croatia needed to reclaim its historical lands, including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, 2) the Independent State of Croatia (ISC) could not tolerate a sizeable Serbian minority living within the bounds of its territory. In this story, the Croatians did not emerge victorious. They were on the wrong side of history and, as a result, found themselves, once again, at the mercy of the Serbs. Many in this group were forced to flee Yugoslavia following the end of the war. Upon settlement in the United States, these individuals became pivotal players in diaspora life—intensely politicizing communities with their “experience of collective trauma and nostalgic memories of the independent state.”

To this group, Yugoslavia was an offense. They saw their dream of independence dissolve and witnessed their ancient homeland being seized by Tito’s Partisans. They saw Croatia demoted to what they felt was a second-class republic dominated by Serbia and stripped of all ability to take autonomous action. This concept of diasporic life meant

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that, "even as many of them became prosperous in the diaspora, they continued to invest in producing a particular memory of an independent Croatia for future generations."\textsuperscript{358}

As occurred with their more mainstream compatriots, these more nationalistic Croats were primed for action by the narratives triggered through the 1991 declaration of independence by Croatia. The link between past and present was of a different tone. More severe in their nationalism, their stories focused on the revolutionary tactics used by their historical counterparts to liberate Croatia from Serbian domination and establish an independent Croatia. They echoed the need for violence and bloodshed to reclaim Croatian lands. Reviving the symbols used by the old guard, they accepted the need for aggressive tactics to ensure the survival of the Croatian state. Foremost in their minds was the memory of 1945 when the Croatian people lost the chance to have their own state. This was not to happen again.

5. \textit{Strategic behavior does not adequately explain the Croatian response}

The intense and oftentimes extreme engagement on the part of Croat Americans did not diminish their ability to effectively organize for their cause. The well-structured and sophisticated approach to community organizing and government advocacy suggests a very skilled leadership. It is natural, then, to consider how Croatian response was driven by the political interest of Croatian leaders as opposed to emotional incentives. Without a doubt, Croatian leaders were delighted by the surge of interest shown by Croat Americans to events taking place back home. They were even more thrilled by

\textsuperscript{358} This point is often made in reference to the Palestinian diaspora but is equally relevant to segments of the Croatian diaspora as well as to the Serbian. See Mohammed A. Bamyeh, "The Palestinian Diaspora," in \textit{Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers}, ed. Hazel Smith and Paul Stares (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007).
expanding membership in their organizations. The early 1990s was a tremendously exciting period for diaspora organizations as they saw their size, relevance and capacity grow. Leaders were able to operate with an authority that they formerly lacked and acted on a national agenda important to both Croatian Americans and the U.S. government. It would not at all be surprising if Croatian elites took advantage of this opportunity to consolidate their positions and secure their ability to continue to operate on a national scale.

It is difficult to argue convincingly that diaspora elite action was guided more by political self-interest or one-upmanship than by emotional considerations. Unquestionably, both self-interest and emotions played an important role in determining priorities. Throughout the conflict, though, we witness a shifting of balance between these two drivers. Predictably, emotions dominated the start of collective engagement. Croatian leaders were overwhelmingly more concerned with achieving their goal—homeland independence—than promoting their individual or institutional interests.

Several things stand out in the way of U.S. Croat leadership action that suggest the group was more emotionally directed than self-interest promoting. First, Croat Americans were not necessarily encouraged to join an organization, but rather to participate in Croatia’s fight. Even though there was a remarkable spike in membership, Croatian American leaders pushed more for involvement in the cause and did not proactively initiate membership drives. Several leaders openly admitted that they initially found themselves at somewhat of a loss on how to organize the demand they
were receiving from the Croatian community.\textsuperscript{359} This could, in part, be why established leaders encouraged people to take action through their parishes, reputable humanitarian agencies and local organization chapters—they simply did not have the capacity to respond.\textsuperscript{360} Others, however, seemed to recognize the importance of unity. “We dare not be naïve and think that we can tear each other apart and the enemy will just sit by idly and not capitalize on it. No one organization or person has all the answers, but all together a great consensus can be built...It is imperative that the leaders of our organizations sit down face to face and seek solutions which bring unity and not division.”\textsuperscript{361} Much of what was encouraged was individual action. Community members were instructed to not only give generously to humanitarian efforts but to lobby their members of Congress, participate in letter writing campaigns, give political and financial support for U.S. Congressmen sympathetic to the Croatian cause and attend protest rallies in Washington or other major cities.

Second, Croatian leaders were remarkably adept at putting aside differences and overcoming rivalries. The more established institutions welcomed new organizations and all tried, albeit loosely, to coordinate toward a common goal. The Croatian Association of America (CAA) was founded to maintain an active presence in Washington and aggressively participate in all forums having to do with U.S. policy on the Balkans. The National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA) was later established as a coordinating body for all U.S. Croatian organizations and to support the CAA in its

\textsuperscript{359} “Personal Interview with John Kraljic, President of the National Croatian American Association.”

\textsuperscript{360} Croatians Americans claim that over $700,000 was sent to Croatia for humanitarian relief during the years 1991-1995 through the Croatian Catholic Union alone. Melchior Masina, “Overview of the Croatian Catholic Union's Work on Behalf of the Croatian People, Especially in Croatia and B&H in the Last Decade” in \textit{Croatian Diaspora in the U.S.A. at the Eve of the Third Millennium} (Chicago: 1999), 26.

\textsuperscript{361} Petrusic, “NFCA, CAA and Croatians in America: Let's Stick Together!,” 13.
lobbying efforts. Additionally, the public relations and legal talents of Croatian professional and academic communities were harnessed as part of a campaign to ensure that the Croatian point of view was adequately represented to the U.S. public. An impressive number of letters to the editor, opinion pieces, paid advertisements, press releases, position papers, and petitions were published on a regular basis both to keep the Croatian issue in the minds of the U.S. public and to ensure the Croatian voice was being heard.

Finally, the Croat leadership did not shy away from aggressively challenging the United States' Balkan policy. Rather than try to accommodate government officials so as to maintain access and good will, Croatian nationalists forcefully denounced Washington's failure to condemn Serbian aggression and criticized the Bush Administration's perceived bias toward Serbia. As one Croatian wrote, "is this in the American nation's best interest...to see such a small nation abused?" They assailed U.S. inclination to end the war quickly, stating that the government was "solely interested in the quickest possible termination regardless of the consequences to the victims." Croatian Americans assaulted the government with their independence agenda and showed a stubborn unwillingness to modify their position. Croatian obstinacy, in part, contributed to the notion that ancient hatreds dominated relations in the Balkans. How else could such hard and unforgiving stances be explained if not rooted in a history of antagonism and hostility? In addition to working tirelessly to mobilize the U.S. Croat

362 See White House Briefing, July 1991 in Batistich et al., Croatian Anti-Calumny Project. Commemorative Booklet on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
364 Ibid.
community, they made every effort to win the sympathy of the U.S. government and the American public.

Paradoxically, the more passionate their entreaties, the more unreasonable they seemed. Neither U.S. officials nor the American public were interested in or persuaded by the litany of historical grievances Croats highlighted to rationalize their goals and legitimize their tactics. Rather than win support, Croats advocates often alienated those they were trying to convince. The more extreme elements seemed woefully disconnected from the current hostilities and unable to seriously engage in the realities of the present-day fight. Their anger was deeply tied to perceived past injury, which they continued to use to interpret the homeland conflict.

There is no doubt that the Croatian community quickly became a formidable political force in American politics. For the Croatian-American community, the struggle for independence had the unintended, but positive, effect of structuring a formerly fragmented community into a professional, national, political force. Leaders adroitly used this unforeseen opportunity to create a national presence upon which they could promote Croatian interests and flex Croatian muscle.

With the advent of sovereignty, however, the vigor that accompanied the fight for independence was replaced by a more measured interaction with the new country, as actions taken were assessed in light of how they affected a wider set of interests. As one individual explained, interests became more practical as the focus switched from nation-getting to nation-building. Inevitably, organizational interests and needs emerged

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365 Personal Interview with Dr. Ante Cuvalo.
particular to the U.S. community as they sought to define their new role in the post-independence environment. As the emotional power of independence faded, these interests began to assert themselves with greater strength, noticeably changing the focus of the diaspora leadership. “The early sense of unity, togetherness, that sense of mission and purpose has lost its intensity and importance. We have drifted away...ever so slowly from the initial ‘one heart, one mind’ stance to a more critical and divisive attitude,” was one diaspora leader’s comment.366 Our own politicians are the source of trouble dividing us into Croats from Bosnia, Dalmatia, Istria, Hercegovina,” noted another activist.367 The issue of Bosnia became the first challenge. More moderate nationalists looked to positioning Croatia, and themselves, in the post-war environment. They viewed the Bosnian entanglement as a harmful distraction. Croatia, and its diaspora, needed to focus on post-war next steps and avoid appearing aggressive or extreme.

V. Conclusion

Easily overlooked, but argued as central to expressions of nationalism, humiliation is the unseen driver of action. Rooted in a real sense of historical decline, humiliation becomes a problem when groups are unable to reconcile themselves to the reality of their decay and admit that they were powerless to prevent it. In these instances what is seen is an obsessive concern about status—a surfeit of explanations extolling the former greatness of the group in question and over-detailing why they are no longer admired or respected. Frequently, a particular enemy is identified as responsible. Stories of historical wrongs are formed that illustrate purposeful malevolence of the enemy and depict impossible odds to overcome. These ideas simmer and fester during times of calm.

367 Ibid.
when the status quo dominates. It is only around periods of uncertainty and change, when opportunity arises to challenge the status quo, that these stories become significant to diaspora action. It is not surprising, then, that groups who define themselves in terms of historical injury are likely to exhibit extreme nationalist tendencies over issues that involve status—either its loss or gain.

With the advent of independence, Croatian Americans finally felt equal to other ethnic groups. The homeland war was a turning point in their lives, giving them personal pride and increasing their self-esteem. The struggle for independence also served as a means of social cohesion for many Croatian Americans. However, after the fight for independence was completed, the vigor, force and power of the early 1990s dissipated. Diaspora leaders scrambled to find new ways to energize the community but have found it difficult to maintain the emotional engagement that was present in the early 90s. What is agreed on is that “Croatia needs now to look above and beyond the last fifty years of its history and create and economic and social vision for the nation-state.”

CHAPTER 4: SERBIA

I. Introduction

Serbian Americans have a remarkably strong sense of ethnic pride. Conversations with American Serbs often reveal a detailed knowledge of Serbian history and a lively interest in events taking place back home. It comes as no surprise, then, that the Yugoslav turmoil caught the attention of the American diaspora. What was astonishing was the strength of the reaction, how quickly it surfaced and the uniformity of response.

As with the previous chapter, I consider critical decision-points that confronted the diaspora and analyze their choices with regard to their politics. Four episodes are singled out. The first is support for the Krajina Serbs' secession ambitions. The second is defense for the Bosnian Serbs' breakaway agenda. Both these war aims challenged diaspora Serbs politics in similar ways. Their options fell along the following lines: 1) do nothing; 2) support greater Serbian minority rights within an intact Croatia and Bosnia; 3) support a breakaway agenda without Serbian military involvement; 4) support the breakaway agenda with Serbian military involvement. The U.S. diaspora consistently supported option 4. They backed the autonomy efforts of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs and championed the idea of these groups joining Serbia proper as part of a Greater Serbia nation-building project. The diaspora position was notable for its consistency. Serbian Americans remained committed to the separatist agendas of their brethren even as Belgrade backed away from its Greater Serbian plans. On a smaller scale, I look at the Dayton accord and diaspora opinions on the compromises made for the sake of peace. Here I look at the binomial decision of compromise for peace vs. continue to fight. In
what would become typical of the Serbian diaspora, they rejected the Dayton Peace Accord. Finally, I consider attitudes toward the Kosovo war, an event that uncomfortably positioned diaspora loyalties between home and homeland. Confronted with US condemnation and military action against Serbia, the diaspora was faced with the following choices: 1) do nothing and allow the confrontation to play out without their involvement; 2) support the US policy and condemn Serbian action; 3) position themselves as peace brokers, advocating for concessions on both sides; 4) support Serbia and condemn the United States. Once again, the US Serb diaspora chose option 4. The bombing of Belgrade not only galvanized the already active portions of the diaspora but activated those who had previously remained quiet on the subjects of Croatia and Bosnia. The attack of Serbia proper served to unite this hold-out section with the more activist members.

The next section gives background into the Serbian diaspora in the United States, including a history of the U.S. community and an outline of some of the more relevant and active organizations. The third section diagrams the major Serbian narratives that remain current with the diaspora. The fourth section talks specifically about the five critical periods and charts where on the nationalist scale different elements of the diaspora fell. Section five analyzes how well my emotion-based theory of extremism holds up against the rational actor model I posit as an alternative. I finish with some concluding remarks.
II. Background

A. Serbian American Immigration

The 2004 U.S. census records 300,936 Serbian Americans living in the United States. Chicago, IL boasts one of the largest communities. Other sizable majorities are found in New York, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, California and Arizona.

Early Serbian immigration to America began circa 1815, with the first significant migration occurring between the years 1880 to 1914. A second flow followed the end of WWII. During mid-to-late 1960s the number of Serbians coming to the United States rose again, largely due to a stagnant Yugoslav economy and a shortage of economic opportunities for working-age Serbians. The outbreak of hostilities in the Balkans in the early 1990s spurred the next surge of Serbian migration as young men fled military service and families sought safety.

The character of migrants varied significantly by cohort. Early settlers came largely from Serb-populated outlying areas under the control of either the Hapsburg or the Ottoman Empire. These were predominantly young, uneducated men looking for work. They settled in the mining areas of Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, as well as in the big industrial cities of Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago. Most were manual

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369 Generally speaking, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Serbs who came to America in the early waves of immigration because immigration records often did not distinguish between various Slavic and, especially, South Slavic groups. The term Slavonic was most often used in recording immigrants from the various parts of the Eastern Europe. Church records are more helpful in distinguishing the Serbs, for these documents clearly state religious orientation of the parishioners. In addition, census statistics compiled before World War I had further confused the issue by listing immigrants by their country of origin. Thus, the Serbs could be included with the Croats, Slovenians, Austro-Hungarians, Turks, Bulgarians, or Romanians, or simply listed as Yugoslavs after 1929, when the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was renamed Yugoslavia.
laborers, taking jobs in steel mills, meat-packing companies, and lumber industries. In contrast, the post-1945 migrants came largely from Serbia proper. This group was not only wealthier and more educated than their predecessors but more highly politicized as well. Many were, in fact, former army officers and soldiers who had recent experience in the battles of World War II. A significant number were supporters of Serbian General Mihailović, the founder and leader of the nationalist Chetnik movement who fought against the Nazis and the communists partisans. While forced to flee abroad at the end of the war they, nevertheless, remained deeply engaged in the politics and culture of their home country.

Post-1965 and following the start of the Yugoslav wars two smaller clusters of Serbian immigrants made their way to the United States. The first was largely young individuals who felt economically disenfranchised in Yugoslavia. They came looking for greater professional and financial opportunities that were denied to them in a stagnating Yugoslavia or, later, to avoid military service in the Yugoslav Army. These migrants were only loosely tied to the U.S. communities and engaged casually with the Serbian American population and their organizations. The American diaspora, in their turn, saw these new immigrants as largely lacking in Serbian pride and a sense of Serbian history. Living under communist rule for so long, they were seen as crass opportunists, more interested in making money and taking advantage of living in the United States than joining Serbian societies, clubs or organizations. The second group was made up of individuals who were fleeing the conflicts and young men trying to avoid forced

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370 Lees, Yugoslavia-Americans and National Security During World War II.
371 Dragoljub "Draža" Mihailović was the Serbian general now primarily remembered as the WWII leader of the Chetnik movement.
372 Interview, Member Serbian National Federation.
conscription into the Yugoslav Army. As with the prior group, these migrants held a less idealized image of Serbia and the conflicts that were taking place. In fact, many Serbians arriving after the start of the Balkan wars were surprised by the parochial and outdated mindset of their Serbian American friends. The Serbia with which these émigrés interacted was based on an obsolete image that had little to do with the everyday reality of the modern republic. 373

B. Serbian American Organizations

The Serbian National Federation (SNF) is one of the oldest Serbian American organizations still active today. Officially incorporated in 1929, its roots extend as far back as 1901. 374 Based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the SNF initially began as a fraternal organization offering insurance to members of the Serbian community. Its mission quickly expanded, however, as the organization began to address a wider range of issues important to Serbian life abroad, or what it referred to as the ‘Serbian nationalistic consciousness’. 375 As stated by SNF founder, Sava Hajdin: "We never wished our federation to be only the association of benevolent societies. We wished it to be the matrix of Serbianism in America and the bastion of the idea of St. Sava." 376 Since its inception, the SNF has been publishing its weekly bilingual newspaper, Amerikanski Srbobran.

373 Lees, Yugoslav-Americans and National Security During World War II.
374 On June 15, 1901, a group of Serbs founded the first Serbian Federation, under the name: "Serbian Orthodox Federation-Srbobran. This organization was the pre-cursor to the SNF, which is why the SNF claims that it was begun in 1901.
376 Ibid.([cited).
As with many ethnic groups, the SNF struggles to keep American Serbs engaged with the organization and with their heritage. A significant challenge is to remain relevant with younger Serbians Americans who define their relationship to their Serbian identity in different terms than their parents or grandparents. Offering scholarship programmes, Serbian-language primers and courses, organized trips to Serbia, in addition to soccer, tennis, golf, and bowling leagues, the SNF hopes to generate interest in the organization and in all things Serbian. Additionally, the SNF organizes a three-day "Serbian Days" celebration each summer as a way to bring people together for a yearly event. As observed by former SNF President, Daniel Pyvich, organizations such as the SNF were having a rough time remaining relevant. He attributes their overall decline largely to the increased number of options that people have to engage with their communities. Whereas before the SNF served as an important community center for the Serbian population, it now competes with other civil society groups for the time, attention and support of members—many of whom define themselves in more expansive terms.377

While ostensibly focused on the cultural and communal life of Serbs in America, the SNF is, nevertheless, a nationalistic organization. The SNF office in downtown Pittsburg is filled with photos of Serbian heroes, the most prominent being General Mihailović, founder and leader of the Chetnik nationalist movement during the Second World War. In addition to sending humanitarian assistance, the SNF also championed the war aims and strategies of the Serbian government. As explained to me in one

377 "Interview Pyviech, Former President Snf," (August 2007).
conversation: “If there were ever a time to rebuild the pride, honor and spirit of our people, it is was then.”\textsuperscript{378}

The \textit{Serbian National Defense Council of America} (SND) rivals the SNF in terms of longevity. Started in 1914 in Chicago, IL, the SND has a long and illustrious history of Serbian patriotism and activism. It recruited volunteers to fight for Serbia during World War I and was a strong supporter of the Serbian Chetnik movement formed and led by General Mihailović during World War II. Following these wars, the SND sent food and relief supplies to thousands of Serbs dispersed in various displaced persons camp. The SND publishes \textit{Liberty (Sloboda)}.

