Appendix B

A National Intelligence Estimate on Yugoslavia

The Intelligence Community Case Method Program

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National Defense University

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A National Intelligence Estimate on Yugoslavia

- *Yugoslavia will cease to function as a federal state within one year, and will probably dissolve within two. Economic reform will not stave off the breakup.*

- *Serbia will block Slovene and Croat attempts to form an all-Yugoslav confederation.*

- *There will be a protracted armed uprising by Albanians in Kosovo. A full-scale, interrepublic war is unlikely, but serious intercommunal conflict will accompany the breakup and will continue afterward. The violence will be intractable and bitter.*

- *There is little the United States and its European allies can do to preserve Yugoslav unity. Yugoslavs will see such efforts as contradictory to advocacy of democracy and self-determination.*

These eight sentences were the first substantive text in National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 15-90, published in October 1990 and entitled "Yugoslavia Transformed." The sentences appeared on page iii of the NIE. A map of the region was on page iv; the key judgments (see exhibit 1) were on page v. By all accounts, the NIE was what policymakers generally said they wanted from the Intelligence Community: it was analytically sound, prescient, and well written. It was also fundamentally inconsistent with what US policymakers wanted to happen in the former Yugoslavia, and it had almost no impact on US policy. The process through which it was created and its fate, however, may provide insights into the analytic process and the relationship between intelligence analysis and the formulation of US foreign policy.

This case study is based on open sources cited in the text; documents held by the US Intelligence Community; and interviews with intelligence and policy officials who were directly involved in the events described. The study was written in May 2003 by Thomas W. Shreeve. It may not be used outside the National Defense University without permission from the director of the US Intelligence Community Case Method Program. The NIE was originally classified SECRET but has since been declassified and approved for release. For further information, please call Thomas W. Shreeve & Associates, LLC at 703-848-9003.

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Yugoslavia: A Troubled History

In his 1996 bestseller entitled The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, Harvard University political scientist Samuel Huntington referred to

> ...the great historical line that has existed for centuries separating Western Christian peoples from Muslim and Orthodox peoples. This line dates back to the division of the Roman Empire in the fourth century and to the creation of the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century. It has been in roughly its current place for at least five hundred years... In the Balkans, of course, this line coincides with the historical division between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. It is the cultural border of Europe, and in the post-Cold War world it is also the political and economic border of Europe and the West.

Huntington and other scholars observed also that this dividing line between civilizations ran straight through the former Yugoslavia along the border separating Slovenia and Croatia from the other republics. Yugoslavia and other nations of the Baltic region thus had the misfortune of lying at a point where the tectonic plates of two major civilizations collided, resulting in cultural anomalies that appeared to resist resolution. Historically, the Balkans had so long been prone to chaos and instability that the term "Balkanized" had come to describe any collection of polities that were fractious and divisive to the point of being dysfunctional.

The modern nation of Yugoslavia was created in 1918 out of the post-World War I wreckage of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The new country was called "The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" for the three nations from which it was formed. (The name of the country was changed to Yugoslavia – "the Land of the South Slavs" – in 1929.) For Serbia, which had been an independent nation since the Congress of Berlin in 1878, this represented an opportunity to unite Serbs scattered for centuries throughout the two collapsed empires. (The Serbian royal house of Karadjordjevic was given hereditary rule over the new monarchy in recognition of Serbia's role on the winning side in World War I and of the numerical plurality of Serbs throughout the new nation.) Croatia joined the new state mainly to be among the winners of World War I and to counter Italian ambitions along the Dalmatian coast. For Slovenia – the smallest of the three components – union provided security against territorial claims by Italy and Austria.

