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EES NEWS

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The After-Life of Projects: Mapping Democracy-Promotion in the Western Balkans and Beyond

Keith Brown

Keith Brown is Associate Professor at Brown University's Watson Institute. He spoke about his current research project (titled "From Idea to Impact," which is sponsored by an IREX Policy-Connect grant) at an EES Noon Discussion on March 12, 2008. The following is a summary of his presentation. ***Meeting Report 348.***

Since the 1990s, an array of international organizations has devoted considerable time and energy to democracy promotion in the Western Balkans. A major strand of this work has comprised civil society assistance, increasingly targeted at the community level. Official evaluations of this work tend to emphasize quantitative indicators of increasing civic participation, reduced incidence of inter-ethnic violence and socio-economic progress. They tend not to portray the empirical realities of democratization, or the less tangible, longer-term impacts of such efforts. The ongoing research project described here aims to offer a longitudinal case-study in US civil society programming which combines academic and policy perspectives. Our goal is to examine closely and systematically the impacts and lessons from a single project, while factoring in the wider context. We also hope to demonstrate the advantages of qualitative, open-ended inquiry for researchers interested in uncovering what might be termed the "invisible legacies" of external democracy promotion efforts, as well as offer a better understanding of what we term internal democracy promotion efforts, often with deep historical memories of their own, which have been ignored or overlooked.

In January 2008, I traveled to the Republic of Macedonia with two colleagues to conduct oral historical research on the birth, implementation and after-life of one civil society program, which ran from 1995-2004. This program, DEMNET, was part of an integrated package of interventions designed and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to foster a vibrant civil society in the country. As part of a wider effort, which operated in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and other East and Southeast European countries, Macedonia's DEMNET program was spearheaded by the Vermont-based Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), a non-governmental organization (NGO). ISC worked with local communities and NGOs to develop their capacities in strategic planning, advocacy, lobbying and effective cooperation. Much of this work was done by Macedonian nationals who, through their work for ISC, gained new insights and skills regarding civil society's role and structure within a democratic system. As USAID has downscaled its funding and ISC has reduced its footprint, ISC's target communities, partner NGOs and former employees face the challenge of sustaining the momentum of reform.

I have worked in and on Macedonia for the past 15 years: my research partners are Paul Nuti, a former ISC Macedonia country director with whom I have previously collaborated, and Paige Sarlin, a documentary film-maker with interests in the role of media in democracy. Our interviews were structured as informal conversations: we called it muabet, a Turkish loan-word also used in Macedonian, Greek, Albanian and Serbian to mean "chit-chat." We chose this form in part because of our sense that more formal evaluations (as well as hypothesis-testing) often miss something. Focus groups and specific question sets are used to establish objectivity and distance between an individual interviewer and members of an organization: human rapport is considered as undermining the validity of the information gathered. This project is based on a different model of knowledge-production, which we consider

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profoundly collaborative. It was an attempt to talk about impact in a holistic way: not counting specific indicators, but rather asking people to share less tangible results and observations.

Thus far, we have interviewed eight former ISC staff and six other civil society activists, focusing in particular on individuals with their own histories of community engagement and involvement in participatory politics. All of the former and three of the latter interviews were conducted in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, where between a quarter and a third of the country's population live, and where most of the country's largest and longest-running NGOs, as well as virtually all foreign agencies, are based. The remaining three interviews were conducted with community leaders in Vevchani, a small municipality with around 2,500 inhabitants, in Western Macedonia, the significance of which is discussed below. In Skopje interviews were conducted in English, and in Vevchani, in Macedonian.

This focus on private giving—which involved both public education and lobbying to reform the tax code to incentivize giving—marks a profound philosophical difference from approaches that see public funds as central.

Our interviews in Skopje offered a glimpse into the uncertain future of the civil society sector, insofar as it still relies heavily on external funding. A majority of donors have closed or are winding down their programs: EU pre-accession funding is coming online, but has specific demands in terms of formats. One of our interviewees, for example, offered the following observation:

> I sometimes have a hard time to understand the European approach, because they're pretty much service-oriented… it's so mechanistic, so Newtonian in a way, everything must be in blocks or tables… Development is about making changes in the lives of people. Development is not making blocks and plans two years ahead, especially in an environment like the Balkans, but in any place, really. This environment is so changing and complex, that you cannot have a mechanistic approach like some donors have... It's a formula for how to fail. Of course, standards are there in terms of spending and monitoring… but looking for results in this global level management-for-results approach introduced by the UN, I think might cause more problems and bureaucratization than change.

He went on to stress the difference between the rigidity of such audit-driven approaches to programming (in which, in particular, "logframes" occupy a central place) and the greater flexibility and empowerment he had experienced while working for ISC during the implementation of DEMNET. The imagery of Newtonian physics, in particular, which conjures inputs, outputs and predictable, guaranteeable results, represents an affinity with social scientific critiques of "top-down" approaches to governance and assistance, such as James Scott's discussion of "high modernism."

Another interviewee spoke of enduring rivalry between donors, which manifests itself in prejudice on the part of European employers against those perceived as acculturated in the ways of US project management. In this regard, it was interesting to observe how different NGOs in Macedonia were tackling the thorny problem of financial sustainability. While some (including the Open Society Institute [FOSIM] and the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation [MCIC]) are retooling to apply for EU funding sources, a key strand of development for ISC's legacy organization, the Center for Institutional Development (CIRa), was philanthropy development and the promotion of corporate social responsibility in Macedonia. This focus on private giving—which involved both public education and lobbying to reform the tax code to incentivize giving—marks a profound philosophical difference from approaches that see public funds as central.