Unlike many other diaspora organizations, the SND is overtly political and does not concentrate on Serbian community building in the same way as other organizations, such as the SNF. The membership application to the SND, for example, requires agreement that persons applying do not ‘ascribe to any communist, fascist or totalitarian ideology’.\textsuperscript{379} Additionally, the SND does not offer a banquet of ‘services’ as is the norm with most organized ethnic groups. What it provides is a way for Serbian Americans to remain actively involved in the political life of their homeland. Through informational bulletins, thought pieces, and links to major Serbian-centered news reports, the SND promotes a particular viewpoint that is heavy on Serbian history, pride and rights. It directs members and the public on how to effectively lobby for a cause, defines the issues of import to the Serbian community along with the proper stances to assume and helps

\textsuperscript{378} http://www.serbnatfed.org/Centenial/Centenial.html
\textsuperscript{379} See on-line membership application at http://www.snd-us.com/AboutUs/membership_SND.pdf
organize protest events so that the Serbian voice in the United States is heard. In all these matters, the SND is Serb-centered and unequivocal in its nationalist position.

The Serbian Unity Congress (SUC) is a fairly young organization in comparison to the two previous. Incorporated in 1990, it was established “in response to the historic changes occurring in Yugoslavia.” The SUC describes itself as “a non-profit international organization representing Serbs and friends of Serbs in the diaspora committed to ensuring the continuation of the Serbian heritage…Its long term goal is to contribute to democratization and reconstruction of the Serbian territories.” Based in Washington, D.C. but with chapters throughout the country, the SUC serves as the political and lobbying arm of the Serbian population in the United States. The SUC is both a membership organization made up of individuals and an umbrella organization linking a number of Serbian-oriented groups.

The SUC functions in a number of different capacities. First and foremost, it sees itself as the modern mouthpiece of the Serbian diaspora and assumes authority for representing this population to the U.S. government and to the wider American public. The SUC invests considerable resources in building and maintaining a vibrant Washington network. It employs professional lobbying firms to advocate on its behalf and works to parlay the collective power of Serbian Americans into more favorable policies toward the homeland. Additionally, the SUC promotes itself as the go-to place

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380 The latest cause is, unsurprisingly, Kosovo independence. The SND was instrumental in organizing a protest rally in Chicago that was held on 1 March 2008 ‘against recognition of the self-proclaimed Albanian quasi-state in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija by the U.S. administration.’ The SND goes on the say, “the illegal and brutal takeover of the Serbian land for the sake of Jihadist war criminals and church-burners must not be allowed! Let’s show we have our pride, our voice and OUR VOTE!’. See http://news.serbianunity.net/2008/02/22/6096/
381 www.serbianunity.net
382 www.serbianunity.net
for accurate information on all-things-Serbian. In the face of what it considers an exceptionally anti-Serb attitude in the United States, it diligently works to get the Serb point of view out. Through partnerships with Serbnet, based in Chicago, and SAVA (the Serbian American Voters Alliance), based in Los Angeles, it produces and distributes materials for public consumption.

Although the SUC tries to project a coordinated front, political differences exist between its leaders that, at times, challenge the unity of the group. One of the more public divisions in the history of the organization centered around public support for Slobodan Milosevic. With many Serbian Americans becoming disillusioned with Milosevic as events in the Balkans continued to unfold, a number of community leaders opted to openly disavow the former Serbian President. Others, however, argued that such a public stance would signal weakness and give ammunition to their enemies.

C. Serbian American Political Activity

Serbian American didn’t make real efforts to engage in joint political activity until the start of the 1990s. The violence in Yugoslavia catalyzed Serbs in the United States began to define their common political interests. As noted by then Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley, “[t]his is something which has never been done before, and let me assure you we are making a difference. We are building a Serbian-American grassroots political lobby and network in this country and from the ground up.”

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Bentley, in fact, emerged as one of the initial leaders of the nascent Serbian political community in America. From her seat in Congress, she fervently championed the Milosevic regime to her fellow Representatives and fought to align Washington policy to favor Serbian interests. She repeatedly battled against attempts by others to sanction Serbia for their conduct in the war. She also lobbied hard to channel official humanitarian assistance to Serb populations in Bosnia. Outside of her official government duties, Bentley was instrumental in organizing the Serbian community into more formal structures. She tirelessly reached out to prominent Serbian Americans in an effort to create a unified message that could define Serbian politics in the U.S. Bentley, herself, started the organization SerbNet in 1991. Largely information-focused, SerbNet published and produced a range of written and media materials that could be used by other Serb American organizations to support their activities. It also organized lectures and supported pro-Serb speakers to popularize the Serbian version of events taking place in Yugoslavia. SerbNet was unquestionably hard line in its leaning and forceful in its messaging. For all its lack of subtlety, however, it represented the first serious effort by Serbian Americans at collective political action around the Yugoslav war. A year later the Serbian Unity Congress, which was to become the major representative organization of the Serbian American community, was formed.

From the start, the SUC set the standard for Serbian American political action. It sought to insert a level of professionalism into Serbian nationalist activity that was formerly missing from the American community. Particularly, it wanted to move the Serbian collective response to the war away from the hodgepodge of random protests that
defined its early engagement to a more targeted agenda for action.\textsuperscript{384} Headquartered in California, with an office in Washington and local chapters throughout the United States, the SUC worked diligently to create a large membership base that could be mobilized to vocally and consistently support the SUC political agenda when called upon. For example, the SUC encouraged its members to call and write their local and national representatives to express their views on the war in Yugoslavia and U.S. policy. Members were given form-letter templates and the names and addresses of their elected officials. They were also provided with a list of the priority issues of the Serbian American community (as defined by the SUC) and talking points on topic: 1) lifting of economic sanctions against Serbian people; 2) the U.S. would not militarily engage in the Balkans; 3) the U.S. was to recognize the right of Serbian people in Serbian-occupied territories of Bosnia and Croatia to self-determination; 4) the arms embargo was to be reinforced equally on the Croatian and Muslim sides; and, 5) pressure was to be applied to the Croats and Muslims to negotiate a peaceful territorial settlement and redraw the communist-drawn borders of the former Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{385}

In addition to the larger Serbian American agenda, the SUC also asked that its members weigh in with their elected representatives at critical junctures during the war, when U.S. policy was under debate. In 1993, for example, when the issue of whether or not to send U.S. air strikes against the Bosnian Serb forces was being debated, the SUC organized a massive letter writing campaign by members to their representatives in

\textsuperscript{384} Post-Kosovo, the SUC put itself through a real self-examination to better understand its weakness and strengths. It came to the conclusion that it's lobbying efforts were too closely tied to historical grievances, making them largely ineffective. As pointed out by one member of the SUC, they seemed unable to frame their issues in language that resonated with Washington policymakers.

\textsuperscript{385} Blitz, "Serbia's War Lobby."
Congress arguing against this policy. The SUC, itself, sent information packets explaining the Serbian American position to the White House, members of Congress, the State Department, and to major media outfits. Again in 1995, the SUC mobilized its members to write in support of the cease fire initiative orchestrated by Jimmy Carter, which proposed to freeze the division of Bosnia along the current battleground lines. 386

Also in 1995, then newly-elected SUC President John Delich appealed to SUC chapter heads to rally members to contact their congressmen asking them to ‘use their efforts and influence to help end the carnage in Bosnia now.”387 Delich also personally targeted Senator Jesse Helmes, then Chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Representative Charles Wilson, who held an influential position in the House Appropriations Committee.

Additionally, the SUC launched a concerted information campaign whose aim was to better publicize the Serb version of events to the American public. The perceived anti-Serb bias of the American media was a constant concern of the SUC. They sought to counter the negative press with rebuttals from ‘ordinary’ Serbs, as well as the Serbian American leadership. The aim was to provide both an alternative account of the war than the one being publicized and to also give the historical background of the region that was seen as so important to understanding current events. Finally, the SUC organized several rallies around the country. While not expecting the protests to have immediate impact, these gatherings were a useful way to advertise their positions and create the perception of a large and engaged ethnic community.

The SUC also worked to gain better access to the major decision centers of Washington to more directly influence U.S. policy. Similar to other ethnic communities, it turned to professional public relations firms to facilitate this part of its work. Mantos and Matos, Inc. was the primary firm engaged in 1992, although other parts of the Serbian American community also worked with David Keene and Associates, as well as McDermott O’Neill.

By itself, the Serbian American community was not a large fundraiser. Blitz writes that a major aim of hiring Mantos and Mantos, Inc., was to link Serbian Americans to the better organized and wealthier Hellenic community. Mantos and Mantos represented several major Greek Americans organization and had deep roots in that community. The joint force of these two groups would multiply the impact of Serbian American lobbying efforts by making the community seem larger and more influential than it actually was. Together, the two populations could bundle their contributions and target members of Congress sympathetic to the Serbian cause. The Serbian-Greek strategy sought to package contributions from wealthy individuals in the two communities into repeated donations to specific members of Congress. The targets were those who could influence decisions taken on the Balkan conflict during critical periods. A spike in contributions was seen in 1994, for example, when NATO threatened airstrikes following the Serbian attack on Gorazde. Similarly, a rise in contributions to key members of Congress from prominent Serbian Americans was also recorded when the issue of lifting the arms embargo in Bosnia came for a vote in both the House and the

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388 Blitz, "Serbia's War Lobby."
Senate. As reported by Lutterbeck, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) recorded a number of repeat contributions by high-placed Serbian Americans during the first half of the 1990s. Former SUC founder and President Michael Djordjevich gave generously to such people as Senator Phil Gramm ($1000), and California Representative Bill Baker ($8000). Former SUC Treasurer Peter Chelovich donated in amounts of thousands to Senator Spencer Abraham ($4000), Representative Richard Chrysler ($3000), and Representative Rep. Joe Knollenberg ($5500). The most popular recipient of Serbian largess, however, was Representative Lee Hamilton, then Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Between 1993 and 1994, Representative Hamilton received over "$30,000 in multiple contributions from leaders of the Serbian and Greek-American communities." In addition to the above lobbying strategy, the Serbian Unity Congress Political Action Committee (SUC PAC) made its own contributions to a number of elected officials, although in much smaller amounts. Unsurprisingly, Representative Helen Delich Bentley received the most support.

For all their efforts to effectively operate on the national stage, Serbian Americans never became as influential as they hoped. Records of SUC Annual Meetings show post-Kosovo, the leaders of the SUC, themselves, recognized the need to radically change their approach to influencing Washington.

390 Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas); Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.); Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.); and Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) were only some of the members of Congress reported as accepting donations from the SUC or high ranking members of the organization during critical periods of war in Yugoslavia. See Ibid.
391 Lutterbeck also notes that Baker received $2500 from regional SUC vice president Desa Wakeman
392 Lutterbeck, "No Sacred Cows--the Balkan Crisis."
III. Serbian Narratives of National Identity

The strong sense of ethnicity found in many American Serbs translates into a fairly consistent set of identity narratives that capture the essence Serbian self-perception. What we find is a tightly knit web of ideas and beliefs that hold tremendous sway on the hearts and minds of the Serbian people. This uniformity of beliefs stresses a high self-regard that is often difficult to reconcile with the equally vibrant number of victim narratives that define the Serbian experience. For while Serbians tend to think very well of themselves, they also deeply believe that history has been largely unfair to this exceptional group. Serbians are the ultimate victims—continually faulting other groups, circumstances, and even disloyal members of their own community, for their misfortunes.

In this respect, the quintessential Serb story is one of valiant effort and noble loss—referred to by some as the Serbian “victim-martyr complex”. By all appearances, the Serbian people are unable to capitalize either on their strengths or on the small successes that they sometimes are able to wrest from history. It is this mindset that led to the saying that the Serbs often “win the war but lose the peace”. Stuck in a seemingly continuous cycle of almost-achievement (“It seems like no matter how hard we try, we just can’t win”), the Serbian people have crafted a number of compelling narratives that account for their perpetual under-dog status. While Serbian disunity is

393 Marko Zivkovic aptly refers to this as “the stories that Serbs tell themselves and others about themselves”. He also uses the term ethnic self-stereotyping to describe how the Serbs, his focus of study, essentialized their identity through narratives. I will use both characterizations in this chapter. See Marko Zivkovic, "Stories That Serbs Tell Themselves (and Others) About Themselves: Discourses on Identity and Destiny in Serbia since the Mid-1908s" (University of Chicago).
395 Personal Interview with Nebosja Malic, Vice President Washington Chapter, Serbian Unity Congress, March 2003.
396 American Srbobran, 2 January 1991
without question a prominent theme in Serbian self-description, the identity narratives embraced by most diasporic Serbs tend to emphasize their suffering and persecution at the hands of others along with their extreme self-sacrifice in sustaining the dream of a united and prosperous Serbia. The theme of maltreatment, in fact, provides one of the strongest continuous threads in Serbian history and serves as a potent force for unity in the Serbian community abroad.

A. The importance of Kosovo

The most prominent of the identity narratives are the stories surrounding Kosovo. Often referred to as the ‘cradle of Serbian civilization’, Kosovo is a privileged place with the Serbian community. “Kosovo is Serbia and Serbia is Kosovo.” “Everything which we are stems from Kosovo. Kosovo in the hearts and minds of Serbs is far deeper than a birthright. It is a covenant between our people and God.” As the early headquarters of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the continued home of a number of eminent monasteries and shrines, Kosovo has significant religious

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397 Kosovo’s symbolic power cannot be overstated. A discussion about Kosovo and its importance to Serbia was initiated by every person interviewed for this study, without exception. More striking, however, is how Kosovo was brought up by Serbian Americans not formally interviewed. In one instance, movers who were helping me move items from storage to a new house noticed that I had a number of books on Serbia. They mentioned that they were Serbian American and asked about my interest in their country. I explained my research to them and they immediately launched into a long explanation of Kosovo, starting with 1389 and the battle of Kosovo Polje. I was surprised not only at the depth of their historical knowledge, but that they felt to need to explain the importance of Kosovo to Serbians with such passion.

398 All nations also point to particular historical occurrences in their past which were and are sources of pride and heart-warming memories, events which for various reasons are glorified because they teach, inspire and act as morale builders; events which help nations in creating their own religious, philosophical, cultural and ethical values and norms. These historical events help to define the behavior and personality of nations and very often shape and control the so-called quality of life which we as individuals, members of different nations, enjoy. It is in this category which I have placed the Kosovo Battle, whose 600th anniversary was celebrated in June of 1989. The memory of Kosovo has become a part of the Serbian national psyche and its example is ever present in the Serb national mind.” American Srbobran, 19 June 1991. Also see Laura Silber and Allan Little, Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).


400 Ibid.
Historically, Kosovo is also the celebrated site of the Serbian battle and defeat against the Ottoman Turks on 28 June 1389. The event is one of the centerpieces of the Serbian story and remains vibrant in the collective memory of much of the Serbian population. So significant is Kosovo that it is often used as shorthand for what it means to be Serbian. As expressed by Tim Judah: “In all of European history it is impossible to find any comparison with the effect of Kosovo on the Serbia national psyche.”

For many American Serbs, thus, the status of Kosovo is non-negotiable. They point to the fact that when Prince Lazar exhorted the Serbs to fight for their country he stated that “every Serb who calls himself a Serb would meet at Kosovo.” As such, a prominent sentiment expressed by large portions of the diaspora is that “every Serb who calls himself a Serb will not turn his back on Kosovo.”

The Battle of Kosovo is an epic tale. Passed down among Serbs from generation to generation it tells the story of how the medieval Serbian army was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. The defeat ushered in 500 years of foreign domination, from which the Serbs emerged only in the nineteenth century. Prince Lazar, the Serb commander

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401 In the history of Kosovo and Serbia, Sava must rank as one of its towering and most influential figures. Until 1219, the Serbs, or rather the people who were on their way to developing a national consciousness as Serbs, teetered on the brink between western Roman Catholicism and Byzantine, eastern Orthodoxy. In 1219, Sava, a brilliant diplomat and politician, secured from the then enfeebled Byzantine emperor and the Orthodox patriarch, autocephalous status for what was then to become, in effect, the Serbian national church. Autocephaly meant autonomy within the Orthodox church. What Sava’s actions meant were that, at least until 1355, Nemanjić’s power was supported by two pillars, that is to say the state and the church. When the Serbian nobility was swept away by the Ottoman invasions, the church remained. Judah, Kosovo: War and Revenge 3.


404 Ibid.

405 Historical records, however, show that while this particular battle was bloody and brutal, fighting between Serbian and Ottoman forces continued for many more years before the Serbs were definitively defeated.

406 Silber and Little, Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation.
who perished in the campaign, chose to fight for Serbia against a vastly larger Turkish army even though it meant almost certain death. His decision to defend Serbia and die rather than to betray his people for earthly benefit is held up as a hallmark of Serbdom and continues to define the thinking of many modern-day Serbs. As pointed out by one member of the Serbian diaspora, “It was during this post-Kosovo era that Serbian tradition and history formed a number of ethical postulates—guideposts and norms which Serbs accept to the present day: the concept of suffering and martyrdom; the concept of gallantry; the concept of boldness and heroism; the concept of betrayal, treachery and treason.”

Several of the more relevant of these ideas are expanded on below.

B. Martyrdom and Suffering

“It is better to die a martyr rather than live in shame,” is a common sentiment expressed in different forms in diaspora writing and mirrored in many of the conversations held with Serbian émigrés. Serbs, in fact, seem to pride themselves on their willingness not to compromise; they relish the sacrifices that they have made, and have to make, for their principles and ideals. As clearly stated in one interview, “it is better to fight honorably and die than to live like slaves.”

It is no wonder the figure of Prince Lazar remains so prominent among the Serbian diaspora population. The tremendous appeal of Lazar stems, in large part, from the moral superiority, mission and purpose his story endows on the Serb people. The defeat of Lazar and the subsequent subjugation of Serbia by the Ottoman Turks is viewed as a noble sacrifice not a humiliating loss. Lazar, as the story is told, is given two choices

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408 Personal Interview, Member of Serbian National Defense Council of America, February, 2004.
on the eve of battle: to die fighting for a noble cause and, by doing so, enter the
'Heavenly Kingdom', or compromise his people and cause for immediate earthly benefit.
He, of course, chooses the former and by doing so, ensured that the Serbian nation
remained spiritually intact, "persisting in the heavenly kingdom to resurrect another
day". 409 As described in one diaspora periodical, Lazar's choice, recognized that "valor
unto death guaranteed future Serbs the nobility of their heritage." 410

Translated into the present-day, the Kosovo defeat and the sacrifice of Prince
Lazar provide, in part, a basis for understanding the often rigid stances that diaspora
Serbs adopt when asked to compromise on what they feel are core elements of their
identity. The story teaches that the integrity of the Serbian nation is what matters.
Fighting the "good fight", even if the result is defeat, is acceptable as long as the motives
are pure—meaning as long as it is done for the greater good of the Serbian people and not
for personal gain or ambition. Compromise for expediency is considered an ultimate act
of disloyalty.