During World War II, Germany and Italy invaded and partitioned Yugoslavia, creating a pro-Nazi puppet state in Croatia. (Many Croats participated with willing enthusiasm in efforts by the German army to quell local resistance, particularly from among Serbian elements of the population.) Guerrilla forces under a number of

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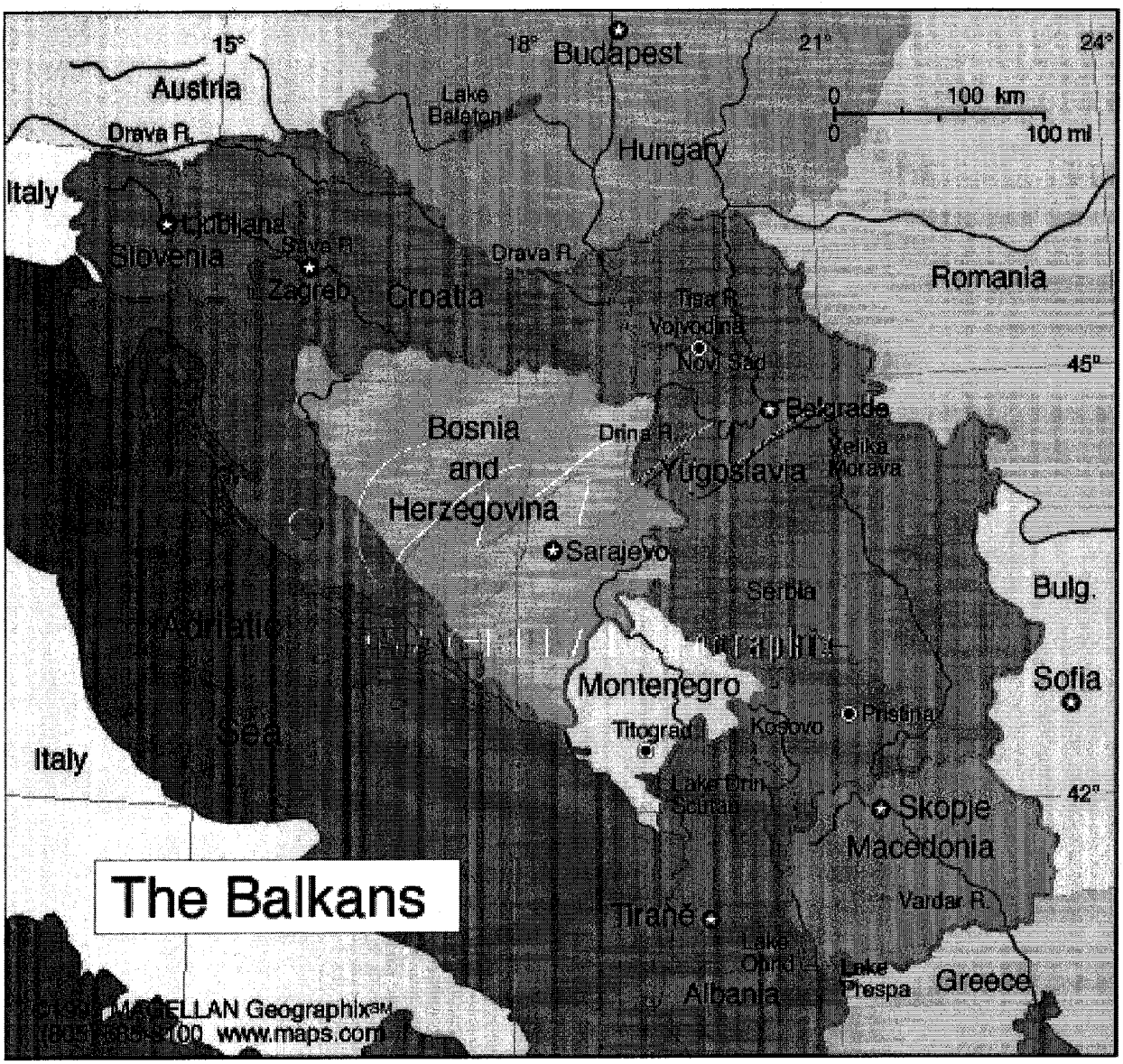
The Balkans
Budapest
Austria
Lake Balaton
Hungary
Drava R.
Italy
Ljubljana
Slovenia
Zagreb
Croatia
Romania
Tisa R.
Vojvodina
Novi Sad
Belgrade
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Drina R.
Yugoslavia
Velika Morava
Sarajevo
Serbia
Bulg.
Adriatic Sea
Montenegro
Sofia
Pristina
Kosovo
Titograd
Lake Drin Scutari
Skopje
Macedonia
Vardar R.
Tirané
Lake Ohrid
Lake Prespa
Albania
Greece
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100 km
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Yugoslav leaders fought stubbornly against the invaders and their local allies. An estimated one million Yugoslavs died during this period, most of them slain by fellow-Yugoslavs. A charismatic former Communist Party apparatchik named Josip Broz Tito emerged as the most effective partisan commander of the war. American and British forces – appreciating Tito's ability to tie down some 10 German divisions in Yugoslavia's remote and mountainous terrain – provided him with aid and supplies.