Finally, our conversations with former ISC employees also made clear the extent of their professional mobility and development. A core of the young activists recruited in the 1990s by ISC country director Terry Armstrong now lead CIRa: others work in managerial and analytical roles at other international organizations, including the British Council, and the Swiss and Swedish development organizations. Several have earned internationally-accredited masters' degrees in the professional field of development studies, and a common theme in our conversations was their commitment to fostering collaboration between different governmental and non-governmental actors to bring about positive change in the country. In this regard, several reflected on the distance they had traveled from their early, "instant" activism (organizing trash pick-ups, for example) to an awareness of the need for protracted, incremental work to embed progressive values in the legal code, and change public attitudes.

What was also common, as noted above, was the pivotal importance in their own professional development of working for ISC. One of our interviewees, now the director of a regional organization that brings together local associations from different Southeast European countries to share best practices, tried to capture that experience as follows:

> It's a different working culture. It's difficult to describe, you know, it's just a feeling you have, when you get up and go to work, and also the liberty you have in being more creative about doing something,

> or having the opportunity to say when something is not going as well as you wish, or spending time to discuss those issues. In many other organizations there's no time for such things—you're just running and doing things just as they are written in advance. So we were spending some time thinking about how to improve things, and I think not only the product is better, but the feeling of the employees and the staff that they can do it and they should think about it, is very important.

He stressed that he was trying to replicate this sense of shared purpose and empowerment in the organization he now directed. The terms he used resonate with those of the first interviewee quoted above, with their shared concerns about the limitations of operating, as it were, "by the book."

ISC's DEMNET program, then, left an imprint on those Macedonian citizens directly involved in its implementation. In our next round of interviews, we plan to widen the circle of inquiry and visit some of the communities and organizations outside Skopje where ISC provided support through specific projects. In several interviews, former ISC employees expressed curiosity about the outcome of their work in particular locations, and we will continue our documentation of project afterlife in a sub-set of the score or so of communities where ISC was most actively engaged.

We also plan to return to Vevchani, a community which was never on ISC's map. This represents something of a paradox, as Vevchani strikes us as a site where, historically, citizens participated in activist efforts to make local government more effective, responsive and accountable, and thereby acted in accordance with several of USAID's strategic objectives for DEMNET. The town is the location of a yearly carnival, which residents claim represents a 1400 year old legacy, and also attracted publicity when in 1992 it declared itself, in an act of playful politics akin to those documented elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Republic of Vevchani. In our research, though, we focus on the legacy of events in 1987, which we argue constitute a locally-driven project in their own right, in which "foreign assistance" took a rather different form. In August 1987, following a dispute with local government officials over a proposed redistribution of water from the springs in Vevchani, Macedonian police clashed with local residents, mostly women and children who put up barricades and blocked access to the springs. Despite the non-violent tactics of the townspeople, the police used dogs, tear gas, conventional truncheons and also specialized prods that delivered electric shocks against the population. The townspeople nevertheless continued their resistance, protesting and publicizing police methods through a hunger strike and non-violent protest meetings.

They were motivated, in part, by skewed media coverage of the events. Nova Makedonija, the newspaper of record, reported that Vevchani's Orthodox Christian population had refused to share their water with their Macedonian Muslim neighbors in the village of Oktisi, and the police were compelled to intervene for the greater good. Vevchani's activists recall that in fact, they had been negotiating with Oktisi, and had reached an agreement on sharing water resources, but that the local government had tried to impose its own plan, which involved piping Vevchani water to an elite settlement of villas of party members at Elen Kamen, on Lake Ohrid.

Nova Makedonija's coverage also sparked a reaction from Vlado Milchin, who was then a theater director, and who I interviewed in Skopje. He recalled reading the Nova Makedonija coverage and, because he knew of mixed marriages between people in Oktisi and Vavcani, knowing that something was not quite right. He went to Vevchani, where a friend lived, to see for himself, and ended up spending three days in his friend's house, filming and interviewing victims of police violence.

> So after doing that, I remember that the next day, or two days after we came back to Skopje, I wrote a letter to the editor in chief of NM telling my view of what had happened. Basically it was a refutation of that editorial. It was not published, naturally. And then I recommended a performance from Vevchani to come to Skopje and to be a part of the program of Youth Open Theater Festival organized by the Youth Cultural Center. So they came, and then probably somebody from the theater group told Iso Rusi—then correspondent for the Zagreb weekly Danas—that I was in Vevchani and that I was investigating the whole story, then Iso came to me and asking me whether I would be ready to give an interview. We did the interview, not only about Vevchani, but the [wider] political situation, history, [especially] things which somehow are completely dark in the history… and Danas published that, and Danas was really a weekly with a reputation. I remember then I was professor at the faculty of drama, and the dean came to me and said "this is a bomb." So after Danas came Mladina, which was famous, very open weekly published in Ljubljana, and Valter from Sarajevo. And it was really a voice… the only voice from Macedonia, at least in the public, and that was something which was very instructive. I had no ideas of doing anything afterwards. But it happened that as result of that activity, actually, I was invited by Professor Branko Horvat to join perhaps the first NGO in Yugoslavia, the so-called UJDI, Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiatives. It was the beginning of a process which brought me to this world of civil society.