Additionally, the sacrifice of Lazar keeps intact the future hope of Serb greatness
or Serbian "resurrection". The Kosovo story calls all Serbs to continue to struggle and
sacrifice for the triumph of their people. As expressed by one Serbian author: "We
recognize that from the deepest and most desperate acts of sacrifice in His name we, as
Serbs, will find our greatest glory." 411 Because this covenant with God has no expiration
date, Serbs are comfortable taking a long-term view. Succinctly stated by one diaspora

409 Paul Pavlovich, "Kosovo, Secular History and the Preservation of the Serbian Identity--an
410 Ibid.
writer: "[e]mpires which have molested the Serbs in the past have fallen apart...the Serbs will again emerge triumphant!"\textsuperscript{412} Echoed by another activist: "Over the centuries, historians have praised the sacrificial courage of Prince Lazar and his army on that day in 1389...that same courage is embodied by spirit of all the Serbian people."\textsuperscript{413} The mythical narrative that underlies the Serbian national identity seems firmly structured on a heroic code of martyrdom and sacrifice.

C. The idea of the chosen people

In a similar vein, Kosovo teaches that the Serbians are a special people, similar in their exceptionalism to the Jews. Marko Zivkovic writes, "[w]hen Serbian writer Vuk Draskovic proclaimed in 1985 that ‘Serbs are the thirteenth, lost and the most ill-fated tribe of Israel,’ he was invoking an analogy that has long existed as one of what I call the ‘stories Serbs tell themselves (and others) about themselves.’"\textsuperscript{414} Similarly, diaspora writing is filled with numerous comparisons between the Jewish experience and the Serbian story. ‘Serbs are like the Jews’ or ‘Kosovo is to Serbs what Zion is to the Jews’ are common images promoted by diaspora writers.\textsuperscript{415} Others compare “the waves of Serbian migration from Turkish domains...to the Jewish exodus.”\textsuperscript{416} They draw parallels between Serbian suffering during World War Two and the agony of the Jewish experience: “It is by the hands of the same executioners that both Serbs and Jews have

\textsuperscript{412}13 March, 1991 American Srbobran, p. 9
\textsuperscript{413}American Srbobran August 29, 1990.
\textsuperscript{414}Marko Zivkovic, "The Wish to Be a Jew: The Power of the Jewish Trope in the Yugoslav Conflict," Cahiers de l'URMIS, no. 6 (2000).
\textsuperscript{415}28 March 1990, American Srbobran 1990
\textsuperscript{416}Zivkovic, "The Wish to Be a Jew: The Power of the Jewish Trope in the Yugoslav Conflict," 73.
been exterminated at the same concentration camps, slaughtered at the same bridges, burned alive in the same ovens, thrown together in the same pits.  

The Jewish comparison seems to serve two main purposes. First, it reinforces the idea of Serbian exceptionalism. The Serbs depict their national identity as a gift from God. Emphasizing the similarity between the Serbs and the Jews—who are the definitive example of a ‘chosen people’—provides a certain authority to Serbian identity.  

If the Serbs are like the Jews then they, as a people, are also endowed with a special standing that comes from God. Taken a step further, their relationship with God guarantees the Serbs, like the Jews, ultimate triumph through their struggle for national redemption. Second, similar to the Jews, the Serbs know suffering and are ennobled by it. They see themselves as a people who understand that it sometimes takes death and sacrifices for victory to be achieved. Such a mindset allows downturns in the fortunes of the Serbian people to be depicted as inevitable bumps on the path to their certain redemption. The rightness of the path, itself, is not usually questioned.

D. Beliefs about unity and betrayal

The belief that ‘only unity can save the Serbs’ figures prominently with Serbian Americans and is a theme that is much discussed, decried and lamented. Expressed by one member of the diaspora, “within each side smaller groups disagree over the best approaches to eventual unity, revealing a woeful lack of true oneness. Trivial bickering on the local level continues to be our worldwide hallmark.”  

Further conversations about Serbian unity with leaders of different organizations yield similar opinions. One

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417 Vuk Draskivuc quoted in Ibid.  
418 Colovic 2002:70  
419 American Srbobran, 2 January 1991
member observed that "Serbian disunity in peace or war is legendary".  

Another noted the jealous infighting that marked relations between Serbian "bigwigs", each competing to seem to be most important to the outside world.

Other Serbian commentators marveled at the lack of cooperation during the crises, even around like-minded issues.

And still other active diaspora members pointed to the dangers of discord within the community and the need for Serbian Americans to speak with one voice. They blamed the inability of Serbian leaders to overcome petty differences for why Serbia and Serbs were largely vilified by the American and world press. Incapable of speaking with one voice and crafting a coherent message, they allowed their enemies to have the upper hand and control perceptions.

The idea that disagreement or dissention results in disastrous outcomes for the Serbian community has a long legacy that can be traced, once again, to the story of the Battle of Kosovo. In contrast to the heroic Lazar, this narrative strand focuses on the treasonous figure of Vuk Brankovich. Brankovich, a trusted lieutenant of Lazar, deserts his commander and goes over to the Turkish side to fight against the Serbs. Whether or not this actually happened is near impossible to ascertain; like many historical myths the truth is less important than the symbolic meaning attached to the story and the lessons that emerge as a result. What endures is the idea that disunity in the community equals defeat. Most especially in times of crisis, Serbs are expected to unite in unequivocal support of the Serbian community. Brankovich continues to stand as the example of how Serb disunity throughout the centuries has been their curse and their downfall. It is no

420 Personal Interview with Nebosja Malic, Vice President Washington Chapter, Serbian Unity Congress.
421 Personal Interview, Member of Serbian Unity Congress, New York Chapter, April, 2004.
422 "Interview Pyviech, Former President Snf."
wonder that many leaders in the Serbian diaspora viewed dissention as treason against the Serbian people. With slogans such as “Only with unity will the Serbs survive,” diaspora activists condemned those who questioned Serbian motives and tactics. They continually pressed the theme of unity as paramount for Serbian success: “We call upon the Serbs in the homeland and abroad to unite and set their differences aside for once and for all.”

E. Serbians are the losers

“We are a great people, but for this we are also a big loser.” A strong belief in much of the diaspora population is that because of their generous, trusting and overall good-natured character Serbians constantly end up compromising their own interests. While Serbians fight valiantly for their state, people and church, they rarely reap the rewards for the sacrifices they endure. In this way Serbians are caught in a self-defeating cycle: “They win at war, but lose in peace.” According to Serbian telling, all their war victories have been canceled out by the ensuing peace settlements: “We have always stood in the first line of defense of the West and its civilization... But somehow this defense ended up every time in self-immolation on the altar of freedom for others.” World War Two stands out as particularly egregious example of Serbian sacrifice that resulted in Serbian loss and a gain by others. As pointed out by one diaspora activist:

“The nation which after a long and bloody struggle came once again to the only nation

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that did not have its own state. A worse historical fiasco in peacetime could not be imagined."\(^{429}\)

F. **Serbians are vulnerable, exploited and in danger**

It is the fate of the Serbs to be “attacked at home, betrayed abroad and left alone, the sole guardians of their own destiny.”\(^{430}\) This is a common theme expressed by Serbian émigrés, and they muster a number of examples as proof of this “reality”.

World War Two provides a fertile source of modern-day grievance material. Typical to most victim/grievance stories, Serbian narratives of World War II paint a black and white picture of good versus evil, with Serbians playing the role of the heroes and, in this instance, Croats epitomizing malevolence. “Serbs have suffered greatly in both World Wars. Croats have a short memory... In WWII the Serbs rose to the call of freedom to defend the honor of mankind. Serbs have always made history and they have always been supporters of the most praise-worthy democratic principles.”\(^{431}\) As further proof of their virtue, American Serbians point to the fact that Serbia fought on the “right” side of the war, again in contrast to their Croatian neighbors: “during WWII, the Serbs lead by Mihailovic’s Chetniks fought on the side of the Allied forces against the invading Nazi’s and Tito’s Communist Partisans.\(^{432}\) The Croatians, by contrast and largely


\(^{430}\) Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* 92.

\(^{431}\) "Serbians the Oppressed Not the Oppressors," *American Srbobran* January 17, 1990, 8.

\(^{432}\) Many Serbs, as well as some Croats and Muslims, followed the militant group known as the Royal Chetniks into the mountains of Herzegovina and Montenegro. There they engaged in guerrilla warfare under the leadership of Draža Mihailović. The Chetnik movement received broad support from British and American allies, who saw in the Greater Serbian movement a potential ally for defeating the Germans in the West and communism in the East. But in 1942 another resistance movement arose, the communist Partisans under Josip Broz Tito. A bitter civil war ensured between the two movements and eventually Tito was able to wrest the allies’ support from the Chetniks. With the allies’ support Tito won the war and then established the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. See Birgit Bock-Luna, *The Past in Exile:*
without resistance, allowed themselves to become a Nazi puppet state controlled by the Croatian Ustashe." 433

In typical Serb fashion, the Serbian diaspora tends to over-emphasize the importance of their role in WWII and their alliance with the United States. Serbians commonly portray Serbian-American relations in terms of a deep friendship based on "their remarkable ties to the U.S. throughout this century." 434 Such has been the belief in this long-lasting friendship that they often expressed shock and dismay when the United States acted in ways that were not deemed Serb-friendly. The bombing of Serbia in 1999 during the Kosovo conflict is the prototypical example. The American Serbian press described it as being "betrayed by a traditional ally—the U.S." 435 Even earlier in the decade, however, Serbian Americans sadly noted that they had few friends in the United States or Europe—powers whose sympathies seemed to be, inexplicably, with Serbia's enemies. Echoing a besieged and misunderstood mind-set, one that former president of the SNF, Daniel Pyevich, characterizes as typical of the Serb mentality, American Serbs seemed to eagerly embrace the need for a go-alone attitude. They readily accepted that the "Serbian people do not have friends among the great powers of the world to support them in the struggle for survival." 436 Such easy adoption of an 'us-against-the world' mind-set is somewhat indicative of a victim-oriented mentality. One wonders why American Serbs, in particular, seemed unable to attribute the lackluster support accorded them by large powers to factors other than pernicious intent and biased attitudes. This

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433 "Will the West Dump on Serbs Again?", American Srbobran July 17, 1991, 8.
434 Editor, American Srbobran April 21, 1999, 4.
435 Ibid.
perceived isolation from goodwill became a rallying point for Serbian Americans. They firmly believed that "Serbs who live in the democratic West cannot remain indifferent."\(^{437}\)

A more dangerous claim to emerge from the retelling of WWII history, however, is the idea that Serbs were directly targeted for extinction by their Croat neighbors "who killed hundreds of thousands of Serbs...in an attempt to create a pure Croatia."\(^{438}\) The Serbian version of events claims that the Croats brutally "embarked on what it called 'the purge of Croatia from foreign elements', which had as its main purpose the elimination of the Serbian minority. More than half a million Serbs were killed, a quarter million expelled and two hundred thousand forced to convert to Catholicism."\(^{439}\) The fear of unbridled Croatian nationalism in the 1990s was, in part, fueled by such stories of atrocities committed in the name of an independent Croatian state during WWII—many of them based in historical fact. It is not surprising that many Serbs in the diaspora, most especially those with direct experience of the events of the 1940s, strongly felt that "[a]s long as Croatia was part of Yugoslavia, the Serbs in Croatia felt somewhat safe. When Croatia declared its independence, the Serbs felt seriously threatened."\(^{440}\)

The number of Serbians killed during WWII has, in fact, become somewhat of a national obsession with certain sectors of the Serbian population. A contentious debate continues between Croats and Serbians as to the exact number of victims, with each side inflating the numbers as a way to assert legitimacy as the victim. To Serbians, the

\(^{437}\) Ibid, 4  
\(^{438}\) "Will the West Dump on Serbs Again?," 8.  
\(^ {440}\) American Srbobran November 6, 1991, 4.
killings that occurred during WWII were genocide that is destined to be repeated. As stated by one member of the diaspora, “It seems to me that that which disrupts relations between Serbs and Croats now is connected to the genocide which was perpetrated against the Serbian people by [the Croatian Ustashe regime]. . . . We can conclude that this hiding of genocide represents an appeal to history for a repeat. . . .”\textsuperscript{441} This belief is often carried to the extreme so that it has become an accepted fact among certain members of the diaspora that the “Serbs are the people who are constantly exposed to genocide.”\textsuperscript{442}

In a second popular grievance story pulled from modern history, Serbian Americans claim that it was in fact Serbia who was economically exploited by Croatia and Slovenia under communist Yugoslavia. This exploitation explains Serbian economic backwardness. Serbia’s unfair treatment as a republic is a theme thoroughly developed in the infamous ‘Memorandum’ published in 1986 by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science. The Memorandum, highly nationalistic in tenor, was quickly picked up by U.S diaspora periodicals which saw it as an eloquent and accurate expression of their beliefs:

"During the entire postwar period, the economy of Serbia was exposed to nonequivalent exchange. . . . There is not the slightest degree of suspicion that the relative retardation of Serbia primarily resulted because of smaller investments per capita, and not because of the effectiveness of investments. . . . One gets a picture of an oppressed and neglected economy in the Yugoslav space. . . . The situation of Serbia should be observed within the pattern of the political and economic domination of Slovenia and Croatia, who were the initiators of changes in all of the previous systems."\textsuperscript{443}


\textsuperscript{442} Radovan Samadzic, \textit{Politika}, August 7, 1992. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{443} "Memorandum to the Members of the United Nations and Their Respective Government."
The plan of Tito, it is claimed, was to keep Serbia weak: “After the war, Tito left many Serbian-populated areas in the newly created Croatian Republic. This was part of a long-standing political programme of diving the Serbs to keep them weak.”

The 1974 Constitution is held up by Serbian Americans as proof of Serbian discrimination under communist rule. The expressed belief is that an “anti-Serb bias has...been institutionalized in the 1974 Constitution of the country, which discriminates against Serbs living in other Republics and Provinces where Serbians ethnic, cultural and political rights have been greatly abused...In fact, Serbs outside the boundaries of ‘narrow Serbia’ have become close to second class citizens.” Serbs believed that “[t]he Constitution of 1974 was meant to keep Serbia small.” The devolution of substantial power to Serbia’s two provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, in the re-written constitution was offensive to many Serbs in the diaspora. These provinces, traditionally considered part of Serbia proper and under Serbian government jurisdiction, were made constitutional members of the Federation, giving their leaders substantial independent powers. Not only were the provinces given seats on the rotating Yugoslavian presidency, they were also allowed to elect deputies to the Serbian parliament as well as have their own assemblies, among other things. In this way, the enormous disparity between Serbia and the other republics was, with one stroke, diminished. By virtually abolishing Belgrade’s authority over Kosovo and Vojvodina, the constitution cut Serbia ‘down to size’.

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444 “Serbians the Oppressed Not the Oppressors.”
447 Personal Interview, Member of Serbian National Defense Council of America.
the next biggest republic, Croatia. Diaspora writings confidently assert that “according to
the 1943 master plan of Tito, Serbia was to be brought to its knees. Only Serbia was split
into three parts and watched as 45,000 Serbs fled from Kosovo or other parts of
Serbia.”\footnote{448 “Bias of the European Press against the Serbs,” 7.} The phrase, “weak Serbia, strong Yugoslavia” is a bitter saying in the
diaspora population.

Serbian Americans celebrate their history and identity through the number of
stories that are told and retold about who they are and what they value. Looking at the
particular triumphs and tragedies that communities choose to keep alive provides an
unparalleled insight into how these populations have decided to define themselves to
themselves as well as to the outside world. For the Serbs, the story of Kosovo
emphasizes the dual traits of victimhood and sacrifice that is central to Serbian self-
conception. The blending of these two themes is so ingrained as to be reflected in a
number of other identity narratives. The core of many of these narratives are particular
national grievances onto which several familiar stories have been attached. Reference to
a particular story usually indicates the belief in a specific wrong committed against the
Serbian nation. The more profound the feeling of having been wronged, the more
influence these stories have in defining identity and the more easily these feelings can be
tapped. During times of crisis and uncertainty, these identity reference points become
more important than in other periods. We should expect to see greater reference to these
identity narratives of the past as a way to explain events taking place in the present.
IV. Critical decision points

The position adopted by the leaders of the Serbian-American community throughout the various confrontations often baffled outside observers. Demonstrating a single-minded loyalty to the Serbian people, Serbian expatriate leaders often found themselves having to justify their support for extreme measures to an unsympathetic American public. The importance of the ‘nation’ to the Serbian population overrode other considerations. As stated by Father Irinij, Director of the External Affairs Office of the Serbian Orthodox Church: “To Serbians, the preservation of the nation is paramount.” He explained that during the Yugoslav crises, the Serbian nation was threatened both from within and from without. Outside powers used the disintegration of the Yugoslav state to try to diminish the Serbian nation. They were helped by corrupt politicians who were willing to sacrifice the future of the Serbian nation for short-term political gain. This reasoning was echoed by other members of the Serbian-American community, who defined their purpose in surprisingly similar terms—to protect and defend the Serbian people. The various stances adopted by U.S. Serbian leaders—even those that supported the extreme use of violence—can largely be explained by this single-minded rationale. In their view it was the Serbian people, not the Serbian government, that was under siege. Milosevic, while initially supported by the American Serb community, was ultimately described as a traitor—someone who was willing to abandon many of the legitimate interests for which the Serbian people were fighting for personal political gain. Externally, traditional enemies of the Serbian people threatened

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449 Personal Interview, Father Irinij Dobrijevic, Director, External Relations, Serbian Orthodox Church, January 22, 2003.
450 Ibid.
451 Interview, Member Serbian National Federation.
to take away time-honored Serbian territory through brutal ethnic cleansing of those regions. The aim was to leave a severely weakened Serbia that could be dominated by others.

This general understanding of events taking place back in the homeland is striking in the way it resembles many of the narratives already prominent with the US Serbian community. Themes of sacrifice, unity, danger and betrayal would be repeated again and again by Serbian Americans in their attempt to explain and justify their position to the outside world. Regardless of personal cost, many of the activist Serbs in the diaspora were stalwart supporters of the Serbian nationalist agenda that was aggressively promoted by Serbian leaders. To deviate or compromise on the aims and goals set out by these leaders—who painted their endeavors in highly emotive terms—was seen to be a betrayal of the national community.