After Germany's defeat in World War II, Tito and his partisans crushed the remaining pro-Nazi resistance – mainly in Croatia – and took power in the now-communist state. Yugoslavia under Tito consisted of six republics, including Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. There were also two autonomous provinces of Serbia, including Kosovo and Vojvodina. The nation's internal boundaries roughly reflected ethnic and historical divisions, but the population was so thoroughly mixed that it proved impossible to separate the various ethnic groups clearly. This was especially true of the Serbs, who were widely dispersed in varying concentrations except in Slovenia, where there were few Serbs. The Muslims were concentrated almost entirely in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there were also many Muslims among Kosovo's Albanian population, which had grown to comprise about 90 percent of the province's total. (The Muslims of Yugoslavia had the highest birthrate in Europe.) Nationalistic tensions had long plagued the region, but under Tito's strong and occasionally ruthless leadership, these were largely suppressed. (As a dedicated communist, Tito – who was himself part Croat and part Slovene – disparaged nationalism as inconsistent with communist ideology.)

In 1948, the United States supported Tito despite his politics when he broke with Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. Successive US administrations continued to support the notion of Yugoslav independence from the USSR at a time when Yugoslavia successfully asserted a growing role in Europe and even internationally in the so-called "non-aligned movement." In his 1996 book entitled Origins of a Catastrophe, Warren Zimmerman, the last US Ambassador to Yugoslavia, wrote of the US hope that

> Yugoslavia could become a model for independence as well as for an Eastern European political system that, though regrettably communist, could be more open politically and more decentralized economically than the Soviet satellites. Yugoslavia's position between hostile Eastern and Western camps made its unity a major Western concern. As long as the Cold War continued, Yugoslavia was a protected and sometimes pampered child of American and Western diplomacy…

By the mid-1960s, according to a number of historians and other observers, growing disparities in economic growth rates began to provoke dissatisfaction – particularly in Slovenia and Croatia – with Tito's rigid centralization. These two republics were the nation's most heavily industrialized, and realized with increasing resentment that they were making disproportionate contributions to the federal budget while receiving little in terms of investment. A movement toward economic and cultural decentralization gathered steam, especially in Croatia, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1974, the ailing Tito bequeathed to Yugoslavia a constitution that was to come into full effect after his death, which occurred six years later. The effect of Tito's constitution was to bolster the power of the constituent republics of Yugoslavia at the expense of the power of the central government. "In fact," Ambassador Zimmermann wrote, "the government of Yugoslavia was constitutionally the weakest in Europe....The old dictator's reasons can only be guessed at. Possibly he didn't want any more Titos, possibly he wanted to deny Serbia the opportunity to reestablish its pre-World War II dominance over Yugoslavia's political institutions." Whatever his reasons, Tito left behind a central government that was "federal" in name only. Its cumbersome, rotating eight-member presidency in Belgrade, for example, consisted of one representative from each of the six republics and two autonomous provinces. "Yugoslavia became feudalized," according to John Zametica, writing for the International Institute for Strategic Studies in 1992, "an unwieldy collection of eight small states with small economies competing against each other. The system was designed to offer decentralization as a substitute of political pluralism. In fact, it was a recipe for chaos."