This story—told, I reiterate, in the mode of muabet—reveals the organic process by which Nova Makedonija's "big lie" came to be revealed as false: not by direct challenge (which was censored) but through a sequence of individual acts of friendship and loyalty. The chain of necessary conditions Milchin lays out is testament to the existing landscape of democratic potential in the

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former Yugoslavia: in this rich narrative account, we see how a friendship with a Vevchani resident (forged through the theater), a framework for theatrical collaboration, acquaintanceship with a trusted journalist, and then a network of alternative, critical media brought the first-hand account of events back around to people in Skopje. He nonetheless sees the moment—created by citizens in Vevchani—as pivotal in his own career path, which sees him as director of the Foundation of the Open Society Institute in Macedonia.

In Vevchani, interviewees confirmed a strong, enduring sense of community activism. Two years after the original events, residents marched to the government buildings in Skopje and then camped three days outside the building until a party spokesman came out and acknowledged that the police had gone too far. One of the leaders during the events, the former school principal, described the participants' sense of determination, "to show them that we would struggle to the end for democracy, freedom and for our dignity, which had been trampled on. For that reason Vevchani can be reckoned as a green shoot of democracy—or a spring of democracy, of a kind that didn't exist anywhere else at the time." This organic metaphor, evoking the growth of plants, and Vevchani's own springs, is part of a powerful rhetoric of spontaneous, authentic localism. Elsewhere she described the importance for people in Vevchani of voluntarism and action—as opposed to waiting for someone else to think or provide for them—which culminated in a successful campaign to have Vevchani acknowledged as a free-standing municipality, with substantial financial autonomy.

As I suggested earlier, the vision that the principal and Milchin express is close to that which ISC and USAID aspired to cultivate. But despite the apparent commonality, we identified a strange miscommunication. Before this trip, Paul Nuti, former country director of ISC, had never heard of Vevchani. Vlado Milchin—one of the leading figures in civil society activism in Macedonia before and after the break-up of Yugoslavia—indicated in our conversation that he had never heard of DEMNET. Memories are sometimes unreliable, and sometimes institutional rivalries play a role. But in this project, what we are uncovering is apparently disconnected conversations about the same thing—the importance, and the possibility, of locality, mutuality and human connection in participatory democracy. We hope to find ways to knit them together, and thus perhaps extend the after-life of both, and highlight the value of close listening, muabet, in grasping how and when democratic projects, home-grown or externally-promoted, take root.

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Serbia's October Revolution: Evaluating International Efforts Promoting Democratic Breakthrough

Ray Jennings

Ray Jennings is a research scholar at the Stanford University Center for Democracy Development and the Rule of Law. He spoke at an EES Noon Discussion on October 31, 2007. The following is a summary of his presentation. ***Meeting Report 346.***

In 1987, the former Yugoslav communist apparatchik-turned national protagonist, Slobodan Milosevic, showed promise as a modern liberator. Enjoying immense initial support, he rose to power swiftly and retained the authority he achieved with violence, xenophobic propaganda, appeals to history, legalism, patronage and appropriation of the country's wealth. He ruled as Yugoslavia's constituent republics devolved into separate nations, through four wars and as a NATO bombing campaign pitted his regime against the West. The stirring electoral victory of his opposition and subsequent protests that removed Milosevic on October 5, 2000, came after more than a decade during which the autocrat often seemed unassailable, invulnerable and incorrigible. His fall was hailed inside and outside of Serbia as a decisive moment of revolutionary democratic change.

Few of the players critical in the dramaturgy of the electoral breakthrough of 2000 characterize the ouster of Milosevic as revolutionary today, however. Much of the architecture of the regime's judicial, security and intelligence apparatus remains intact. National chauvinism, distrust of pluralist politics, poor relations with the West, endemic corruption, and economic stagnation persist. It is not always the case that a successful breakthrough also triggers a gradual, evolutionary process of consolidating liberal democracy. Instead, successful cases can degenerate into partially consolidated democracies and sometimes slip back into authoritarian rule. At times, the very way breakthrough is achieved can signal difficulties in the consolidation that follows.

Factors that contribute to breakthrough develop over time. During the 13-year period under Milosevic from 1987 to 2000, cultural values were contested and new borders, a market economy, multi-party democracy and oppositional politics developed fitfully and in a context unlike other breakthroughs before or after in the region. Externally, international regard for Slobodan Milosevic oscillated, but democracy promotion assistance grew to proportions that outsized other similar subjects of that era. Milosevic eventually fell, but what combination of external factors and domestic variables over time combined for such a result and what were the causal connections between them?

Internal influences on democratic breakthrough

Several domestic influences during the period between Milosevic's initial consolidation of power in 1989 and his defeat in 2000 contributed to the breakthrough moment that October. Many of these domestic factors are interdependent and difficult to isolate from each other or the proactive/reactive genius loci of historical and external influence. Taken together and in retrospect, six determinants played a particularly important role in the resistance leading to Serbia's democratic breakthrough.

First and in many ways foremost, civic resistance and a democratic political opposition matured and drew important lessons from two clarifying episodes of dissent after 1988. Participation in the groundswell of resistance in 1991-1992 and in 1996-1997 contributed to the effective engagement of the political opposition, civil society organizations and student activists in the culminating efforts of 1999-2000. At the time Milosevic was defeated, an experienced, inclusive and influential civic and political "counter-elite" had developed as a riposte to the cogent exclusionary politics and principals of the regime.

Second, free print and electronic media, including the nascent internet, proved essential in disseminating more balanced news coverage and in providing access to an alternative set of political values that collectivized a fragmented democratic resistance.

Third, political crises in Serbia throughout Milosevic's rule occurred against a backdrop of extraordinary economic failure. For most of the decade, entrepreneurial anarchy, survivalist capitalism and sanctions-related economic decline proved advantageous to Milosevic. By 1999, a lack of reforms, unpaid salaries and remittances, poor service delivery, international economic isolation, inability to repair damage from NATO bombardment and growing awareness of the effects of a decade of unlawful appropriation of the republic's wealth contributed to disillusionment with his leadership.