A. Support of Croat Serbs

The Serbian diaspora reaction to events in Croatia was remarkable on several fronts. Community members rallied quickly and unequivocally to the Serbian cause with little questioning of the nationalist version of events or the rightness of compatriot actions. The Croatian confrontation was dominated by images of the past, most prominently those of the Ustaše, with scant attention given to current differences as the basis of conflict. Prevailing images stressed storylines of historical brutality and victimization and virtually ignored all evidence of Serbian aggression or chauvinism. Articles with titles such as, “Serbians the Oppressed Not the Oppressors” and “Bias of the European Press Against the Serbs” and “National Geographic Unfair to Serbs”, detail
how Serbs have suffered in the hands of others while always being unjustly portrayed as
the aggressors. In short, to a large majority of the diaspora, the violence between
Serbia and Croatia was unquestionably seen as an attack on Serbdom. “The Serbs in
Croatia,” one author noted, “have absolutely no rights and no recognition.”

In the eyes of Serbian Americans, Croatia’s malicious intent was confirmed by
the discriminatory policies aimed by Zagreb toward the minority Serbian population
living in Croatia. The unabashed nationalism to emerge from the Tudjman government
including the re-adoption of the Ustaše coat of arms and checkered flag as official state
symbols, the introduction of a loyalty oath for all minorities holding any public
employment, and requiring the Latin alphabet be used in all official proceedings were just
some of the policies that heightened Serbian anxiety. To diaspora Serbs, these acts
rekindled memories of brutal Serb persecution under the Ustaše regime. Articles began
appearing with greater frequency in Serbian ethnic newspapers recalling the events of the
1940. “Hundreds of thousands were killed,” wrote one contributor, “in a genocide of
unbelievable proportions by Pavelic’s Ustash Croats in the Nazi satellite Independent
Croatia.” Another decried that the Serbs in Croatia “are being persecuted today worse
than during the war when more than a million of them lost their lives in concentration
camps.” As asked and answered by one diaspora periodical, “Just what kind of
independence does Croatia have in mind? The last time Croatia became independent it
was as a Fascist Ustashi State and killed over 750,000 innocent Serb, Jews and Gypsy

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452 “Can Serbia Become the Leader of Democracy in Yugoslavia?”; “Bias of the European Press against the
453 “Can Serbia Become the Leader of Democracy in Yugoslavia?”
454 “Serbians the Oppressed Not the Oppressors.”
455 “Can Serbia Become the Leader of Democracy in Yugoslavia?”
victims." These actions simply reinforced the lessons of history, which committed Serbs to protect Serbs living elsewhere. The Serbian people who have not been so brutally suppressed "since the beginning of WWII in 1941, need and deserve the full support of all the Serbs." "Today the notion has matured," wrote another US Serb, "that any aggressive political attack on any Serb in the world will constitute an attack on the entire Serb population and that the entire Serbian people will respond to the aggressor."

In response to the more oppressive environment in Croatia, American Serbs began to mobilize. They were among the first voices to call for secession. As clearly expressed by one diaspora activist, "For longer than America has been a country, Serbs have lived on Serbian lands. This was not Croatian land and the people who inhabited it then and now are not Croatian, they're Serbian." Unlike the dialogue that was taking place back home, which first considered political autonomy, the diaspora position was for full-out secession and, if need be, war. "Nobody will ever again dig graves for the Serbian people" was the US Serbian position. Croatian independence and the chauvinist propaganda that emerged from the Tudjman government simply hardened the diaspora nationalist position. Now Serbs were really threatened, and war was no longer a remote possibility.

A defining moment for the Serb diaspora came with Belgrade’s acceptance of the Vance Peace Plan and its withdrawal of support from Milan Babić, the radical political

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457 "Serbians the Oppressed Not the Oppressors."
460 Raskovic, "A Noted Serb in the Service of His People."
leader of the Krajina Serbs. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, international envoy
Cyrus Vance proposed a plan that would halt the fighting in Croatia, demilitarize the
Krajina area and put in place a peacekeeping force until a political settlement could be
negotiated. Babić rejected the proposal, advocating for continued fighting and secession.
Milosevic, however, accepted the plan and withdrew his support from his former allies in
Croatia.

The US diaspora was livid. Milosevic, who was willing to compromise the
Krajina Serbs for political gain elsewhere, was considered a traitor and decried as such by
the true believers. In direct criticism of Milosevic, delegates of the Serbian Unity
Congress 7th Annual Convention resolved that, “the delegates at the S.U.C. Convention
with other Serbs in the Diaspora, are deeply concerned with the failure of all Serbian
political and cultural organizations to effectively protect the interests and integrity of the
Serbian nation.”461 Interests could not be protected by auctioning off inconvenient parts
of the Serbian nation. As Hockenos notes in his work on the Serbian Americans “the
diaspora abandoned Milosevic because he betrayed the national cause in Croatia, Bosnia
and Kosovo, not because it finally grasped that this cause itself was responsible for
Serbia’s decimation.”462

The diaspora threw its support behind Babić. While this stance was, in effect, a
vote for continued violence, the position reflected a strongly felt priority of the
diaspora—the protection of the Serbian nation. As described by one diaspora activist,
“the Serbs today find themselves in exactly the same situation as in 1914: the country is

461 Serbian Unity Congress, "Resolutions" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress Seventh Annual
Convention, Chicago, 1996).
laid low, their nationhood destroyed. In this war, more than in the previous ones, the Serbs are completely alone, facing a hostile world that is bent upon their total destruction." This attitude was a direct reflection of the ultra-nationalist position encouraged by Serbian academics in the drafting of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts when they wrote: "Except during the period of the NDH (the Independent State of Croatia, proclaimed in 1941 by the pro-Nazi Ustaše), Serbs in Croatia have never been as endangered as they are today."  

Supporting the policies of such politicians as Milan Babić placed the Serbian diaspora in an awkward position. Shunned by the Serbian state because of the harsh criticisms of Milosevic's politics, they were nevertheless demonized by those outside of Serbia because of their ethnicity. Their deep-felt concern for the interests of the Serbian population was labeled as radical nationalism because of the carnage that was associated with the so-called protection of Serbian rights. The message of 'Serbs as victims' was not well-received in the face of images of the atrocities committed by Serb militias in Croatia. But the feelings were powerful. "Always the victim...never the aggressor. We were the victims of fascism, we were the victim of communism and now we are the victim of democracy. Everyone wants to destroy us." The assigned Serbian collective responsibility reached such a level that a prominent diaspora organization began to "collect evidence of defamation and other civil rights violations against Serbs in the

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464 The Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 64.

Diaspora to present to the American Civil Liberties Union...to seek their assistance in pursuing remedies to such violations.”

The Serbian-American leadership gained little from pursuing a political agenda of universal Serbian rights. Their message secured them few friends at home or abroad. Rather, the extreme methods the Serbian diaspora gained them the reputation of fanatics. Given the hardship being experienced from pursuing such an unpopular agenda in the United States, it is difficult to explain Serbian-American actions in terms of simple rational self-interest. The mentality of Serb nationalism in the diaspora was atavistic. “The deliberate evocation of atrocities that had long passed from living memory; a consciously-fostered paranoia fed by rumor and myth as much as historical reality; the use of the past as a weapon of conflict and the sublimation of individual identity to that of the collective.”

The Serbs in Croatia's Krajina Region, who had been turned into a minority by the declaration of independence on the part of Croatia, voted to secede from Croatia in 1991. As will be discussed in more detailed below, Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina also expressed their wishes not to live as a minority and boycotted the referendum for Bosnian independence held in late February 1992. Most members of the U.S. diaspora supported the secessionist aspirations of both these groups. The rationale was that Serbs not living

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466 Serbian Unity Congress, "Resolutions" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress Sixth Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1995).
467 In part, the reputation of Serbian-Americans is undoubtedly due to a lack of public relations sharpness. As astute as the Albanians were in packaging their message in user-friendly language, is as inept as the Serbians were. The Serbian National Defense Council, for example still continues to publish most of its documents in Serbian—making them inaccessible to non-Serbian speaking individuals interested in the position of this group. The Serbian Unity Congress, unfortunately, is prey to the same shortcoming.
468 Silber and Little, Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation '92.
under the control of Serbia proper "had reasons to fear for their lives." They referred back to World War II, during which Serbians having allied against the Axis Powers had become the target of systematic extermination at the hand of the fascist Croat Ustaše and their Muslim allies.

B. Support of the Bosnian Serbs

Taking a similar attitude to that adopted in relation to Serbs in Croatia, the Serbian diaspora was clear in its backing of the Bosnian Serbs: "Since day 1 from eruption of hostilities, the SUC has supported the Bosnian Serbs in their determination to retain the lands their forefathers have lived on for over a millennium." 470

Serbian Americans were confronted with a set of broad political choices on what to do about Bosnia. These choices fell roughly into four categories: 1) do nothing; 2) support greater Serbian minority rights within an intact Croatia and Bosnia; 3) support a breakaway agenda without Serbian military involvement; 4) support the breakaway agenda with Serbian military involvement.

With little hesitation the diaspora, once again, embraced option 4. The Serbs in Bosnia are an essential part of Serbdom, was the explanation. 471 "The Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the same situation as the Serbian minority in Croatia," said another. 472 And quoting Radovan Karadzic, another stated "How can we be

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470 Serbian Unity Congress, "President's Report" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress Eighth Annual Convention, Pittsburgh, PA, 1997).
471 Bock-Luna, The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the Wake of the Third Balkan War.
aggressors in our own country?" In addition to providing humanitarian relief to their beleaguered compatriots and offering policy advice to the Bosnian Serb leadership, US diaspora activists mounted a campaign to change Washington’s policy toward Serbia. Specifically, they hoped to convince Administration officials to cease bombing and other military attacks against Serbs, recognize the right of all Serbs to self-determination, lift sanctions, and disallow foreign troops to be deployed in the former Yugoslavia.

Once again, the U.S. Serbian diaspora found themselves in an unpopular position. To the right of the Milosevic regime in their politics, they insisted that Serbians had the right to protect their nation by any means possible. Unable to trust the Serbian political system, which they felt was ready to abandon Serbian rights for political expediency, the diaspora threw their support behind those who showed themselves to be actively defending the Serbian nation—even if that meant doing so at a high price in blood. As noted in Spoerri’s research on diaspora support for Serbian political parties, until the mid-1990s, the diaspora was divided between those supporting Milosevic versus those who favored the more hard-line SPS (Socialist Party of Serbia). Once Milosevic abandoned Bosnia, the National Serbian Radical Party (SRS) became the main destination of the diaspora’s political contributions.

The resistance of the Serbian-Americans to shift from their hard line position is often seen as baffling to outsiders. In the face of firm evidence exposing the predatory nature of the Bosnian-Serbian forces, the gross tactics they employed, and the sheer

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473 Personal Interview, Father Irinij Dobrijevic, Director, External Relations, Serbian Orthodox Church.
474 Congress, "President's Report".
senseless destruction of their actions, Serbian-Americans continued to insist that the
Serbs were the victims. When confronted with some of the more gruesome realities of
events taking place, diaspora leaders often dismissed the evidence as false, a response to
aggression, or part of a grand conspiracy by Serbian enemies to discredit the Serbian
cause. Rarely was bad behavior on the part of the Serbs ever acknowledged. \( ^{476} \)

Rationality falls short in explaining the persistence of such a difficult and
controversial agenda. Rather than gaining benefits from championing the Serbian cause,
Serbian-Americans were demonized and held responsible for the actions of their kin. In
spite of the difficulties, however, Serbian-American organizations continued to believe in
the rightness of their position. To the Serbian-American community, events in Bosnia
were simply a continuation of a familiar pattern of Serbian exploitation by aggressive and
opportunistic neighbors. The breakup of Yugoslavia was the latest threat, in a long series
of serious dangers, that the Serbian nation faced. The failure to resolve differences
peacefully only served to underline the precarious situation, as it demonstrated the
unreasonableness of the other parties. Under these conditions the need for Serbs to
protect themselves became paramount.

The heightened sense of danger served to further kindle those elements of Serbian
national mythology that speak to the inherent worth of the Serbian people and the need
for the nation to protect itself against unfriendly neighbors. The bashing that Serbs
took because of these views brought the community closer together and reinforced the
belief that the world is indeed an unfriendly place if you are Serbian. The overriding

\(^{476}\) The notable exception has been the Serbian Orthodox Church. Their main representative in the United
States has openly condemned atrocities committed by all parties during the various crises.
dominance of these ideas effectively closed down any other course of action than the one supported. Absent alternatives that adequately addressed the security fears of Serbians in the Balkans, Serbian-Americans saw little choice but to fight for their rights. As in Croatia, once the cycle of violence began, radical action appeared more and more necessary to counter the extremist policies of the enemy.

C. Dayton Accord—Win the wars, lose the peace

The 1995 Dayton agreement was the ultimate betrayal of the Serbian people by Milosevic. American Serbs strongly objected "to those imposed provisions of the Dayton-Paris agreement which are "unjust, unfair and damaging to the Serbian national interests". They condemned "the neo-Communist regime in Belgrade for the 'national catastrophe of the Serbian people' and the loss of historic Serbdom lands." Their nationalist sentiment, powerfully reawakened at the start of the decade, had not dimmed. Unlike Belgrade, American Serbs remained faithful to the concept of all Serbs living under one state. Dayton was a betrayal of this idea. It was noted by the SUC "that after 200 years of intermittent fighting, the Serbs today find themselves in exactly the same situation as in 1914: the country is laid low, their nationhood destroyed. In this war, more than in the previous ones, the Serbs are completely alone, facing a hostile world that is bent upon their total destruction." Milosevic, who had lost the support of the diaspora when he abandoned Croatian Serbs, was condemned as one of the "grave

478 Ibid.
479 Congress, "Serbs and Their Enlightened National Interest: Report on the Symposium Held at the Sixth Annual Convention of the Serbian Unity Congress."
diggers of Serbdom.\textsuperscript{480} He was labeled the “greatest monster and traitor of the Serbian people since Kosovo.”\textsuperscript{481} As written by one member of the diaspora: “When Milosevic and Holbrooke get together three things seem to follow. Serbian interests are disregarded, Serbian territories are given away, and Serbian inhabitants of those territories are forced to flee.”\textsuperscript{482}

The ingrained belief of many émigrés on the ideas of Serbians as victims—besieged from within and without—was evident again in the diaspora interpretation of Dayton. As eloquently stated by Dusan Batakovic, “Today we have not only lost the war because of our enemies, we have been defeated because the communists, who have become war profiteers and criminals, betrayed us. They have divided our peoples and lost the war we won in the past as well as this one we had to win. They betrayed our great culture and political traditions and made senseless our two hundred year efforts and sacrifices for national unity.”\textsuperscript{483} “You witnessed the conclusion of the war and how we were forced to accept injustice…As it is, Republik Srpska represents a consolation for all our suffering and losses caused by our disunity.”\textsuperscript{484}

The emotive discourse in the diaspora, as they struggled to come to terms with their perceived defeat, reflected common themes of Serbian self-understanding: surrounded by enemies, betrayed by their own, victims that are misunderstood by everyone. Serb émigrés nationalists could never have supported the Dayton Accords. To

\textsuperscript{480} Vojvods Djujic, "Messages to the Serbian Unity Congress" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress 7th Convention, Milwaukee, WI, September 20-22, 1996).
\textsuperscript{481} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{482} Editor, \textit{American Srbohran} 1999, 6.
\textsuperscript{483} Dusan Batakovic, "Messages to the Serbian Unity Congress" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress 7th Convention, Milwaukee, WI, September 20-22, 1996).
\textsuperscript{484} Radovan Karadzic, "Messages to the Serbian Unity Congress" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress 7th Convention, Milwaukee, WI, September 20-22, 1996).
have done so would have required them to abandon their ideas of what it meant to be Serbian, their long memory of suffering, and their unwavering belief in the need for a Greater Serbia.

D. Kosovo—Divided Loyalties

“From the standpoint of the people who live here, shock was generally the first feeling experienced when the attacks began. Now we are all appalled at what is taking place—the long term friendship between Serbia and the USA was destroyed when the first bomb fell.”⁴⁸⁵ “We couldn’t understand how easily it happened that we, who were always allied with America, and proud of that fact, found ourselves on the other end of the deal. How was it that Croatians, Bosnians Muslims, and Albanians, the very ones who fought against America [in World War II], who were fascists, how was it they came to be allied with America? This is something that was beyond comprehension for us, and it was the first time we ever felt divided within ourselves. Being Serbian and being American were suddenly at odds with each other.”⁴⁸⁶

In the Spring of 1999, the United States began the NATO-approved bombing of Serbia. The goal was to convince Milosevic to pull the Serbian military out of Kosovo. American Serbs were both horror-struck and angry as they watched their adopted country go to war with their nation. The diaspora could not remain quiet on the sidelines. In what was one of the more successful efforts of collective action on the part of the Serbs,

⁴⁸⁵ Editor, 4.
⁴⁸⁶ Quoted in Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars 105.
demonstrations against the bombings were organized around the country throughout the 78-day campaign. The message was clear—stop the illegal aggression against Serbia.487

The Serb position was no surprise. Serbian organizations and their supporters had remained stalwart on the position of Kosovo. Not only was Kosovo unquestionably seen as part of Serbia, the Albanian majority was labeled as “illegal settlers...responsible for terrorism against Serbs and other people, civil disobedience and open rebellion against legal authorities in this part of Serbia.” 488 There was no compromise on Serbia. President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright were branded as war criminals by Serbian American demonstrators.

As Hockenos reports, “Serb withdrawal from Kosovo was a devastating slap to the Serb diaspora, whose mythic conception of a ‘Greater Serbia’ had never wavered.” 489 American Serbs cried foul. “The effect on the remaining 200,000 Serbs in the province is predictable...Their destiny is sealed. It will be the same as their compatriots in the Krajina. Kosovo will be Serb free but nobody in the West will mind very much.” 490

V. Analysis

The behavior of Serbian-American nationalists defies clean explanations of political rationality. While often falling to the right of the Milosevic regime and frequently supporting the policies of radical militants, it is easy to attribute the stance of émigré Serbs to something other than strategic positioning or rational calculation.

487 Serbian Unity Congress, "Convention Resolutions" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress 10th Convention, Clevland, OH, September 10-12, 1999).
489 Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars 107.

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Throughout the lifetime of the conflicts, expatriate Serbian leaders failed to gain much traction with either their home- or resident-country communities. They stubbornly stuck to a single-minded agenda and seemed incapable of adjusting their goals or their message to achieve even a portion of their programme. The rationale for this agenda was pulled from a set of historically-based narratives that were mistaken for reality when hostilities erupted in the Balkans. Against the backdrop of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the familiar set of wisdoms and emotions from the past became significant in the present.

The themes of loyalty and unity are present front and center in Serbian diaspora identity. Their main moral-historical lessons of the battle of Kosovo highlights the disastrous consequences of Serbs abandoning their ethnic group. The expectation is firmly set that when Serbs anywhere suffer hardship, the entire community is obligated to come to their defense. This idea, for all intents and purposes, creates the same obligation that a more traditional honor code—with its emphasis on reputation and retribution—achieves.