Growing decentralization of Yugoslavia's constituent elements occurred at a time when the nation's economy was performing badly. Unemployment was increasing during the 1980s, and production was falling. Foreign indebtedness grew sharply and inflation reached exceptionally high levels. Moreover, the forces of nationalism, apparently dormant under Tito, began to re-emerge. For example, the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo briefly revolted in 1981. In 1987 in Serbia, former communist apparatchik Slobodan Milosovic rose to power by appealing increasingly to Serbia's historically virulent sense of nationalism.

Senior officials in the United States were aware of these trends and concerned about their implications for Yugoslavia's future. For example, Ambassador Zimmermann wrote that when he returned to

Yugoslavia after a long absence, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar told him:

> You have to understand what's happened to Yugoslavia since you were last here. With Tito gone we have become a completely decentralized country. The federal government has very little influence, and no control, over the six republics.

Changing Times

With the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the position of Yugoslavia shifted in the calculation of US foreign policy, according to a number of senior officials and others. In early 1989, shortly after being confirmed as the new US ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann sought out Lawrence Eagleburger, who had just been appointed Deputy Secretary of State in the incoming Bush administration and was widely acknowledged as among the foremost US experts on the Balkans.

Mindful of the profound geopolitical shift in Eastern Europe that had accompanied the end of the Cold War, Zimmermann and Eagleburger agreed that in his introductory calls in Belgrade and in the republican capitals, Zimmermann should deliver a new message. In his 1996 book, Zimmermann recalled their conclusion:

> I would say [to Yugoslav officials] that Yugoslavia and the Balkans remained important to US interests, but that Yugoslavia no longer enjoyed its former geopolitical significance as a balance between [NATO] and the Warsaw Pact. It was no longer unique, since both Poland and Hungary now had more open political and economic systems. Its failures in the human rights area, which the United States had tended to downplay because of America's security interests, now loomed larger, especially in the province of Kosovo, where an authoritarian Serbian regime was systematically depriving the Albanian majority of its basic civil liberties... Not least, I would reassert to the Yugoslav authorities the traditional mantra of US policy toward Yugoslavia – our support for its unity, independence, and territorial integrity. But I would add that we could only support the country's unity in the context of progress toward democracy; we would be strongly opposed to unity imposed or maintained by force.

Both Eagleburger and Zimmermann were well informed on Yugoslav matters. Both were career foreign service officers, and both had served in Yugoslavia earlier in their respective careers. Eagleburger had spent eight years there, beginning in 1962 when he was only 32 years old. Shortly after he arrived, there was a very severe earthquake in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. Eagleburger had taken over and skillfully directed the successful relief operation, including the construction of an army hospital. As a result, he was regarded as a hero by many Yugoslavs, and was warmly welcomed when he returned as US ambassador in the late 1970s. He made no secret of his high regard for Yugoslavia. Zimmermann had served in

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Yugoslavia beginning in 1968. In his 1996 book, Zimmermann wrote: "They say that every diplomat has a special posting, a place that shines brightest in imagination and memory. For me Yugoslavia was such a place." Zimmermann in particular wrote glowingly and at length of Yugoslavia's historic charm, the physical beauty of its mountains and lakes, and the warmth and friendliness of its people.

As the trend toward decentralization in Yugoslavia appeared to accelerate, US policymakers with a focus on Europe began to express concern regarding the country's future. For example, Ambassador Robert L. Hutchings, who was a leading specialist on Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia and NSC Director at the time the NIE was published, later wrote in his book entitled American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War, that

> By the time of Marshal Josip Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia was neither centralized enough for effective leadership in Belgrade nor decentralized enough for genuine federalism to take hold. And the galvanizing element of a Soviet threat was fast disappearing.

Some Western observers of events in Yugoslavia expressed occasional frustration with the chronic divisiveness of its people, particularly over matters of religious faith. The Serbs were Orthodox, the Croats and Slovenes shared a common Central European Catholic culture, and the Muslims – comprising about 10 percent of the total population but heavily concentrated in the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo – were the descendants of local residents who had converted to Islam during the rule by the Ottoman Empire, perhaps hoping it would help them prosper under Ottoman/Turkish domination.