Milosevic preserved parcels of easily-controlled, nominally-open political space to reassure international interlocutors, co-opt his political opposition and portray himself as a legitimate democrat. But consistent and comprehensive control of social alternatives eluded Serbian authorities.

Fourth, the semi-autocratic nature of the regime worked both for and against Milosevic. Milosevic preserved parcels of easily-controlled, nominally-open political space to reassure international interlocutors, co-opt his political opposition and portray himself as a legitimate democrat. But consistent and comprehensive control of social alternatives eluded Serbian authorities. Moreover, a reliance on legalistic authority inclined the regime to resort to the passage of repressive laws on

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civic activity, university education and media expression when threatened, providing signature moments for mobilization of the opposition.

Fifth, nationalism and historical memory were indispensable to Milosevic during much of his tenure in government after 1987. By 1995, nationalist ideologues who were receptive to Milosevic's unity and salvation rhetoric felt betrayed by his poor treatment of Kosovo's Serbs after 1991, disavowal and maltreatment of Serbian refugees during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Finally, Milosevic's negotiated international agreements ending those wars were regarded as inimical to the interests of Krajina and Bosnia's Serbs. By the end of the war in Kosovo, the Milosevic regime was barely able to rally traditional bases of support with patriotic appeals. The opposition, however, was able to leverage the soft nationalism of an unassuming Vojislav Kostunica to attract attention away from the regime during the campaign.

Not only are external influences on democratic breakthrough multi-faceted and diverse (and, at times, even unintended), they are typically and characteristically uncoordinated and notoriously hard to isolate.

Sixth, splits among security forces became more apparent after the Kosovo conflict, particularly after the September 24, 2000 elections, which ultimately proved fatal to the regime during the protests of October 5. Without the full support of the army, secret police, interior ministry and key paramilitary commanders that the regime relied upon as its last lines of defense, Milosevic's ability to retain authority in the face of overwhelming numbers of protestors was lost within hours.

External influences on democratic breakthrough

Not only are external influences on democratic breakthrough multi-faceted and diverse (and, at times, even unintended), they are typically and characteristically uncoordinated and notoriously hard to isolate. Of all the factors bearing on the demise of the Milosevic regime, direct democracy promotion assistance in the form of financial support, training and contact with other regional activists was the most influential. But economic and military sanctions, diplomatic isolation of the Milosevic regime, Western demonstration or "city-on-the hill" effects and significant, though diffusionary, impacts from the wave of Eastern European transitions, especially in Slovakia and Croatia, were also integral to creating an atmosphere where revolutionary potential accumulated.

As with internal influences on democratic change, these factors are interdependent and few could easily be singled out for a signature impact on breakthrough. It is more the case that these influences leveraged each other and domestic developments to democratic change. Taken together, important external influences contributing to breakthrough in Serbia fall into five broad categories: international democracy promotion assistance; economic and trade sanctions; diplomatic isolation; military intervention; and diffusionary effects.

First, democracy-promotion assistance from all sources totaled nearly $150 million in the period between 1988 and 2000. Nearly two-thirds of this amount was expended in 1999 and 2000 alone. Some of the largest providers of democracy assistance were the Open Society Fund based in Belgrade, the United States Agency for International Development, the European Union, bi-lateral European donors and a host of other quasi-governmental and private institutions. After 1998, assistance broadened and deepened to include initiatives designed to bolster the survivability of the resistance and engage in confrontation with the regime. There was less of a focus on sustainable development and more on short-term political change in Milosevic's last two years in office.

Second, economic sanctions and constraints from 1992 onward including various IFI, UN, US and EU credit, import, flight, trade, energy, arms and trans-shipment bans had a mixed impact, both creating the expansive criminal coterie that sustained the regime and contributing to the exhaustion of assets and patience that eventually eroded support for Milosevic after 1998.

Third, diplomatic relations with Milosevic were schizophrenic. At times, when Milosevic was accepted as a peacemaker, as he was after the Dayton talks, the autocrat turned inward to strong-arm his domestic critics and reward his supporters. Later, more "targeted sanctions" on Milosevic's inner circle, along with quiet diplomatic approaches in 1999 and 2000 to persuade Milosevic allies to "come clean," and the Hague indictments eventually gave Milosevic an expiration date that contributed to the regime's vulnerability.

Fourth, military intervention, in the form of NATO bombing, and the ground occupation of Kosovo had a mixed effect on regime change. In the short-term, the bombing scattered the opposition and radicalized domestic politics. It terminated any leverage the West could offer a vanishing class of moderates. NATO's attacks appeared as proof to many Milosevic sympathizers of the hostile intentions of western countries and their disregard for Serbia. However, the loss of Kosovo and inability to repair damage from the bombardment, combined with the fragile economy and the hard dictatorship that emerged during the war, contributed to public doubts and open criticism of Milosevic's ability to lead.

Fifth, diffusion and demonstration effects were important contributors to breakthrough. Street protests in Serbia influenced later democratic change in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Slovakia, and these successes in turn impacted Serbia in 2000. The visits of activists

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Eye of the Storm: The ICTY, Commemorations and Contested Histories of Croatia's Homeland War

Vjeran Pavlakovic

Vjeran Pavlakovic is an NCEEER Research Scholar working in Zagreb, Croatia. He spoke and an EES Noon Discussion on November 14, 2007. The following is a summary of his presentation. ***Meeting Report 347.***

On August 5, 2007, Croatia celebrated the twelfth anniversary of Operation Storm (Oluja), the four-day military action that liberated over 10,000 square kilometers (18.4 percent of Croatia) after peace negations to reintegrate the territory failed to make progress. The entire Croatian political leadership gathered in Knin, the capital of the former Krajina para-state and the actual and symbolic center of the Serb rebellion against rule from Zagreb. Since 1996, Croatia has commemorated the day Knin fell to the Croatian Army as the Day of Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving.