A. Explaining Serbian Humiliation

Serbian humiliation needs to be explained by both straight forward experiences—with defined grievances, specific enemies and impulses for retribution—as well as by the grand narrative of Serbian identity. This narrative, based on the historical battle of Kosovo, has held Serbian nationalist identity hostage to the belief that its people are involved in a timeless epic, a struggle for survival. Every generation is passed the burden of carrying on the fight to reclaim Serbian historic territory, unite the Serbian people under one rule and fulfill the Serbian covenant with God. For example, one of the
leading political Serbian diaspora organizations published in 1997, “We must continue to fight for the survival of the Serbian nation. We owe it to the future Serbian generations.” Unable to evolve past this narrow definition of their ‘destiny’, Serbs frame the bad things that happen to them as part of their historic battle. The solutions that nationalist Serbs seek to their current confrontations are rational only to the extent that they reflect the larger resolution that the ‘nation’ requires, rather than the short-term compromises that a specific fight demands.

Undoubtedly, Serbian nationalism was linked to a specific set of grievances that were tied to clear experiences of humiliation. World War II and Serbia’s decline under Tito Yugoslavia, with its loss of authority over Kosovo, stand out as the major modern struggles for Serbia pre-1990. These experiences re-defined Serbia’s enemies, gave new fodder for their national story of struggle and provided specific targets for vengeance.

The Second World War is coded by many in the diaspora as the Serbian “holocaust”. Literature on the Jasenovac concentration camp was recommended to me as educational reading. Such books describe in sensationalist and gruesome detail the barbarity of the Croat Ustaše, especially against the Serbs: “In the concentration camp at Jasenovac, on the night of August 29, 1942, orders were issued for executions. Bets were made as to who could liquidate the largest number of inmates. Peter Brzica cut the throats of 1,360 prisoners with a specially sharp butcher’s knife. Having been proclaimed the prize-winner of the competition, he was elected King of the Cut-troats.” Such accounts were used as proof of the long-standing Croatian hatred of the Serbs and were

491 Congress, "President's Report".  
often paired with stories of specific personal experience—their own or someone they knew. The result was to reinforce the thesis that the conflict in 1991 was simply a restart of what took place in 1941. The denial of the level of killing and a refusal of deal with this terrible past continue to emotionally plague many Serbs and drive their anger toward Croats. As Bock-Luna observes from her work with US Serbs, “Never reaching international recognition for the hundreds of thousands of dead between 1941 and 1945, Serbs in exile became determined to speak out ‘the truth’ about the ‘Balkan Holocaust’.”

She notes the search for “justice” and the desire to settle “unsettled accounts” from World War II as motivators of Serb exile nationalism in the 1990s.

A second significant source of humiliation is tied to the demise of Serbian power under Tito’s Yugoslavia. The claim that “Tito’s Yugoslavia had been a gigantic plot to keep the Serbs from their rightful place in the sun,” was echoed in one form or another by many in the diaspora. “The Serbian people were forced in a state which has even since suppressed and denied their national identity, heritage and strivings.”

This was most evident when talking about the 1974 Constitution. The changes made in the Yugoslav constitution are proof positive of the anti-Serb bias of Tito’s Yugoslavia. To nationalists in the diaspora, the most insulting, and humiliating, change was Serbia’s loss of authority over Kosovo. This sentiment was clearly evident in diaspora explanations of the 1989 Serb re-annexation of the southern province: “Another very serious problem for the Serbs is the present situation in the Province of Kosovo where a large Shiptar majority is

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493 Bock-Luna, The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the Wake of the Third Balkan War 161.
494 Ibid. 142 and 48.
persecuting a Serbian minority with the intent of making it an ethnically pure Shiptar region. They carried out a reign of terror, intimidation and discrimination against the Serbian minorities until thousands each year left the Province to take refuge in neighboring Serbian regions. It is believed that over 200,000 Serbs left the province since the second World War. Because of the demographic explosion of the Shiptar population, Serbs became an even greater minority in a region historically and culturally revered as the cradle of Serbian civilization.  

These specific experiences of Serbian humiliation have been bolstered by a nationalist narrative of identity that relies on a restricted vision of what it means to be Serbian. It has trapped the Serbian psyche in a no-win struggle of trying to recreate a particular image that the Serbs, themselves, cling to as their birthright. This image is based largely on an antiquated story of defeat that has become the centerpiece of Serbian self-definition. For while the myth of the Battle of Kosovo has allowed Serbians to cast themselves as one of God’s ‘chosen people’, it has also created an extremely narrow definition of triumph—one tied directly to land and loyalty. To be faithful to their covenant with God, which promises redemption and victory, the Serbs must fight for their ancient land and be willing to defend their people at any and all cost.

Such an obligation has acted as a straightjacket on Serbian psychological evolution. It has encouraged a shared sense of victimization to flourish alongside a shared sense of national entitlement to territory. Because there is no other nationalist vision for how the Serbs can prosper, they are left with little alternative other than to embrace this limited idea. When talking to members of the Serbian diaspora, I was

struck by the apparent ease with which many conversations toggled back and forth between the Serbian narrative and the more recent conflicts. The link was treated as almost commonsensical. Conversations centered around decades, if not centuries, of loss and suffering that the Serbs have had to endure. They then segued easily to the events of World War II and the conflicts of the 1990s. What was remarkable was that the wars of 1991 were not simply the continuation of past struggles. They were a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy of the Serbian story. The Croats, Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovo Albanians were simply the most current enemies trying to keep Serbia from claiming its historic territory. When I was told in one conversation that the only thing the Serbs did was take revenge for what the Muslims did to them, I was left uncertain if the person I was speaking to was referring to the recent Balkan wars or to the Battle of Kosovo.

B. The Serbian Narrative

Serbian narratives have a consistent storyline. Serbs are the heroes, the martyred and the injured. The enemy is defined rather broadly as those who have tried or are trying to violate sacred Serbia. This has included destroying her kingdom, taking her land, and subjugating her people. The Ottoman Turks are the primary foe around which the original narrative is crafted. The battle against Turkish forces in the 14th century, which brought the end to the Serbian Kingdom, is the defining event. Serbs fought heroically, died as martyrs defending their honor and lived subjugated for the next 500

498 This flow was possible because in many of my conversations with members of the US Serb community, especially those in leadership positions—were not conversations. They were more lectures that I was given. My questions were often left unanswered as the person being interviewed decided what we were going to discuss.

499 Bock-Luna, The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the Wake of the Third Balkan War.
years. The idea that the spiritually untarnished Serb lived on to fight again to redeem the nation is a central pillar of the story. A second equally important theme warns against disunity as the fatal flaw of the Serbian nation and the source of their ruin. When threatened, Serbs fight and, indeed, seem to relish the chance to battle for what is theirs. The more nationalistic are unbending in their loyalty to their brethren. Their protection—wherever they may live and whatever the cost—is considered a fundamental responsibility of all Serbs. Serbs are willing to suffer for their nation, which may in part account for why they stick to unwinnable positions. The promise of national redemption continues to remain elusive.

In its more modern version, the Croats and the Kosovo Albanians are Serbia’s enemies—more recent, more real and more associated with specific grievances. The living memory of the Ustaše government, which came to power during World War II, left a deep mark on those who lived through the horrors. They remember the drive to create a pure Croatian state through the annihilation of the Serbian people. The slogan, “kill a third, expel a third and convert a third” is a frightening reminder of the terror of the times. While nobody knows the exact count of victims, there is little doubt that an unspeakable number of Serbs died during the Ustaše reign. In answer to the Croatian Ustaše, the Serbs fought back under the leadership of Colonel Draža Mihailovic. A highly nationalistic and racist group, Mihailovic’s Chetniks are, nevertheless, considered to be freedom fighters by many Serbs. They play the expected role—the fighters and potential redeemers of the nation. Mihailovic’s mission was to reinstate Greater Serbia as

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500 Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* 93.
World War II reinforced the narrative of 1389. It also set the bitter tone for Serb-Croat relations that would linger for decades and emerge in all its acrimony in the 1990s. Kosovo Albanians were also considered enemies of Serbia for aspiring to control Kosovo. The demographic dominance along with the political control given to them by Tito in 1974 was odious to Serbs who considered this territory to be the center of their nation. Stories of Serbian abuse at the hand of the Albanian majority only served to inflame the sense of righteous anger at their impotence to do anything about it. When the opportunity presented itself to reclaim what was rightfully theirs, Serbian Americans rejoiced.

For many of the émigré population in the United States, these narratives ran quietly in the background of their lives, neither encouraging or discouraging action, but informing how events taking place back home were interpreted. As the events of the 1980s became to unfold in Yugoslavia, the stories were unpacked and used as a common reference for understanding what was taking place. The Memorandum from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, with its revival of the themes of sacred land and endangered people, the increasingly chauvinistic and historically-laden rhetoric coming from the Serbian leadership and outbreak of skirmishes and hostile confrontations in Kosovo all served to rekindle dormant ideas of threat, conflict and injury. Milosevic's

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501 The mission of our units is: 1) The struggle for the freedom of all of our people under the scepter of His Majesty, the King Peter II; 2) The creation of Greater Yugoslavia, and within it Greater Serbia, ethnically clean within the borders of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srem, Banat, and Bačka; 3) The struggle for the incorporation into our social structure of those non-liberated Slovenian territories under Italy and Germany (Trieste, Gorizia, Istria, and Carinthia), as well as Bulgaria and northern Albania with Shkodra; 4) The cleansing of all national minorities and anti-state elements from state territory; 5) The creation of direct common borders between Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Serbia and Slovenia by cleansing the Bosniak population from Sandžak, and the Bosniak and Croat populations from Bosnia and Herzegovina; 6) The punishment of all Croats and Bosniaks who have mercilessly destroyed our people in these tragic days; 7) The settlement of the areas cleansed of national minorities and anti-state elements by Serbs and Montenegrins (to be considered are poor, nationally patriotic, and honest families).
infamous speech in 1987 Kosovo where he declared to a crowd of Kosovo Serbs, “no one should beat you anymore”, was the clarion call for action. The statement encapsulated the humiliation Serbians were feeling living as second-class citizens in their sacred home, separated from Serbia-proper and vulnerable to the predations of others. It rallied them to fight back. Abroad, Serbian Americans answered the call. They were never prouder than in 1989, when Serbia ‘took back’ control of their blessed Kosovo.

When the cry came from Krajina that Serbs in Croatia were under attack from a resurgent Ustaše government, the response could not have been more predictable. Serbs and Serbia would come to the rescue. Watching as Croatians revived Ustaše symbols with impunity, Serbs abroad could only be reminded of a time, in the not too distant past, when they were the targets of killing sprees and butchery. Even without direct experience of these atrocities, the stories kept alive the events, the expectations, the anger and the humiliation. The xenophobic policies of the Tudjman government only confirmed suspicions already nurtured in the diaspora—namely that a fragmented Serbian nation could not survive. Serbia needed to unite all Serbians under one flag and reclaim her ancient lands to be strong. To do otherwise would betray the Serbian people and, as in 1389 and 1941, sentence the nation to subjugation and potential extermination. These were not new ideas but rather accepted truths reinforced over time through their retelling. As bluntly stated by one diaspora leader, the last time there was an independent Croatia, “the Serbs had only saved themselves from extinction by taking up arms.”

The expansionist rhetoric of Milosevic met with willing ears in the diaspora. As noted by the well-known Serbian writer Vuk Draskavic, “[t]hey bought into the Greater

502 Interview, Member Serbian National Federation.
In the eyes of Serbian émigrés, Milosevic would restore Serbia to its proper place as ‘first among nations’, either in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia or as its own independent Greater Serbia, bringing all regions with Serbian inhabitants under Serbian control. He would “revenge them for the atrocities that the Ustashe committed against the Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia.” He would re-assert Serbian position in Kosovo and ensure Serbian dominance vis-à-vis the Kosovo Albanians. As long as Milosevic pursued this aggressive agenda, the diaspora gave him their backing. Indeed, they were often more assertive in their stance than Belgrade. While the rest of the world watched in horror, the diaspora applauded their regional political and battlefield commanders in Croatia and Bosnia for their aggressive commitment to translating the Serbian patriotic vision into reality. They rejected Milosevic’s attempts to negotiate partial solutions, preferring on-the-ground results.

When the diaspora eventually backed away from Milosevic in the mid 1990s, their cooling toward Belgrade was due primarily to his retreat from the Greater Serbia project.

Unlike the Croatians, the Serbs did not feel ethnically diluted or diminished because they did not have their own state. Serbs were not trying to join the “club of nations”. They did not compare themselves to others, as the Croats so readily did to Western Europe. As Brock-Luna writes, “Serbs are identical with themselves, or try to

503 Quoted in Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars 108.
504 Ibid.
505 Vuk Drašković quoted in Ibid. 125.
506 Ibid. 108.
become what they are, whereas Croats are trying to be identical with others." The Serbs were trying to fulfill their destiny. Their anger was aimed at those who had, in the past, prevented them from attaining their goal. "The emergence of nationalism was vaunted as the rebirth of dignity. Serbs believed that after 50 years under the enforced slogan of 'Brotherhood and Unity' they had come out the worse. They would be looking for a way to right the wrongs.

C. Strategic behavior does not adequately explain the Serbian response

Elites in tenuous positions of power often attempt to portray their ethno-nation as being threatened by another as a way to shore up their own position. The manipulation of this "ethnic threat" is often an effective way to advance their interests, hold on to power and vanquish competing elites. The Serbian diaspora in the United States needed very little convincing of the danger their brethren faced. Primed to think in terms of victimization, loss and injustice, this group was fertile ground for many of the chauvinistic claims made by Serbian authorities back home. Hockenos writes that "Serb peace activists report of being shouted down as 'traitors' and 'Croatian spies' when they launched events critical of the regime. There was no place for them in the diaspora organizations."

While much as been made of Milosevic's skillful manipulation of nationalism for political gain, it is not clear that a similar practice was being used by Serbian leaders in the United States. At a time when Serbia was being labeled as the aggressor in the conflict with Croatia, angry calls from the diaspora for more forceful action by Belgrade

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507 Bock-Luna, The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the Wake of the Third Balkan War 70.
508 Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars.
brought few benefits. If Serbian leaders in the United States were interested in carving out a more substantial role for themselves, they were largely unsuccessful. Serbian activists persisted with their initial message and showed little inclination to moderate their position. "Serbs and Serbia are accused of being too nationalistic," decried SNF President Robert Stone in disbelief. He went on to justify the Serbian position by explaining that "the independent State of Croatia provided a blood bath of genocide and 700,000 plus Serbs and other were massacred in the forgotten holocaust. Today 600,000 Serbs living in the Republic of Croatia are in jeopardy of another Holocaust...After WWII Croatia, as a defeated nation, became a victor retaining even territory gained through genocide against the Serbian people and settling of Croatians in territories where Serbs had been in the minority."509 If anything, their defense of Serbian action became even more relentless, renouncing any possibility of shared responsibility for the conflict with Croatia and holding tight to the claim that Serbian military action was not only defensive but imperative to protect the safety and security of the Serbian minority in Croatia. As strongly declared: "SERB REBELS ARE NO AGGRESSORS—THEY ARE DEFENDING THEIR LIVES, THEIR PROPERTY, AND THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION."510

In the United States, this message was not well-received. Looking to remain largely removed from events transpiring in the Balkans, the U.S. government was not interested in engaging with ethnic groups promoting uncompromising solutions to their small wars. Officials had little time and patience to listen to diatribes about the centuries of injustices suffered by the Serbian people. If anything, realistic solutions to a

510 Editor, American Srbobran August 28, 1991.
potentially destabilizing conflict might have been welcomed. Unfortunately, the diaspora had little to offer in this area. Firmly attached to the lessons learned from their past, they turned to history as an explanation of current events and a justification of Serbian action.

Similarly, the U.S. community gained few friends within the Serbian government. Largely indifferent to the Serbian community outside the region, little energy was spent on gaining the favor of a population that contributed little to Milosevic’s real power-base in Serbia. As noted by the SUC, “We have tried hard to establish a partnership between the diaspora and the motherland but it takes two to tango. It has been difficult for us to find true partners both in Serbia and the RS. Most of the time, our countrymen do not even respond to our letters unless they need something.”511 If anything, vocal groups outside the direct control of Belgrade posed a threat to the ruling elites—as any independent opinion had the ability to challenge the government’s version of events taking place and question the basis of policies being adopted.

From the perspective of Milosevic, this instinct was accurate. While eager for a champion, the Serbian-American population clearly supported issues rather than politicians. “We are solely motivated to help the Serbian people, not any political leader,” stated SUC President Vojin Joksimovich.512 This was demonstrated in their vociferous backing of Milan Babic as head of the Republic of Krajina. Originally a close supporter of Milosevic, Babic broke with Belgrade over the Vance Peace Plan, suspecting that Milosevic was ready to abandon claims to Krajina in exchange for an end to hostilities with Croatia, a more favorable resolution to the Bosnia conflict, and the lifting

511 Congress, "President's Report".
512 Ibid.
of sanctions against the Serbian state. The Serbian diaspora would have none of this. They vocally stated their refusal “to accept the "cleansing" and "occupation" of Krajina, Slavonia, Dalmacija, Southern Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina where Serbs have lived for many centuries”

Unquestionably, the diaspora positioned themselves on the side of the hard liners on critical issues. While members of the diaspora leadership would object to having their decisions characterized as emotionally-driven, the priorities identified and the stiff resistance of their agenda to change, even in an unfavorable climate, suggest ideology rather than practicality. Resolutions from the Serbian Unity Congress that “Condemns the neo-Communist regime in Belgrade for the "national catastrophe of the Serbian people and the loss of historic Serbdom lands; Refuses to accept the ‘cleansing’ and ‘occupation’ of Krajina, Slavonia, Dalmacija, Southern Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina where Serbs have lived for many centuries; and, Strongly objects to those imposed provisions of the Dayton-Paris agreement which are "unjust, unfair and damaging to the Serbian national interests", are clear indicators of diaspora thinking. These were not the moderate options. The SUC, themselves, acknowledged in the late 1990s that they had a public image problem and had been “dismissed as reactionary and negative”.

While immediate coordination between the different Serbian groups may have posed a challenge to their effectiveness, there seemed to be little divergence in terms of the messages that they wanted to convey—Serbian loyalty to each other was paramount.

514 Congress, "Resolutions".
515 Serbian Unity Congress, "Resolutions" (paper presented at the Serbian Unity Congress Eighth Annual Convention, Pittsburgh, PA, 1997).
516 Ibid.
Notable in the Serbian American community was the prioritization of support to the Serbian people, wherever they were located. In this respect, Serbs in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia were all equally deserving of U.S. Serbian support as Serbians residing in Serbia proper. While the SUC members may have fought amongst themselves over the most advantageous political position to adopt, what remains certain is that such bickering did not weaken their ideological commitment to the Serbian cause and the Serbian people. The diaspora Serbs were not pondering war. As described by Hockenos, “they were awakening from a long, restless slumber.”

VI. Conclusion

Post-Dayton saw an angry diaspora but a wiser one. The Serbian Unity Congress, in a rare moment of self-reflection, noted the difficulties it experienced trying to influence American public opinion with history lessons and grievance-laden demands. This approach served to marginalize potential allies in both the US and non-governmental sectors. Rather than gaining formal and/or informal access to those officials in charge of U.S. policy toward the Balkans, using such access to further policy favorable to Serbia, U.S. Serbian leaders effectively ensured their exclusion. In response, the SUC resolved to adopt “a different approach of emphasizing democratic transformations and economic reconstruction instead of lamenting about our misfortunes.”

But while the approach of this younger diaspora organization may show greater savvy, it is unclear if they will be able to break free of the debilitating Serbian history

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517 The competition within the Serbian diaspora continued throughout and after the war. Personal Interview with Nebosja Malic, Vice President Washington Chapter, Serbian Unity Congress.

518 Congress, "President's Report".

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with its unsettled accounts and litany of grievances and begin to define Serbian exile identity in more productive terms.
CHAPTER 5: SLOVENIA and GERMANY

Not all diaspora communities respond in extreme ways to homeland violence. Humiliation—of the type that I argue lays the foundation for feelings of resentment and retribution to fester—is not necessarily part and parcel of the ethnic identity of those living abroad. Many groups, in fact, define themselves in alternative ways; ways that do not lend themselves to extreme nationalistic expression. This chapter briefly explores two groups—Slovenian Americans and German Americans—who failed to react with pernicious intent when faced with a volatile situation in their homeland that challenged their identities.

The chapter is organized in the following way. I first look at the Slovene community in the United States and sketch the main strands of their identity narratives. These narratives were scarce on humiliation. Slovenian Americans did not portray themselves as victims. They tended to emphasize the rational industrious nature of Slovenians—their tendency to make the best of their situations and succeed at their endeavors. The Slovenes were loathed to be categorized with the other nationalities of Yugoslavia, whom they considered volatile, irrational and lazy. It was against these others that Slovenians compared themselves. I then turn to the response of the U.S. community toward homeland hostilities. In comparison to other Balkan diasporas, Slovenian American stand out for their moderate opinions. Few called for independence as the only end-goal. Their concern seemed to be much more about how Slovenia could transition to a political and economic system that would ensure the prosperity of the
Slovene people. Whether this was as a sovereign state or as part of a political coalition of nations did not appear to make much difference.

I follow the Slovenian case with a look at German American nationalism during the First World War. Similar to the Slovenes, German Americans did not, for the most part, respond with anger or aggression when Germany found itself at war with, first, other European powers and, later, with the United States. An extremely proud people, German Americans did not carry with them a sense of humiliation based on some form of status lost. Just the opposite, German Americans believed their rich cultural heritage not only rivaled other peoples but also, to a great extent, informed and influenced their traditions; a perception that was reinforced in the United States where they were highly regarded by the American population. The rise of Germany’s political power was naturally viewed with pride by those living abroad. However, the U.S. German diaspora, for the most part, made a clear distinction between cultural and political nationalism. While sympathetic to Germany’s attempts to assert its position on the world stage, they were more sensitive to the political dynamics taking place in their adopted country. Of greatest concern was maintaining the level of respect accorded to them by American society, which up to that point had given them a privileged place among other ethnic groups. When the United States entered the war, the response by the German American community was unequivocal—total support for the U.S. against Germany.

I. Slovenia

Very little has been written on identity-defining grievances of the Slovenian people. In contrast to the volumes written about both Croatian and Serbian historic humiliations, injury and antagonisms, this other region do not seem to come with similar
baggage. This chapter looks, in part, at the reactions to the Yugoslav hostilities of this other nationality with aspirations to independence. Slovenians abroad faced a similar situation as their Slavic neighbors at the start of the 1990s. But their reactions to their fight for independence played out in a radically different way. Slovenes in the U.S. seemed to hardly notice the ten-day war between Slovenia and Serbia. It was never portrayed as an epic struggle for the survival of their state or of their people. Unlike the xenophobic rhetoric coming from its southern Croatian neighbor, Slovenes expressed little animosity toward the Serbian people. Additionally, once separated from Yugoslavia, Slovenia maintained a studiously neutral stance. They did not involve themselves in the fights taking place around them and seemed to resent having to accept the refugees coming in from the other parts of Yugoslavia which were at war. The humiliation dynamic that I argue drove the reactions of both the Croatian and Serbian diasporas seems to have been altogether absent from the Slovenian response.

A. Slovenian Americans

The Slovene diaspora in the United States is small but significant, in comparison to their presence in other countries. The two major migration periods were between 1880-1914 and 1949-1956. Almost ninety percent of Slovene-Americans are second generation or later. The 2000 census recorded 175,099 people to be of Slovene descent, with the largest community based in Ohio and smaller groups in Pennsylvania, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin and California.

Slovenians have never been known for their ethnic assertiveness. Indeed some commentators have claimed that there is no such thing as Slovenian nationalism. Others have described the Slovenes as a ‘non-historic’ people who were content to wait until the twentieth century to form their first independent state. “The Slovenians were classified among those nations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy which did not create their national history”, noted one U.S. Slovene writing on Slovenian history. It is not surprising, then, that Slovenia’s break from Yugoslavia occurred with a minimum amount of upheaval and violence. The ten-day war with Serbia was remarkable for its ‘civility’. While Slovenia was well-prepared for the confrontation, Serbia did not seriously fight to keep Slovenia within the Yugoslav federation. In contrast to the bloodshed that would occur in the rest of the region, Slovenia’s separation was indisputably gentle.

In addition to the low level of violence, Slovenian independence was also remarkable for the mild tenor of its nationalism. Compared to the ethno-national excesses of its neighbors, Slovenian nationalism was devoid of a hard edge. This can be attributed in part to the lack of historical significance of Slovenian independence. In carving out its own state, Slovenia was not trying to refashion an image of its former self. Slovenia was, in fact, fairly forward looking in its self-conception. Gow notes, for example, that in contrast to others, Slovenians opted for a modern symbol of their independence. Rather than relying on a historically-charged emblem, as seemed to be the norm among the newly independent states of Eastern Europe, they instead chose Mount

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Triglav as a fresh and forward-looking representation of the new Slovenian state.\footnote{James Gow and Cathie Carmichael, \textit{Slovenia and the Slovenes} (London: Hurst & Company, 2000).}

Slovenia’s mild nationalism can also be ascribed to the demographic homogeneity of the Slovene state. With few permanent minorities making up its population of two million, Slovenia was largely immune to the nationalist fear-mongering that fed the inter-ethnic tensions and jingoistic attitudes in its neighboring communities.

A similar reasonable attitude was reflected in the diaspora. Prior to 1991, Slovenians abroad were not heavily engaged in homeland politics. Even during the short war, many Slovenes living in America and other countries remained somewhat detached from events that were taking place overseas. Zlatko Skrbis notes that first and second generation Slovenes living in Australia were overwhelmingly unemotional with regard to events taking place back home. While proud of the idea of Slovenian independence, the expatriate population was not quick to mobilize on Slovenia’s behalf.\footnote{Zlatko Skrbis, \textit{Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities} (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999).}

A similar attitude was evident in the émigré population in the United States which failed even to muster enough enthusiasm to politically lobby Washington in an organized or way.\footnote{This is not to say that there was no national organizing on the part of American Slovenes. The community did come together under an umbrella organization, United Americans for Slovenia, to encourage Washington to recognize Slovenian independence. The United Americans for Slovenia (UAS) grew to represent 659 organizations across the country.}

The most widely read Slovenian ethnic newspaper, \textit{American Home}, published in Cleveland, Ohio, was remarkable for its lack of political content or opinion.\footnote{I reviewed the published issues of American Home from 1980-1995. The paper is published in both English and Slovenian. I was able to review only the material that was published in English.}

The somewhat contained response of Slovenians abroad could have been due in part to the short and unremarkable nature of the war. They simply did not have a chance
to engage. Had the fighting lasted for more than a week and been more intense, perhaps the diasporic reaction would have been different. But even in the period leading up to the 1991 declaration, Slovenians did not express strong political sentiments toward homeland independence. When discussing the future of Slovenia, the diaspora framed their expectations in terms of “national progress” and “Slovene development.” The themes of “democracy” and “the right to control its own destiny” and “to choose freely whether it [Slovenia] wants to be an independent country or to join with other peoples to from some other kind of political union,” were also repeated with a fair amount of frequency. What is evident from a review of U.S. Slovenian writings of the 1980s and 1990, was that Slovenian Americans lacked the ardor for independence and hegemony that characterized the Croatian and Serbian responses. Minus a central burning issue for which to fight, “the ground was far less fertile for ... war mobilization.”

Slovenian self-definition may provide some insight into the reasonable tone of the diaspora’s politics. Slovenians at home and in the diaspora distinguished themselves from the others in three significant ways. First, Slovenia’s high degree of ethnic homogeneity was a point of pride. Of all the Republics of the former-Yugoslavia, Slovenia had, and continues to have, the fewest minorities. “The Slovenes speak their own distinct language, number more than 90% of the population of Slovenia, but only about 8% of the total population of Yugoslavia.” Slovenians were keen on keeping it that way. While minorities in Slovenia were treated fairly, they were also seen as a

528 Skrbis makes this point for the Slovenian population in Australia but it equally applies to the U.S. community. Skrbis, Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities #
potential danger to "the pure and homogenous Slovenian national body." As migration from the other Republics to Slovenia increased, the issue of demographics became a source of tension. By the early 1980s, the majority of Slovenians opposed further immigration from the other Republics. “A defensive Slovenian national position appears to have emerged recently in response to the influx of non-Slovenian Yugoslav workers into the Republic of Slovenia,” wrote one observer of Slovenian politics. This hostility extended to refugees from Croatia and Bosnia when violence took over. The sentiment was echoed in the diaspora. The Australian-Slovenian press, for example, argued that “Slovenians around the world should use their arguments against assimilation of refugees into the Slovenian environment.”

Second, Slovenia’s obvious wealth in contrast to the other former-Republics was seen as further proof of their hardworking and industrious nature. As stated by one diaspora member, “I don’t really know a great deal about other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia. However, I know that the peoples down South are a real drain on the Yugoslav economy and that Slovenia has up till now subsidized these inefficient and, dare I say it, lazy people down South.” “[T]he reason is work ethic.” expressed another. “Slovenes learned to work hard under Austrian rule.” Slovenians’ self-image was that of a hard-working, diligent and self-reliant people. Their “dedication to order, probity and hard work, plus their organizational talents are exploited by the Serb

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530 Skrbis, Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities  120.
531 Requam, "Is Slovenian Nationalism on the Rise?," 1.
532 Quoted in Skrbis, Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities  121.
533 Quoted in Ibid.

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government." Additionally, Slovenian Americans seemed to take pride in Slovenia’s efforts to open its economy, in contrast to the rest of Yugoslavia. “The achievements of the hard-working and democratically-oriented Slovene people tend to be overlooked because of the noise produced by other Yugoslav centers and also by the turmoil that pervades Eastern Europe,” expressed one diaspora activist. They emphasized and supported Slovenia’s efforts to raise the standard of living of its population and becoming more affluent. “Slovenia has been the most energetic in advocating a transition to a market-style economic system with an extensive role for private enterprise. The Slovenes argue that all of Yugoslavia must adopt such reforms if the country is to survive and eventually prosper.” This outlook was remarkable for its forward-orientation and ‘can do’ attitude. Slovenian Americans openly acknowledged that Slovenia was the wealthiest republic in Yugoslavia. “The inhabitants of Slovenia account for less than 10% of Yugoslavia’s total population but produce more than 25% of its GNP,” noted one diaspora advocate. It recognized that much of Slovenia’s wealth was diverted to bolster the economies of Yugoslavia’s poorer republics. Rather than adopt a tone of bitterness, as did U.S. Croats, Slovenian Americans seemed to expect that Slovenia would reform its own economy and set the example for the rest of Yugoslavia to follow.

Finally, Slovenes considered themselves far more westernized, culturally and politically, than their Balkan neighbors. Their natural association was with Central Europe—predominantly Austria and Italy—rather than with the other nationalities with

whom they shared a state. "As the westernmost branch of the Slavic family of nations, the Slovenes are by history and cultural tradition, as well as by geography, a part of Central Europe, not the Balkans." Their more ‘southern’ cousins, which included all non-Slovene peoples in Yugoslavia, represented everything that Slovenia was not—underdeveloped, irrational and unstable. Among diasporic Slovenes, this negative view of the other Yugoslav nationalities was more pronounced and stereotypical. Research conducted by Skrbis on Slovenian diasporic attitudes towards the other nationalities in the former-Yugoslavia uncovered a remarkable uniformity in perceptions. Serbs and Croats, especially, were described as ‘different’ and ‘aggressive’. In a representative remark, one second-generation Slovene commented that, “Yugoslavs are known as having hot tempers. Be we [Slovenians] are very cool, we have a very good temperament, I think. I think we are pretty good compared to other Yugoslavs. Compared to them we are fantastic. I think we are a lot more stable, it’s easy to get along with us, we’re friendly.” Given the cultural and character difference between Slovenes and the ‘others’, it came as no surprise to the U.S. diaspora that that Slovenia took the “lead in urging the peaceful evolution of the present Communist dictatorship into a multi-party Western-style parliamentary democracy,” while others fought the transition.

Slovenian identity was not built on the same ethnic animosity, resentment and historical grievance that flavored the personalities of the other Yugoslav diasporas. Both at home and abroad, Slovenes seemed to take pride in the forward-orientation of their nationalism and their ability to eschew the destructive passions that seemed to hold

539 Susel, "Slovenia, Eastern Europe: Concerns, Opportunities," 1.
540 Quoted in Skrbis, Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities 123.
541 Susel, "Slovenia, Eastern Europe: Concerns, Opportunities," 1.
hostage their fellow Yugoslavs. Even when faced with the impending break-up of Yugoslavia, U.S. Slovenians shied away from Manichean positions of right and wrong, black and white. They seemed more comfortable discussing the future of Slovenia not in simplistic terms of territorial independence but rather in terms of national progress and prosperity. In this respect, the nationalism of the other peoples of Yugoslavia provided the perfect backdrop against which Slovenians could and did define themselves. Skrbis' work with the Slovenian community in Australia confirms this finding. He writes that "[t]he concept of a Southerner could be considered to be the very core of Slovenian post-Second World War nationalism." 542

B. Slovenian American Response to Homeland Hostilities

While Slovenians abroad eventually advocated for international recognition of Slovenian independence, their nationalistic claims were mild in comparison to those made by the Serbian and Croatian U.S. communities. As with the diasporas of Slovenia's southern neighbors, U.S. Slovenians had a range of choices of how they could respond—from detachment to extreme engagement—to events taking place back in Slovenia and in the larger Yugoslavia. While others have described the Slovenian diaspora reaction as indifferent or moderate, I find that the position of American Slovenians to have been quite rational given the character of the community. This was a people that liked to think of themselves as politically fair and enlightened, economically industrious and culturally advanced. The most strident argument was remarkably generic in its content and gentle in its call to arms: "The Slovenes in Yugoslavia are essentially trying to preserve themselves as a nation—a nation with more than one thousand years of history behind

542 Quoted in Skrbis, *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* 121.
it... The Slovenes of Slovenia recognize clearly that to surrender their autonomous status
to a Serbian-dominated central government in Belgrade will lead inevitably over the
long-term to the literal disappearance of the Slovene nation... The general American
view is to try to preserve Yugoslavia at any cost—and the cost has been considerable
over the decades...Slovene Americans ought to be more active in presenting a counter
view to this attitude at every opportunity.”

Unlike the reaction of the Croatian and Serbian diasporas, Slovenian Americans
did not draw on historical antecedent or the rationale of national victimization. Partly
this was because there was no historical precedent for Slovenian independence. While
the Slovenes realistically trace their national history back to the 9th century, this history
does not include a golden period of Slovenian sovereignty. Slovenians don’t suffer from
images of national decline which are so common with other ethnies and, which I posit,
are one source of national humiliation. Until post-World War I, when Slovenia entered
into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the territory corresponding to
modern Slovenia was administered by other powers. In line with more positive
identity narratives, Slovenians are more apt to highlight the benefits that resulted from

544 The region corresponding to modern Slovenia was part of the Roman province of Pannonia, 9BC-395
AD, and from the 4th to the 10th centuries was successively under the hegemony of the Ostrogoths, the
Lombards, and the Franks. After the 10th century most of the area was divided between the two duchies
within the Holy Roman Empire, Carinthia and Carniola which by 1493 had passed to the Hapsburgs.
Unlike Croatia and Serbia, Slovenia was never a part of the Ottoman Empire. Slovenia was part of the
French-dominated Slavic Illyrian province 1809-13, after which it was restored to the Hapsburgs. Under
the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, 1867-1918, the region corresponded to the provinces of Carniola and
Styria. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled in 1918, the Slovenes united with other South
Slavs to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which became in 1929 the Kingdom of
Yugoslavia, within which Slovenia was absorbed into the new administrative district of Drava. During
WWII, Slovenia was divided among Germany, Italy and Hungary and thousands of Slovenes were
deported to Germany for forced labor. After the war, Slovenia was reunited with Yugoslavia. Under the
1946 Yugoslav constitution it became a federal republic. In 1947, Slovenia received part of the Istrian
Peninsula from Italy.
545 Kuhar, "The Slovenes--a Short Overview."
their association with their foreign rulers rather than dwell on the negatives. As mentioned earlier, for example, Slovenians attribute their work ethic to something they learned from the Austrians. Such interpretation indicates a very different mentality than the defensive mindset that categorized the Croatian and Serbian diasporas.

Nor do Slovenians appear to suffer from the syndrome of negative comparison, another source of national humiliation in my model. This may be because of whom Slovenians have chosen to compare themselves to. By establishing an ‘us-them’ relationship between Slovenia and the other Yugoslav republics, rather than between Slovenia and Western/Central Europe, Slovenians ensured that they favorably compared to their Slav neighbors. As suggested earlier, Slovenian Americans felt a great deal of pride at Slovenia’s top dog status in Yugoslavia. They did not fail to point out that they were the wealthiest republic upon which others needed to rely. Rather than treat this as a burden, as was done by the Croats, it was portrayed as a sign of the natural superiority of the Slovene people. Additionally, as the Yugoslav model of economics and politics began to prove bankrupt, and as the opening of Eastern Europe began shown promise, Slovenia unilaterally began instituting reforms to make both its economy and government more democratic. These moves were unquestionably lauded in the diaspora who saw these moves as the expected behavior of a practical and forward-looking nation intent on doing well. The tenor of diaspora writings suggest that they were more concerned with Slovenia taking prudent action to maintain an upward trajectory than with fighting for independence. “To be able to bring about changes in one’s governmental philosophies through multiple choice elections can be called doing it the American Way. And at the same time, it's the Slovenian Way. If the Slovenes wish to obtain their basic freedoms—
they are going to do it—first of all—not by guns and destruction—but by elections." Right until Slovenia’s vote for independence, contributors to American Home were applauding Slovenia’s efforts to politically and economically transform while not ruling out the possibility that Slovenia may decide to remain in some sort of political coalition rather than go at it alone. “[W]e must bear in mind that the nation of Slovenia while trying to act independently of the large country of Yugoslavia must realize the dangers of being involved in separating their interests from the bigger group. Will Slovenians be able to join the rest of Europe in the free markets? Will they form their own country? Will they stay the same? Will they join Austria?...It will be up to the people of Slovenia to decide.” Without a doubt, Slovenian Americans were less concerned with Slovenia gaining independence than they were with it adopting smart policies that maintained Slovenia’s reputation as a successful and forward-looking nation.