While President Stjepan Mesic, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, and Speaker of the Parliament Vladimir Seks (along with numerous other Croatian politicians) gathered in the fortress above Knin to watch the ceremonial raising of the Croatian flag, several thousand veterans marched through the streets below. As in previous years, politicians used the spotlight to declare Operation Storm the "most brilliant page in Croatian history" and once again denounce Belgrade as the aggressor of the 1990s.

Amid the celebrations, the question of war crimes and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) invariably came up. Although not as aggressively as in 2005, on the tenth anniversary of Operation Storm, opposition parties criticized the government for arresting "Croatian heroes" and sending them to The Hague. Many of the generals who had joined the first Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, on the Knin fortress in 1995 had subsequently been indicted by the ICTY for alleged war crimes. Shirts supporting General Ante Gotovina (who had been a fugitive for more than four years before being arrested in 2005) were sold on the streets, and pro-Gotovina billboards, posters and graffiti decorated Knin's buildings. Meanwhile, in Serbia, President Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica once again issued declarations calling Operation Storm the greatest act of ethnic cleansing since World War Two and a planned criminal operation.

As the commemoration in Knin concluded with a Mass, Sanader told the gathered reporters that "no one is going to write Croatian history but us," adding that he would "not allow any institutions to falsify history," clearly alluding to the ICTY. This statement, which Sanader repeated on a number of other occasions, highlights how the annual commemorations of the Homeland War are interwoven with Croatia's foreign policy, domestic politics, relations with the ICTY, and an understanding of the recent past. What does it mean when the head of a government argues for exclusive rights on writing history? And to what degree can politics dictate which historians are considered legitimate? Croatia's current political situation, namely efforts at Euro-Atlantic integration and obligations to the ICTY, have helped to reawaken insecurities over the "control of the past," especially when considering the country's experience with communist and fascist regimes in the twentieth century, as well as previous centuries of foreign rule.

Two processes in Croatia have significantly affected the way history is being constructed, for the most part without the participation of historians: first, through commemorations and other political rituals and, second, through war crimes trials and international tribunals. Whereas Croatian politicians used public commemorations to create a purely victorious narrative of the founding of the state, the ICTY has arguably constructed a counter-narrative that casts Croatia not only as a victim, but also as a perpetrator of crimes. The interplay of these two processes provides an insight into how the country deals with the difficult legacy of Yugoslavia's violent destruction.

In the 1990s, President Tudjman was obsessed with constructing new political rituals which connected the modern state with certain aspects of Croatia's past, particularly those emphasizing the continuity of Croatian statehood and sovereignty.

Commemorating the Homeland War

Commemorations, along with other political rituals such as rallies, parades, anniversaries and other mass gatherings, are symbolic public activities that are often used by the politicians to construct a grand narrative of a nation's history. Symbols and rituals play a particularly important role in states that have recently achieved independence and nationhood, in order to legitimate the new governing institutions, territorial integrity and borders, and a ruling elite that lay claim to the founding myths of the country. In communist Yugoslavia, the legitimating historical narrative centered on World War II. For newly independent Croatia, the Homeland War (1991–1995) provides the dominant narrative. In the 1990s, President Tudjman was obsessed with constructing new political rituals which connected the modern state with certain aspects of Croatia's past, particularly those emphasizing the continuity of Croatian statehood and sovereignty.

War commemorations are important rituals for a society to remember the dead, grieve for the victims of violence, and honor the soldiers who gave

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their lives for their country. This is no different in Croatia, which suffered thousands of casualties and widespread destruction in its struggle for independence. But these commemorations also often serve as platforms for politicians to ensure that their version of the past is what gets recorded as history. Moreover, the content of commemorations can serve as a gauge of how a society remembers its past.

The two most important commemorations of the Homeland War are the siege (and fall) of Vukovar (November 18) and the aforementioned Day of Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving centered in Knin (August 5). The public ceremonies of these two defining moments of the war in Croatia clearly reveal two prominent images, victim and victor, in the dominant narrative of the recent past. Vukovar remains a symbol of Croatian suffering and Serbian aggression, the vicious destruction of cultural monuments, ethnic cleansing and the merciless attack against civilians by the Yugoslav People's Army, which culminated in the massacre of more than 200 Croatian prisoners at the Ovcara farm in 1991. The central event of the Vukovar commemoration is a symbolic "column of memory" that follows the 5.5 km route from the Vukovar hospital (where wounded Croatian defenders and civilians were captured and taken to Ovcara) to the Memorial Cemetery of the Homeland War Victims. A wreath-laying ceremony at the monument at Ovcara, located on a former pig farm on the outskirts of town, is also a prominent component of every commemoration held in Vukovar.

The fact that Serb civilians were killed by Croatian extremists during the conflict, or that many Serbs remained loyal to Croatia and contributed to the defense of Vukovar, is overlooked in the simplified "Serb versus Croat" version of history perpetuated through public rituals.

At the 2007 commemoration, a former commander of the town's defense declared that "the most important thing is that Vukovar becomes a place for the collective memory of the Croatian people." That memory is exclusively one of victimization, and exclusively ethnic Croatian victimization at the hands of "Serbian aggressors," which is reinforced by the commemorations. The fact that Serb civilians were killed by Croatian extremists during the conflict, or that many Serbs remained loyal to Croatia and contributed to the defense of Vukovar, is overlooked in the simplified "Serb versus Croat" version of history perpetuated through public rituals. There is no doubt that Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia, backed by the Yugoslav People's Army and Croatian Serb paramilitaries, committed numerous crimes in the war against Croatia, but placing collective guilt at the feet of all Serbs obstructs reconciliation and distorts the historical record.

The annual commemoration of Operation Storm in Knin presents a radically different side of the Homeland War narrative. Successfully liberating occupied Croatian territory and ultimately "winning" the war, that is, securing independence and international recognition, are emphasized triumphantly on August 5. Memory of war victims, while present, plays far less of a role than during the Vukovar commemorations. Under Tudjman, the town of Knin was not always at the center of the ceremonies; the now practically forgotten Altar of the Homeland above Zagreb and Miragoj Cemetery were locations where the Croatian political leaders would make appearances on this day. In 1997, Tudjman chose August 5 as the day for his inauguration in front of St. Mark's cathedral in Zagreb, seeking to cement his personal legacy with that of the victorious Homeland War. But Knin remained a powerful site of memory. It had been the seat of medieval Croatian kings, as well as the heart of the Serb rebellion in the 1990s, and after 2000 it once again became the central stage for this key public ritual of the Homeland War.

In 2004, the new HDZ government set the precedent that all of the top Croatian politicians (president, prime minister and speaker of the parliament) should attend the commemoration in Knin, emphasizing the importance of this date and place in the national consciousness. However, the tenth anniversary of Operation Storm in 2005 overtly revealed that several contested versions of the recent past existed, which not only affected internal Croatian politics, but influenced Croatia's relations with its neighbors. Right-wing political parties upset with Croatian cooperation with the ICTY organized counter-commemorations, and a new supplement for history high school textbooks dealing with the 1990s provoked considerable public debate before ultimately being scrapped by the Ministry of Education because of the controversy.

More important was the impact on relations with Serbia, which had been steadily improving. Croatian politicians called Operation Storm "a most brilliant victory, unsullied, in accordance with international and all other laws," and "a glorious military operation." The destruction of thousands of Serbian homes, murder of several hundred civilians, and exodus of at least 150,000 Croatian Serbs were brushed off as "events that took place on the margins of the operation." While there is a consensus in Croatia about the legitimacy of Operation Storm, the failure of the Tudjman government to condemn the crimes that did occur raises questions as to its complicity in tolerating collective punishment against

Croatia's Serbs. It is not surprising, therefore, that until 2006 Croatian Serb political parties refused to be part of the commemoration in Knin.

As noted earlier, the response in Belgrade in both 2005 and 2007 revealed a radically different narrative of Operation Storm. President Boris Tadic compared Operation Storm to the genocide in Srebrenica and alleged it "was an organized crime, the planned murder of people and the deprivation the fundamental human right—the right to life." This counter-commemoration in Belgrade provided yet another simplified narrative, stripped of the historical context of the war in Croatia in the 1990s and exculpating the Serbian political leadership for the tragedy of Croatia's Serbs in the Krajina. Efforts at reconciliation between Serbia and Croatia invariably suffer each year as the politicized interpretations of the recent past are combined with raw emotions and traumatic memory of the war in Croatia at these ritualized public recollections.

The ICTY as historian?

A second factor in the construction of recent Croatian history is the role of the ICTY. The war crimes tribunal in The Hague has had a profound impact on Croatian politics, international relations and the perception of the past, as well as how the Homeland War is commemorated. Sanader's repeated declarations that only Croatia can write its own history have been directed at alleged attempts of the ICTY "rewriting" the narrative of the war in the 1990s. Tribunal officials have openly stated that their work will impact the historical record of Yugoslavia's destruction, even though most legal scholars and social scientists have been critical of attempts by criminal courts taking on the mantle of historian (including the selective use of evidence and inability of the courtroom schedule to accommodate the broad social context necessary for historical work). Furthermore, it has become evident that the ICTY is overly politicized in its relations with the Yugoslav successor states. Despite the shortcomings of a "tribunal as historian," there is little doubt about the impact of the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials on the historical narrative of the Holocaust and World War Two. It is therefore quite likely that the ICTY will have a similar affect on how the history of the Homeland War is written, regardless of the debates over the legitimacy of that tribunal.

In the case of Operation Storm, for which three Croatian generals were indicted (Ante Gotovina, Mladen Markac, and Ivan Cermak), the annual commemorations for this military action vividly reflected Croatia's relations with the tribunal. Under Tudjman, commemorating August 5 was always a purely triumphant affair, with no mention of any possible wrongdoings on the Croatian side. During the 1990s, the belief that no war crimes could be committed by the side defending itself against aggression prevailed, and the Croatian government hesitantly cooperated with the ICTY only when pressured by the international community. Generals who would subsequently find themselves on ICTY indictments, such as Mirko Norac and Gotovina, were prominent guests in Knin and other sites of memory for Homeland War commemorations.

However, alongside the legitimate operations of the Croatian Army there were clear cases of war crimes, such as during the aftermath of Operation Storm. Had the Croatian government taken prompt action to publicly condemn crimes against Serb civilians and the destruction of their property, the ICTY would have been less likely to intervene. But since Tudjman showed little incentive in punishing those responsible for crimes in Gospic, the Medak Pocket and Operation Storm, to name a few examples, it was possible to see that he either tolerated collective retribution against Croatia's Serbs or, as alleged in several indictments, actively planned that collective retribution. After 2000, as the first post-Tudjman government recognized the ICTY's jurisdiction over all military activity in the 1990s, a number of Croatian generals were indicted and disappeared from the commemorations.