The Slovene experience of victimization, so prominent with others, also did not generate the same sort of emotional dynamic witnessed with the Croatian and Serbian populations abroad. Similar to these two groups, World War II stands out in the annals of Slovenian history as a particularly brutal and traumatic period for the nation. The tragedy experienced by thousands of Slovenians, and other Yugoslavs, during the period May-June 1945 was discussed in the U.S. community in gruesome detail. Slovenian territory was occupied by the Germans, Italians and Hungarians, all who wanted to annex parts of Slovenia into their states. Slovenians were condemned to ethnocide. Slovenian resistance to the occupiers had the support of the majority, but not all, of Slovenian population. A civil war ensued that pit Slovenian collaborators—the Home Guard—

547 Ibid.
against the Slovenian Liberation Front which was backed by the Tito’s Partisans. The partisan movement won, and the Home Guard and its supporters fled to Austria. They were sent back by the British and the majority of them, treated as traitors, were executed without a trial. As graphically depicted by one diaspora writer:

“As a great number of Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Herzegovinian Home Guard (Domobranci) and civilians crossed the Drava River into Austria they were encountered by units commanded by the British-Marshal Alexander... The order was given to the commanders of the British united who had control of these refugees within their camps to return them to their own county. It was believed at this time by the refugees that they were being returned to Italy and not toward Yugoslavia. The British commanders knew that death would be the fate for most, if not all, of the refugees returning to Yugoslavia. The first arousing suspicion by the refugees occurred at Hrusica where approximately 4 officers were beaten and then shot in nearby woods. At successive train stations this same fate was repeated by the Partisans (of Yugoslavia)...In the town of Kočevj the most blatant massacre was performed by the Partisans. The wrists of the refugees were tied together from cut telephone lines after they were forced to shed part/all of their clothing. The refugees were paired in twos. In groups of 20 these prisoners were headed into trucks and taken away into the forest. At the bottom of a hill was an open space. At this point the prisoners were told to leave the trucks and run into the open space. The Partisans were waiting behind the trees. Upon spotting the prisoners, machine guns were fired upon these people until no more sounds of screaming voices were heard from these people. The number of persons killed has been estimated from 8-15,000 persons.548

The betrayal of the Slovenes by the British and their massacre at the hands of the Partisans is identical to the Croatian experience at Bleiberg. What is curious is how such similar experiences translated into two different outcomes in the ethnic communities abroad. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Croatian community in the United States were politicized by the post-World War II refugees who brought to their new country their resentment of having had their political goals brutally thwarted by the Serbs and the communists. In contrast, the Slovenes in the United States seemed to shun the possible

radicalization of their small community. They were highly suspicious of the World War II immigrants and unwelcoming of their politics. As explained by one diaspora member, “[T]hose Slovenians who emigrated to America during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s were accused by first and second generation Slovenian-Americans of killing innocent people in Yugoslavia... only those people who had committed any killings would leave Slovenia, they said.” 549

Even more striking is the attempt by Slovenians to come to terms with events that took place during that period. Unlike either the mainstream Croatian or Serbian groups in the United States, Slovenian Americans embraced the opportunity to put to rest some of the more destructive and divisive events of their past:

“The test of willingness for reconciliation is an admission of the truth by both sides. The defeated must also carry a part of the blame for their defeat,” wrote one diaspora activist. “Slovenia in World War II was involved in a true civil war. There is no doubt that in Slovenia in the years 1941-45 we did have a civil war, extraordinarily bitter and bloody... I believe that most Slovenians at home and throughout the world are prepared to forgive and that they are willing to leave the investigation and assessment of events during and after the civil war to historians. However, not vengeance but simply honesty and justice demand that at least the mass murders be investigated to ascertain who their perpetrators were so that those of them who are still living can be called to answer for their deeds. We have waited 45 years for the opportunity to help the Slovenian nation in its fight for freedom. We must not let this critical moment pass. As people—as Slovenians—we owe it to our brothers and sisters in Slovenia to support them in their battle for freedom with good will and to the very best of our means and abilities. 550

Echoing this theme, the political editor of American Home noted after a recent trip to Slovenia in the Spring of 1990, “A major surprise for me was the great concern I observed among those of my relatives and their neighbors with whom I had an

549 Ibid.
opportunity to visit that the emergence of more openness might lead to a revival of wartime hatreds and a desire for revenge. Slovene Americans need to avoid doing anything which might promote such an atmosphere in Slovenia."551 This reaction was radically different in tone and content to the attitudes of both the Croatian and Serbian diasporas. Whereas the latter groups spoke of trauma, blame and vengeance, the Slovenians spoke of reconciliation and their responsibility to temper damaging passions that could potentially derail Slovenia’s evolution into a functioning democracy.

C. Nationalism with a soft edge

Slovenian American nationalism went in a different direction than that of either the Croatian or Serbian communities. Slovenian American nationalism did not come with the type of resentment and antagonism that was readily witnessed in the Serbian and Croatian diasporas. Past grievances do not loom large in the Slovenian diaspora and their history is not lived out in the present-day. Slovenian national discourse in the diaspora is notable for its remarkable lack of intransience toward the idea independence. One is left with the impression that had Slovenians abroad would have been equally satisfied with greater autonomy—political, economic and cultural—in a more forward-thinking Yugoslavia. This is in line with my hypothesis that groups who are forward-looking—rather than backward oriented—will be more likely to shed memories of trauma and abuse that so often serve as the fodder for extreme nationalist claims.

Attitudes in the diaspora can undoubtedly harden around singular ideas, stereotypes and memories of trauma and humiliation. For reasons that are beyond the scope of this study, such a process did not occur with Slovenians abroad. The experience

of World War II became an internal debate about the shame of collaboration rather than a story of victimization and blame. Slovenia’s superior economic position within Yugoslavia was also not viewed with resentment but with a certain amount of pride; it was the proof of the superiority of the Slovene people in comparison to the other Republics. What the Slovenian case demonstrates is that concepts of identity can have an significant impact on attitudes toward aggression. The idea of an independent Slovenian nation was undoubtedly the driving force behind Slovenian nationalist expression in communities both near and abroad. This idea, however, was not fuelled by historical memories and narratives of humiliation and victimization. Rather it was a forward-looking idea that embraced the accepted self-perception of Slovenia as a natural member of Central Europe whose time had come to assume its place among its rightful peers.

II. German American nationalism during World War I

The German American response to World War I provides another remarkable case of restrained ethnic nationalism. While undoubtedly emotional, the repose to the war in Europe was not marked by a vengeful chauvinism aimed at righting past wrongs through present-day aggression. German Americans lacked both the collective memory of an unresolved historical trauma and a sense of group victimization—the fodder which, I argue, can feed extreme nationalist sentiment in communities abroad. There, in fact, seemed little in the way of historical baggage in German American identity. A proud people with recognized and far-reaching contributions in the fields of science, literature, music, art and philosophy, German Americans did not harbor either a persistent feeling of resentment toward others or a bruised national self-esteem. Rather the German American attitude was one that continued to honor a rich cultural heritage while eagerly

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assimilating into American society. As described by one scholar, “[t]o use the German language and the cherish German literature, art and philosophy had nothing to do with Germany as a political unit.”

Indeed, when the United States finally did enter the war in Europe, German American behavior was largely beyond reproach. Even the more prejudiced elements of the population—those who rallied behind the Kaiser and his exploits during the early years of the war when the U.S. was ostensibly neutral—significantly toned down their rhetoric once their adopted country became directly involved. As explained by one observer, “Most German Americans held attitudes somewhere between the pro-German and super-loyalist extremes. Like most Americans they regretted that war had come but there was no question I their minds about meeting their responsibilities as citizens.”

A. German American attitude pre-war

At the start of the twentieth century, German Americans were by far the largest immigrant group in the United States. Despite their substantial presence, German Americans were favorably viewed by their adopted country. They were considered an industrious, prudent and sensible people who fit easily into American society. The

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552 Frederick C. Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois Press, 1974).
553 Ibid.
554 The 1910 census numbered the first generation population at 2,500,000 in a total U.S. population of 92,000,000. Combined with second generation German Americans the numbers swelled to 5,780,000. The sizable German immigration to the U.S. in the 1880s was mainly driven by Germany’s rapid transition from a loose confederation of territories into a modern industrial power. At the start, many Germans were simply escaping economic dislocation. Others, however, were fleeing from the mandatory military service required by the new German Empire. German emigration, however, rapidly tapered off by the end of the century. By the start of the war in Europe, second generation Germans Americans outnumbered the first generation.
555 Luebke writes that the majority of the German immigrants prospered in the nineteenth century, surpassing other immigrant groups and sometimes even
Germans themselves proudly boasted that they brought with them a “cultural heritage equal to the dominant English inheritance.”

Pride in all things German was, in fact, used by German American leaders to build community cohesion. They worried over the weakening of the immigrant community. The downside of easy assimilation into American society was a dilution of German-ness in many of the second generation. Ethnic activists had tried to resist this trend by fostering a sense of German nationalism. For many in the diaspora, the homeland had, in fact, become a point of pride over the years. Germany’s new industrial might was viewed as a positive evolution of superior German culture translated into other areas.

On the eve of war German Americans were a large, diverse mix of first and second generation immigrants who exhibited varying degrees of cultural and national pride but who, all, valued their place in American society and the respect that was accorded to them.

B. Restrained German American nationalism

“The outbreak of war in the summer of 1914 came as a thunderclap from a cloudless sky. For the German element in the United States it initiated a period of emotional crisis, conflicts of loyalties, misunderstandings, persecutions, tragedy which few of their fellow citizens appreciated.”

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556 Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I.
557 Ibid.
German Americans displayed an array of attitudes toward the war. The most chauvinistic insisted on displaying pictures of Kaiser Wilhelm. At the opposite end of the spectrum were those who were critical of person and institutions who resisted assimilation and clung to their German identity. Most German Americans fell in between these two extremes.

Not surprisingly, at the start of fighting when the United States still claimed a neutral stance, a good number of German Americans sympathized with the German cause. Ethnic German Americans saw it their duty to ‘accurately represent’ the German side of events, which were often at odds with what was being reported in the mainstream American press. The emphasis of the German American response was to “educate Americans, at least to the point where they would demand ‘fair play’ for Germany in the war news and editorials which appeared from day to day.”559 The Anglo-Saxon character of American society naturally favored the British version of events. In response the German diaspora felt the need to, “vigorously defended the official German explanation of the origins of the war” and, “expressed the utmost confidence in the speedy triumph of Germany.”560 Additionally, the German community was forced to address the sudden hostility aimed by the American public to all things German—which included themselves. Frustrated by how quickly and easily people seemed to accept the justness of the Allied cause and the baseness of German aims, many German Americans fought even harder to convince their fellow Americans that Germany was not in the wrong.

559 Ibid, 8.
560 Ibid, 6.
They clung to the idea that a less biased view of the conflict in Europe would translate into less prejudice at home.

Indeed, the vehemence with which the American public turned on their German population caught the community by surprise. Once vaunted as the ideal immigrant with a recognized high culture, Americans now treated their German inhabitants as unwanted and even sinister interlopers in their society. Even more menacing, German Americans felt put in the uncomfortable position of being viewed as potential traitors. The more anti-German mainstream opinion turned, the more German Americans felt compelled, "to protect the good name of everything German."\textsuperscript{561} As expressed at the time, "I was made to feel the pinpricks of an invisible but so much more hurtful and pernicious ostracism as a traitor to my adopted country. I had never looked for sympathy... I did expect from my neighbors and fellow citizens a fair estimate and appreciation of my honesty and trustworthiness. It had all vanished. Outstanding was only the fact, of which I was never ashamed—nor did I ever make a secret of it—that I had been born in Germany."\textsuperscript{562}

Without a doubt, the rampant hostility in America, caused most Germans to view their ethnicity in a new light. A few reacted by asserting their German-ness with new vigor. "If Germans would not be loved in America, they thought, at least they would be respected."\textsuperscript{563} But many others sought to accommodate themselves to their changed situation. As a diaspora group, they celebrated and sided with Germany as long as doing so did not conflict with the interests of the United States. The moment it did, German Americans unequivocally stood behind their country of residence.

\textsuperscript{561} Luebke, \textit{Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I} 89.
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid. XX.
\textsuperscript{563} Ibid.
The German American example further illustrates the broad character of diaspora response to conflict politics of the homeland. German immigrants, for the most part, did not assume an overly jingoistic stance when Germany went to war. Nor did the community advocate for greater German ambitions than the ones for which that country was fighting. Rather the response was a somewhat defensive nationalism that seemed thrust upon the community by a hostile U.S. environment.

German American were naturally proud of the growing authority of Germany in Europe. While not necessarily pro-war, as long as the U.S. remained neutral, their sympathies understandably lay with Germany. However, when confronted with a hostile attitude toward Germany and those of German origin by broad sections of the American public, German American quickly set about trying to diffuse the antagonism. Their first strategy was to run a counter-campaign to offset the perceived British bias of the mainstream U.S. media. German Americans hoped to dampen animosity by showing their fellow Americans that Germany was not the ‘bad guy’. Ethnic German newspapers took the lead in the effort to change the minds of their neighbors. Many not only presented Germany’s side but argued vociferously in Germany’s favor. This was the dominant strategy from 1914 until the United States entered into the war in 1917. When war was declared by the United States, German Americans quickly retreated from this approach. Remarkable about the German American response was the almost uniform effort by the community to assert their loyalty to the United States. Almost overnight, pro-German proclamations disappeared from the German-language newspapers and editors called for all people of German birth to stand up and support the United States.
As published in the *Express und Westbote* in 1917, “Naturally our sympathies have been with Germany...Germany was our Fatherland. To-day it is different. Our adopted country should have out first love and has it. Even as a man leaves his father and mother and bestows his affection upon his wife, so have we done in the matter of country. Our whole allegiance is to the United States—be she right or wrong.”

Unlike other groups who tend toward extreme nationalistic expression, German Americans did not follow that route. Even the more pro-German elements of the community were careful to tone down their rhetoric when such opinions became unpopular. This attitude is largely explained by the overwhelming U.S.-orientation of German diaspora community and its predominantly cultural, rather than political, affiliation with the homeland. German Americans did not nurture political ties to the Fatherland. As such, they did not carry with them a sense of unfinished business. Narratives of loss, humiliation and retribution were not part and parcel of German American self-definition. Quite the opposite, Germans in the United States were quite proud. Readily accepted and openly admired, they harbored little in the sense of wounded self-esteem. Germany’s military adventures in Europe, while viewed with enthusiasm by some, was never seen as a chance to re-right a wrong or redress an injury. Rather it was viewed the logical evolution of the German state, which had moved from a loose confederation of principalities to a strong central state and now would become a European power. For German Americans, however, Germany’s success on the battlefield would always have been more a symbolic rather than material victory.

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564 Cited in Wittke, "German-Americans and the World War with Special Emphasis on Ohio's German-Language Press," 135.
CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS

I. Open Wounds and Unsettled Accounts

This study is about emotions and the effect they have on diaspora nationalism. I consider the puzzle of why diaspora nationalists advocate for extreme solutions to home country conflicts when rationality suggests that they should do nothing or assume a compromise position. When I began this study, my sense was that such baffling behavior was being driven by an emotional force that pushed these actors to operate in non-rational ways. Their sudden fixation with homeland events, the revival of historical injury and stories of victimization, and the impetus to punish the enemy rather than to simply maximize their win-set, all pointed to a dynamic that needed explanation beyond manipulative leaders, conflicts of material interests or structural factors.

What quickly became evident in the course of my research is that emotions are highly significant determinants of these types of nationalist positions, but not in the way originally anticipated. The most potent emotions were embedded in historical episodes of trauma and injury that had little to do with the present-day fighting. What was astonishing was the emotional silence I encountered when trying to talk about the recent wars. Conversations were inevitably directed to past confrontations—most especially World War II—and the humiliation and anger associated with events from that era. What became quickly evident was that this time period remained very much alive in the community. Individual conversations inevitably migrated toward personal stories of loss and ordeal—whether directly experienced or learned through the story telling of family members. These accounts were mirrored in the ethnic publications of the diaspora.
groups, where attention was focused on drawing parallels between the past and the present. To a certain extent, the disintegration of Yugoslavia was treated as a continuation of past conflict, with little relevance of its own. The unique focus by both Serbian and Croatian émigrés on past animosity was surprising, given the carnage that was taking place in front of them. But as has been noted by other scholars of émigré-homeland engagement, during conflict and war, “long-distance nationalism…is specifically characterized by a discourse on historical injustice and violence.”

Much to my surprise, my fundamental explanation for the non-rational positions of diaspora nationalists ended up revolving around the idea that unsettled historical humiliations can remain more significant for émigrés than current conflicts of interest or identity. These historical grievances fester as open wounds and enable the past to not only stay accessible in the present through the unreconciled emotions that define the experience, but also to dominate the understanding and reaction to more current episodes of conflict. Psychology teaches us that people require resolution in order to come to terms with having been humiliated. Minimally, they look for acknowledgement that they were wronged. More commonly, they seek to undo the injustice and restore a power balance that satisfies their self-esteem. In extreme cases, they not only want to regain their status but also punish those who inflicted the harm. Minus some satisfying closure, humiliation can linger for an untold amount of time, maintaining (and sometimes increasing) its force as it waits to reemerge. The insidious thing about humiliation is that it can lay dormant—subtly affecting a person’s views and beliefs but not overtly directing

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their behavior. It is only when confronted with events that resemble the original humiliation that the emotion is re-activated along with the impetus to act.

The Yugoslav wars were the spark that reignited the 'ancient hatreds' in the Croatian and Serbian diasporas. The resemblance of current hostilities to the past—similar enemies, echoed rhetoric, analogous territory under contestation, revived nationalist symbols—made it easy to refresh the memories and emotions of their destructive history. To outside observers it seemed that these ideas and feelings simply sprung forth with the advent of hostilities, and in a way they did. But embedded in the narratives of the group, they never really disappeared from public discourse even in the most peaceful of times. Rather, they hummed in the background and exerted a subtle but decisive influence on public interpretation of ongoing political processes. The image of Yugoslavia as a continuation of Serb-Croat antagonism is testament to how diaspora narratives of enmity, victimization, insult and injury biased much of the interpretation of what was happening back home. With the social upheaval and political crisis taking place in Yugoslavia, these stories re-emerged full force with all their prejudices and antagonisms intact.