Not only were some of the main protagonists of the heroic Homeland War narrative missing from public ceremonies, but Croatian politicians had to address, and actually incorporate, the issue of cooperation with the ICTY at commemorations of Operation Storm.

Not only were some of the main protagonists of the heroic Homeland War narrative missing from public ceremonies, but Croatian politicians had to address, and actually incorporate, the issue of cooperation with the ICTY at commemorations of Operation Storm. Prime Minister Ivica Racan's center-left government (2000–2003) faced such vitriolic criticism from the right-wing for its cooperation with the ICTY that Racan avoided going to Knin in 2002 and 2003, fearing massive demonstrations at such a symbolic place. Even Sanader's HDZ, with its nationalist credentials, has faced counter-commemorations and protests in Knin. The rhetoric at the anniversary Operation Storm has also changed, with Croatian politicians acknowledging that war crimes did occur and that there were Serbian victims as well, something that would have been unimaginable under Tudjman. The Croatian leadership has insisted, however, that these were individual crimes which must be separated from Operation Storm, and that under no circumstances can it be considered planned ethnic cleansing. This is of the utmost importance for Croatian national interests, as the trial of Gotovina, Cermak, and Markac, accused of

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being part of a "joint criminal enterprise" allegedly involving the entire political and military leadership, is scheduled to begin in 2008.

Conclusion

Both the ICTY and politicized commemorations will continue to shape the public perceptions and understanding of the Homeland War (and the wars in Yugoslavia more broadly), even as a new generation of Croatian and foreign historians have begun to publish serious studies about Operation Storm and other events in the 1990s. While the Hague tribunal can be discredited as a "historian," the archives collected by the ICTY and transcripts from the trials have become invaluable to researchers working on this time period.

Leaders in the region will also need to abandon the manipulation of the past for narrow political interests and the perpetuation of nationalist myths if liberal democratic societies are to flourish.

The ICTY has also become woven into the fabric of war commemorations in Croatia and across the region. In 2007, the commemoration in Vukovar was overshadowed by the light sentences given to Yugoslav People's Army commanders accused of the Ovcara massacre. In Srebrenica, the presence of former chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte sparked controversies, while in Serbia Ratko Mladic has become a prominent symbol in demonstrations against the West and resistance to the ICTY.

In Croatia, commemorations will continue to memorialize certain aspects of the Homeland War, and different versions of the past will exist for different ethnic and political groups. Serbia and Croatia will construct their own narratives of what happened in the 1990s, even though cooperation between Serbian and Croatian historians is now more common. Leaders in the region will also need to abandon the manipulation of the past for narrow political interests and the perpetuation of nationalist myths if liberal democratic societies are to flourish. However, it will be a long time before history and commemorations will contribute to reconciliation, and not exclusive narratives of victimization, as the memories and wounds of the war are still not healed.

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from these transitions, especially during the absence of most western aid providers within Serbia in the 1999-2000 period, were particularly reassuring among the besieged opposition in Belgrade and opposition-controlled municipalities.

Causal linkages: the relationships between internal and external influences

Any focus on breakthrough must account for how revolutionary potential is generated. In the Serbian case, this potential was developed over a decade of war, stolen elections, harassment and violence, abortive protests, signature victories and disillusioning defeats. Any causal analysis should account for how external influences capitalized on or otherwise leveraged the accrual of experience in the local environment.

In research funded by the Wilson Center to date, a number of observations and tentative conclusions on the issue of linkage are possible. One helpful way to look at the question of causality is to array both internal and external forces described above into structural and proximate (or precipitant) categories of influence.

Internally, structural factors such as the semi-autocratic nature of the regime, ethno-nationalism as a normative social value and extraordinary economic failure were significant contributing variables to breakthrough. Internal precipitants, often the exclusive focus of many studies of breakthrough in Serbia, include election fraud, the accumulation of lessons from the protests of 1991-1992 and 1996-1997 and the evolutionary adaptations made by Milosevic's opposition during the hard dictatorship of 1998-1999. It was during the 1998-1999 period, for instance, that key players in the Serbian opposition became convinced that techniques of a coup d'etat, including forceful takeover of institutions critical to the regimes power, might be required to dislodge the regime.

Another critical precipitant was the Otpor (resistance) movement's extraordinary timing and skill in instigating public participation and providing a catalytic alternative to unpopular opposition political parties and civic groups after 1998. Additionally, the increasing unreliability of security forces over the last half of 1999 and into 2000 also culminated in a critical realignment of the regime's defenses during the breakthrough moment on 5 October. The support and neutrality of two key paramilitary formations for the opposition during the breakthrough moment were particularly galvanizing for the participating public. Finally, free media (such as B92, Radio Index, Studio B and others), using platforms in opposition-held towns and on the internet, helped keep alive doubts about the veracity of government news and information while raising awareness of competing social and political alternatives.

Externally, it is more difficult to divide influences into structural and precipitating factors. Structural influences, such as the various economic and diplomatic sanctions placed on Serbia from 1992 onward, certainly had a mixed but ultimately cumulative effect

that gave rise to disaffection, on which the opposition could later capitalize. But direct democracy aid and military action over Serbia's role in the Kosovo war acted more like precipitants.

The $150 million directed toward Serbia from western sources for democracy promotion activities, from 1988 onward, (most of which was expended after 1998) was an extraordinary sum—then and now. In a per capita comparison, this amount is analogous to more than $3.3 billion in a country as large as the US. Numbers alone matter less than the fact that aid was remarkably coordinated with a high degree of consensus emerging among major providers of such assistance by early 1999. Five donor conferences took place between 1997 and 2000 and relationships between agencies and personnel were close in expatriate communities among evacuated aid professionals temporarily lodged in Budapest and Skopje. In Washington, interagency meetings among governmental and non-governmental actors active in Serbia took place monthly. In Serbia, in the absence of full ensembles of foreign embassy and aid organization personnel after the 1998 evacuations, national professional staff often worked in close collaboration across organizational boundaries to continue the difficult and sometimes dangerous work of implementation.

The impact of NATO's bombardment of Serbia also precipitated political change, although it did so in unpredictable ways. The second and third order effects of the bombing were to scatter the opposition and roll back the social and political reforms of 1996 and 1997. However, the regime's inability in the war's aftermath to repair war damage, pay overdue salaries and remittances or to convincingly frame the retreat from Kosovo as a victory contributed to anger, resentment and disillusionment with Milosevic. As with other factors, the impact of military intervention combined with other influences have a not entirely anticipated constellation effect upon political change in Serbia.

In the end (and pending a final analysis of this case study of democratic breakthrough in Serbia due by the end of 2008), external influences were profoundly important but in no way indispensable. They served to speed and organize dissent, acting as an accelerant that provided exposure, resources, moral and material encouragement, technological aid and professional advice. And notably, there were relatively few instances of dramatic retrograde motion that undermined local actors' priorities resulting from international actors' insistence on their own agendas. For the most part, the democracy promotion community in Serbia took most of its cues from local actors.

Internal factors were most responsible for the creation, maintenance and final realization of the revolutionary potential of the period. Successful breakthrough resulted from a coincidence of timing, interests and preparation informed by the previous decade of struggle. International isolation of Milosevic's Serbia combined with the lessons of decentralization, the involvement of the provinces, effective if extraordinarily difficult unity of effort and local activists providing citizens with a sense that they have something to protect, less to fear, and that real alternatives existed to Milosevic. The domestic opposition had created and capitalized on opportunities in 1991-1992 and 1996-1997 without significant outside support and it was not until 1998 that international actors fully aligned with the political opposition's goals of removing Milosevic from power. By October 2000, the unity and sophistication of local resistance to Milosevic was unprecedented and able to use this growing disaffection to oust Milosevic.

Mass movements of the "regime change" variety typically emerge with efforts by political and civic actors to mobilize the public as witnessed in Russia, Ukraine and Georgia. In Serbia, a mass movement for regime change developed as much around such actors as among them, pushing them toward each other, accentuating their impact and helping define their roles. Preparing to visit the Kolubara miners during their strike in the post-election crisis in early October 2000, the would-be Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica remarked: "there are sometimes historic situations in which parties and political leaders do not lead the people, but the people to a large extent lead them. This is one such situation." ■

JUNIOR SCHOLARS' TRAINING SEMINAR 2008

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

DEADLINE EXTENDED: MAY 12, 2008

East European Studies and the Committee on Eastern European Studies of the ACLS are soliciting applications for the 21st annual training seminar for junior scholars in East European studies, to be held August 8-11, 2008.

JSTS, funded by Title VIII, combines formal and informal meetings to promote a variety of intellectual exchanges. Activities include: individual presentations; constructive feedback and question and answer sessions; one-on-one meetings for Junior Scholars with Senior Scholars; advice regarding publishing; and discussions about the state of the profession and obtaining employment in the field.

Application guidelines and forms are available on the EES website:
www.wilsoncenter.org/ees/
under "Grant Opportunities"
or call 202-691-4222 for more information.

Calendar of Events

Please Note: Events are subject to last minute changes. For the most up-to-date information on events please visit our website at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/ees.

Thursday, 1 May: Seminar, 9:30-11:00
Democracy, Demolition and Development: Albania's Crooked Road to the West
5th Floor Conference Room
Remzi Lani, Executive Director of the Albanian Media Institute; **Erion Veliaj,** Former Head of the MJAFT movement, Albania's leading watchdog NGO
this meeting is co-sponsored by the Open Society Institute-DC
RSVP required: email - ees@wilsoncenter.org

Wednesday, 14 May: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:00
Traumatic Memory and Forgetting in Inter-War Croatia
5th Floor Conference Room
Biljana Bijelic, Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellow, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Wednesday, 28 May : Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:00
Dependence, Independence and Interdependence: Capacity Building and Education for Stability and Integration in Kosovo and the Western Balkans
5th Floor Conference Room
Arben Hajrullahu, Fulbright Humphrey Fellow and WWICS scholar in residence

Tuesday, 10 June: Conference, 9:00-4:00
Vision of Eurasia: Trans-Atlantic Perspectives on the Wider Black Sea Region
6th Floor Auditorium
Speakers TBA
this meeting is co-sponsored by the Southeast Europe Project
RSVP required: email - sep@wilsoncenter.org

Friday, 13 June: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:30
Is Kosovo a Precedent?
Secession, Self-Determination and Conflict Resolution
6th Floor Auditorium
Christopher J. Borgen, Associate Professor of Law, St. John's University School of Law; **Charles King,** Ion Ratiu Professor of Romanian Studies and Professor of International Affairs and Government, Georgetown University

Wednesday, 18 June: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:00
Can NATO and the EU Prevent Conflict in the Balkans?
5th Floor Conference Room
Jeffrey Simon, Senior Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University

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