Sitting abroad, both the Croats and the Serbs assembled images of their nations and their histories out of small bits and pieces of information, personal experience, facts, and fiction. Suspended from life in the homeland, they were not required to test their hypotheses. Nor were they exposed to anything that would challenge their ideas. These ideas, in turn, were reified with each retelling of their story, making them more real with the passing of time. As Hockenos notes, "[i]n the homeland decades of coexistence have
often smoothed over old resentments, whereas in the diaspora they festered.\textsuperscript{566} In my interviews with different diaspora activists—both Serbian and Croat—what was notable was the didactic quality of the conversations. I was always treated as an outsider (which I was) who needed to be educated on the “true” history of the people. This history often skimmed over, or outright dismissed, evidence that challenged their dominant claims. In questioning, for example, the assertion that Croatia was purposefully exploited by Serbia in Tito’s Yugoslavia, I was summarily lectured on every unfair policy that Croatia had had to endure. Attempts on my part to show that the other Republics received equal treatment quickly shut down the conversation.

The storylines of the dominant narratives were difficult to challenge, to say the least. They provided the interpretive lens for which to view events taking place and set expectations on what would occur and how to appropriately respond. What was notable was the ubiquity with which these stories were accepted by community members. Internet sites, propaganda material, ethnic magazines and newspapers all repeated with a fair amount of consistency the main themes of these narratives and the thesis that history was repeating itself. The fighting in 1991 was proof of how the dangers predicted by the stories were coming to pass. As Bock-Luna describes from her work with the Serbian-American community, “there was a time-lag, enabling [past confrontations] to loom like shadows over the present putting unsettled accounts that were fifty years old at the center of attention, as if the recent violence had not arrived in the diaspora yet.”\textsuperscript{567} For Croatians what loomed large was the challenge to their ancient state by a people whose

\textsuperscript{566} Hockenos, \textit{Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars} 11.

\textsuperscript{567} Bock-Luna, \textit{The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the Wake of the Third Balkan War} 159.
hegemonic intentions were well-established. They needed to unite in order to fend off the encroaching enemy. The Serbs saw themselves surrounded by enemies—Croats and Muslims—who desired to subjugate the Serbian people and deny them their historical and God-given right to their ancestral territory. The Serbs needed to pull together to claim this right.

Given these narratives, it is unsurprising that with the outbreak of conflict in Yugoslavia, negative identifiers—with an emphasis on victimization, injury and loss—largely overshadowed the more positive connectors that diaspora members fostered with their ethnic identity. The goals of recompense and status reversal seemed to be the dominant motivators for confrontation and fighting. Each group had their own ideas of what was needed to resolve past damage and restore their status. For the Croats, reclaiming their ancient state was the answer. A sovereign state would allow them to escape the dominion of other ethnic groups (the Serbs) and, by doing so, resume their natural upward trajectory as a people. For the Serbs, it was asserting their primacy as a nation over other ethnic groups in their region, be it through continuing with Yugoslavia or unifying all historic territory under a Greater Serbia project. As the ethnic hegemon in their region, the Serbs could be assured of their security while fulfilling the promise of their covenant with God.

More so than affirmative narratives of identity, the Serbian and Croatian diaspora communities were unified by the notion of humiliation. The idea of an independent Croatian state only became a rallying cause when it appeared that Serbia was going to deny its realization. By itself, the positive goal did not move the diaspora to work on its
behalf. Similarly, Croatian independence prompted Serbs abroad to rethink the Greater Serbia solution largely because of the chauvinistic policies of the Tudjman government. Had Tudjman taken a more inclusive position vis-à-vis the Krajina Serbs, it would have been difficult for Serbian Americans to have rallied behind the irredentist goals for the Croat territories. The similarities between 1941 and 1991 would not have been so apparent. As it was, narratives of historical national grievances, mirrored by similar forms of persecution in the present, created continuity between these two periods through the shared feelings of insult, injury and humiliation. Nationalists in both groups embraced ideas of unity and loyalty as a way to reverse the damage and undo the insults inflicted on them decades prior. As the more conciliatory ideas of concession and compromise were shunned, radical voices were allowed to flourish. Extremists’ notions can often appear to represent the spirit of resistance to humiliation. With each additional blow, they are reinforced.

The exception, of course, was the Slovenian diaspora. With this group an altogether different response was witnessed. Affirmative identity narratives dominated this community, who seemed to disdain the Serbian and Croatian tendencies to dwell on the past. The positive potential for Slovenia was the impetus that eventually brought the U.S. Slovenians together to advocate in favor of U.S recognition of Slovenian independence. Slovenian Americans strongly approved of Slovenia’s proactive efforts to politically and economically reform its out-of-date institutions and ideologies. In line with how Slovenian Americans liked to think of themselves, and especially in contrast to the other nationalities of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was smart, industrious and practical in its programme for change. In tune with the opening that was taking place in Yugoslavia as
well as in the rest of Eastern Europe, Slovenia did not shy away from taking the hard steps needed to adjust. In this way, Slovenians American saw themselves as, once again, ahead of their irrational and volatile Yugoslav peers. While the other republics wasted blood and treasure on senseless fighting over the past, Slovenia looked toward what was coming and sought to build the competencies needed to succeed in a post-communist world.

II. The Power of Emotions

With few exceptions, emotions have been largely ignored by political scientists when explaining the militancy of nationalism. This is probably because emotions are seen as vague and unscientific. In some ways, anthropology is much better suited to studying collective emotions—uncovering how they present in individuals and groups and charting their effect. Anthropologists make it their business to take an intimate look into the lives and thoughts of the people they are studying and to try to understand what motivates them by asking the question: “what makes them do this?” Indeed, much of my insight on narratives—as repositories of emotions and the specific modes by which the past is relived in the present through these narratives—was drawn from work by anthropologists on memory and violence.\textsuperscript{568} Psychology, as well, gives us a way to catalogue and measure emotions so that more rigor can be brought to the political study of passion and war.

Emotional explanations are more complicated than alternative rational-choice explanations. But emotions provide a different type of understanding of ethnic


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nationalism that is important to include. Emotions are the inward indicators of meaning. They signal what is important and what is not. The valence and intensity of their expression provide an important insight into the preferences of individuals and their motivations for action. To ignore such signals is like leaving the story half untold. For diaspora members, living abroad and struggling to constantly reaffirm who they are, emotional attachment to identity is not something they can take for granted. It must be constantly reinforced. Identity narratives are significant in this respect. They are, in effect, the repositories of the emotions that diaspora members nurture for their ethnicity and homeland and the short-cut for understanding the parameters of diaspora identity. That identity narratives represent a selective past is to be expected. As Lowenthal correctly points out, "[o]ut of many possible pasts, some are lost, while others are the subject of careful strategies of maintenance and reproduction." What is of concern is not the less-than-accurate representations of history but which narratives capture the popular imagination and how such messages infuse a community’s understanding of itself, not only in the present-day but from generation to generation.

Exile seems to provide fertile ground for narratives of pain, injury, insult and loss. The perception of the past is sharpened away from home. "Exile can produce rancor and regret as well as a sharpened vision," writes Edward Said. "What has been left behind can either be mourned, or it can be used to provide a different set of lenses. Since almost by definition exile and memory go together, it is what one remembers of the past that determines how one sees the future." 

\[570\] Said, *Reflections on Exile.*
So too is the memory of trauma and humiliation. Living abroad and unable to come to terms with the bad things that have happened, both personally and collectively, émigrés are more likely to nurture grudges against those that harmed and humiliated them. Self esteem, as explained by Frijda, “hinges on responding adequately to...slights.”\textsuperscript{571} Compounding the tendency for humiliating events to gain momentum when living in the diaspora is the story-telling that naturally has to occur as identity is established in a foreign environment. Additionally, the collective outmigration of ethnic community members who have suffered a similar experience, which often occurs in the wake of conflict or political disruption in the home country, reinforces a unity of opinion. Personal stories of pain are shared amongst group members—those who have experienced the trauma and those who have watched it from abroad. These personal stories become easily interwoven with the larger historical narratives of the nation. Over time, the boundaries between these two spheres become blurred and the details of the personal story that reinforce the larger national narrative are reinforced while the other elements are dropped. Grievances become fossilized into rigid forms of identity.

Nationalism is without a doubt an emotional phenomenon. Hugo-Trevor Roper describes it as “the expression of wounded nationality: the cry of men who have suffered great national defeat, or whose nationalist is denied, of who live insecurely on exposed national frontiers, surrounded and in danger of being swamped by foreigners.”\textsuperscript{572} It makes sense, therefore, that decisions to engage in militant nationalism might be somewhat emotional in nature. Traditional rational choice explanations fall short in accounting both for the broad-based nationalist revivals that are witnessed in diaspora

\textsuperscript{571} Frijda, \textit{The Laws of Emotion} 270.
\textsuperscript{572} Hugh Trevor-Roper, \textit{Jewish and Other Nationalism} (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 12.
communities and for the non-rational positions that diaspora nationalists opt to take. Nor can they account for the unitary focus of these actors on historical wrongs and their lack of interest in winning the current fight. “Softer rational choice explanations are more successful but this is because they, by definition require much more information about actual preferences.” 573 As I have tried to show, those preferences change in ways shaped by the emotions connected to widely believed stories of historical wrongs. The stories contain embedded emotions that tell group members what they should be thinking, what they should be feeling and how they should be acting.

By focusing on the contribution of emotions to the study of nationalism, I do not want to dismiss the usefulness of the rational actor approach in explaining militancy in the political decision-making of diaspora leaders. Political rationality would argue that diaspora leaders use the disorder of violence to benefit them in a number of ways. In the permissive environment of war, for example, ethnic affiliation can open up opportunities for personal wealth creation. Elites may be able to capitalize on their position outside the turmoil to partner with compatriots in unscrupulous schemes that take advantage of dodgy economics and lax regulations. 574 Crisis also provides an exceptional opportunity for individuals to gain status because of their position within their ethnic group, with home country power brokers, and/or with resident country officials. 575 As rational actors,

573 Kaufman, Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War 204.
574 For an excellent overview of how civil war generates ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ see Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil War (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2000). This work is representative of a body of literature that began to emerge in the mid-1990s which highlighted profiteering as a barrier to war termination. While predominantly concentrating on the vested economic interests of in-country actors, outside players are also included in the analysis.
575 Dual loyalty is a defining element of diasporas. With ties to two places, émigrés are always vulnerable to accusations to disloyalty from both their home and adopted countries. See Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson, Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging (New York: Routledge,
elite leaders will set priorities and assess their actions according to how deeds affect their standing with the particular communities they value the most. At times, skillful entrepreneurs may be able to operate successfully across groups without compromising their standing in either. More commonly, however, they must choose the primary arena in which they wish to operate and calibrate their actions to suit that environment. On this level, elite diaspora action in support of violence is a simple calculation of the benefits and costs of following a particular policy. Greater militancy will be observed when the benefits of supporting aggression are high and the costs low. Moderation is the result of the reverse assessment.

For all their fervor, diaspora nationalists were not immune to the positive consequences for them and their organizations of homeland turmoil. Both Serbian and Croatian community leaders commented, almost wistfully, on the ease with which they were able to harness the energies of existing members in support of their programmes and attract the participation of new members who had previously shown little interest in formal engagement. The emotional heyday of the conflicts readily translated into material benefits for the leading organizations in the diaspora. Typically, as events resolved themselves, émigré groups saw greater disengagement by the larger population.

But whether emotions or reason motivate nationalist revivals in the diaspora, emotions do not always lead to non-rational positions. Contrary to my original hypothesis, I found that emotions can sometimes direct outcomes that are in line with what would be predicted by a rational actor approach. The Croatian case is one such

2000), Hardin, One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict, Shain, The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State, for further discussion on this point.
example. Asking for neither too little nor too much, Croatian nationalists in the diaspora staked out a claim for territory that could be argued as rational given the environment and the constraints they faced. This is not what was expected. The outcome, according to my theory, should have been a more aggressive definition of the borders of Croatia. While this was, indeed, the case for a section of Croat émigrés who looked to annex parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the majority defined their win-in terms of the existing Republic borders.

A closer look at the decisions of the Croat diaspora show that while the major decision was not outrageously out of line with what a rational approach would predict, the elements of the decision were consistent with what emotional drivers would suggest. For example, the drive to assert Croatian dominance over the entire territory, trampling on the rights of the substantial Serbian majority, defies rationality. The chauvinistic stance of the Tudjman government, which alienated and frightened Croatia’s Serbian population, was in part the cause of the Krajina Serbian initial resistance and later secessionist claims. This resistance was, of course, fuelled by the nationalist rhetoric coming out of Serbia. But had Tudjman taken a conciliatory approach to the Serbian minority—guaranteeing them secure rights in the new constitution and perhaps a modicum of autonomy—the fear of this population could have been substantially dampened. It would have been expected that the U.S. diaspora, recognizing that Croatia was ill-prepared for substantial military engagement with the Serbian-backed JNA, would have pushed for Zagreb to make these conciliatory gestures to its Serbian population. Doing so would not have compromised, in any way, the Republic’s push for independence. Nor, would Croatia have had to cede any territory. What may have been
accomplished, however, was a less violent breakaway from Yugoslavia. But the diaspora leadership refused to consider this option. They opted for the more aggressive and punishing position of debasing the Croatian Serbs and forcing them to exist as second-class citizens in the new Croatia with little guarantee of security. When Croatia finally made its push to reclaim the Krajina territory, the results were tragic. Operation Storm effectively wiped out a community that had lived for almost a half a century on Croatian soil. The brutality inflicted on Croatian Serbs as they were forced out of their homes and out of Croatia was appalling—winning Croatia its homeland but spawning a new generation of grievances in the Serbian population. It is difficult to understand how rationality would predict these positions.

III. Diasporas—forces for good or forces for evil?

"Politically-oriented diaspora organizations tend to flaunt an emotional, defensive brand of nationalism. They take principled stances heedless of the repercussions this could have in the home country." 576 Such is the proclamation of Paul Hockenos in his groundbreaking work Homeland Calling. Recent work on ethnic violence and civil conflict do, indeed, point to a number of confrontations that operate with the financial, political, and material support of communities abroad. The seemingly widespread backing has created the general perception that diaspora groups are easily engaged in agendas of violence. The fact that the more prominent voices are usually those advocating extreme points of view further reinforces this perception.

Diasporas are not necessarily war-mongers. Any study of an émigré community points to the diversity of opinion and viewpoints that exist. It is difficult to categorize

576 Hockenos, Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars, 11.
any diaspora as a tightly knit homogenous entity collectively pursuing a single strategy. As much as there are those who push for extreme engagement, there are others who feel otherwise. In her work with the Serbian American community, Bock-Luna stresses that many members of the diaspora refused to be caught up in nationalistic frenzy. It was only when Serbia itself was being bombed in 1999 that their Serbian pride kicked in. Those interested in enlisting diaspora members as peacemakers need to take into consideration the competing opinions and positions that exist within these communities. The most obvious but still most essential observation is that, as long as the fundamental problems and grievances of ethno-national diasporas are not addressed and resolved, these groups will be persistently tempted to use strategies and tactics aimed at the continuation of the conflicts in which they and their homeland are involved.

There are always combinations of factors driving diasporas to get involved, or to withdraw from involvement, in politics and hence in conflicts. I have touched upon one set of explanations that spotlight the complex emotional-psychological ties that groups and individuals maintain with their identity. I briefly mention two more below.

The structure and character of the diaspora community would also seem to be relevant. A shifting balance between long-term migrants and newly arrived ‘refugees’ with direct war experience can substantially alter the interest of the community, their perception of themselves, and therefore how they respond to violence at home. Povrzanovic Frykman in her study of the Croatian community in Sweden points to the

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578 Ibid, 86.
different attitudes between long-term migrants and newly arrived refugees. She finds, counter-intuitively, that long-term migrants were more willing to accept extreme measures to achieve Croatian independence. Those who experienced the war first hand, and with it accompanying loss and displacement, were more reserved in their attitudes.\footnote{579}

The organization of the diaspora community, which allows certain communities to function more easily than others in their host societies, may also have an impact on emotional experience. In the case of the Serbs, for instance, the diaspora was encapsulated and insular, and thus had difficulty negotiating the political environment in the United States. Their inability to penetrate the U.S. policy-making arena was largely the result of a group oriented toward the past and incapable of framing its message in terminology with modern-day relevance. The Croats, in contrast, were more open and cosmopolitan in their view, seeing the United States as an important ally to be co-opted rather than convinced. Croatian leaders were more comfortable negotiating the U.S. environment and framing their agendas in ways that would be positively received by U.S. officials.

IV. Further uses for this approach

In the course of my research for this study, I was struck by how often those trying to explain errant or radical behavior turn to emotions to provide some purchase. Often not directly stated, emotions are nevertheless assumed in most reasoning. Debate over whether the Obama administration would send additional troops to Afghanistan, for example, centered around arguments of further radicalization of the Afghan people if such a step was taken. Similarly, in work being done on home grown terrorism in the

\footnote{579 Frykman, "Homeland Lost and Gained: Croatian Diaspora and Refugees in Sweden."}
United States, researchers talk about the radicalization process of individuals that turn them toward terrorist acts.\textsuperscript{580} In Europe the problem seems more pervasive.\textsuperscript{581} The Madrid train station bombing of March 2004, the London transport bombings of July 7, 2005, and the thwarted August 2006 major terrorist plot to hijack and detonate multiple U.S.-bound airliners out of Heathrow, all involved members of immigrant communities living in Europe at the time. The frightening reality, as in the case of the London Tube bombings, is that the individuals involved in the terrorist acts appeared, for all intents and purposes, to be well-adjusted, functioning members of their communities.

In a domestic and international security environment that has become more overtly concerned with individual acts of political violence, it would seem reasonable to focus greater attention on the causes of radicalization. For this, emotions are key. Whether it be frustration, humiliation, anger, or alienation that drives people to action that harms themselves and others, it is obvious that a greater understanding of the causes will need to heavily rely on theories of emotions and how, and under what conditions, they lead to extreme behavior.

While the focus of this study is fairly narrow—diaspora reaction to homeland violence—the work I have done on framing a theory of emotional causality can provide a launching point off of which a more general theory of emotions and radicalization can be built. The challenge will be on identifying commonalities between disparate cases without losing the nuance. As stated before, emotions are complex and difficult to study.

\textsuperscript{580} Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat," (New York: New York City Police Department, 2007).

\textsuperscript{581} Jerrold Post and Gabriel Scheffer, "Radicalization in the Muslim Diaspora" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the ISSP: 31st Annual Scientific Meeting, Paris, France, 2009).
They do not make for neat models and elegant conclusions. This being the case, the field
of political science needs to take greater note of emotions and their effect on individual
and societal security.
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