This sense of frustration was particularly true of the Americans, raised as they were in a culture that placed a high value on religious tolerance. The advantages of unity in Yugoslavia over disintegration appeared obvious, a "no-brainer," as one senior US official described it, if only the Yugoslavs could reconcile their differences, and look to the future instead of the past. At a time when few Western European observers appeared to share the growing sense of urgency in Washington regarding the future of Yugoslavia and its implications for Europe, it was difficult, according to a number of present and former US policymakers, to figure out what to do. The US Intelligence Community would try to help.

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Intelligence Analysis and Policy Formulation

In 1990, the process known as "intelligence analysis" was carried out in many parts of the vast apparatus collectively called the "Intelligence Community." Broadly defined, this consisted of about a dozen agencies focused on national security issues and federal law enforcement issues that had national security implications. In some cases, intelligence analysts were members of major Cabinet-level departments of the US government such as State, Defense, Justice, or Treasury. These and others had components that focused on intelligence analytic activities on behalf of their respective departments. For example, the State Department had its Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) and the Defense Department had the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) to meet their respective intelligence analytic needs. The Central Intelligence Agency, by contrast, was not a part of a larger department but instead was independent of all of them. Its analytic arm, known as the Directorate of Intelligence or DI, was also much larger than any of the other intelligence analytic components.

The job of the intelligence analysts was to sift through all the information that could be acquired, openly or clandestinely, on a wide range of topics and form judgments that could be useful in clarifying the ambiguity surrounding the many issues that were of interest to foreign policy decision-makers. The analysts were usually assigned to a fairly narrow range of issues, either by focusing on a specific nation or region, or through focus on a specific global issue such as terrorism or weapons proliferation. Typically, analysts had advanced degrees in area studies, history, political science, and many other fields; many had studied their assigned areas, or "accounts," as they were called at CIA, for years.

Getting their views across to their policymaking "consumers" required rigorous, systematic thinking, usually followed by creation and publication of a written document – of which there were several different types – or communication in an oral briefing. The various carefully defined types of "finished intelligence," as the written works were called, were collectively known as "artforms." The shortest of these were in the Intelligence Community's two "morning newspapers," called the National Intelligence Daily (NID)* and the President's Daily Brief (PDB). At the time, these two artforms were about 10 pages in length and contained short, narrowly-focused pieces on a wide variety of topics of current interest. The NID went to a large number of policymakers, senior military commands, and to

* The National Intelligence Daily (NID) has subsequently been renamed the Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB).

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members of Congress. The PDB was distributed to a very small group consisting of the President and Vice President, the Secretaries and Defense and State, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and at times a handful of others; it was typically shorter and more focused on matters of interest to the most senior levels of the US government. Longer artforms included intelligence assessments, interagency intelligence memoranda, research papers, and component-specific reviews of different kinds. Most of these forms of finished intelligence, including those with a focus on current events as well as the longer-term pieces, required coordination among analysts of different components or even of different agencies. The artforms produced by junior analysts also were subject to review – often extensive – before they could be published.

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) was the Intelligence Community's center for mid-term and long-term strategic thinking and the source of all National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs). The NIEs were published in accordance with plans drawn up by a committee of intelligence and policymaking representatives and often took months to write. The SNIEs were estimates that had not been placed on the annual schedule because no one could foresee the need for a judgment on a specific question. These tended to be written in response to urgent requests by policymakers confronted by some sort of crisis. Estimates represented the voice of the Intelligence Community; they went out over the signature of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), and consensus was highly valued in the publication process. Despite being formally sponsored by the DCI, by convention a DCI – who is a political appointees – is not expected to meddle with the analytic conclusions reflected in NIEs and SNIEs. A DCI could and occasionally did offer judgments to the President that were at odds with those in the NIC's written products.

As a result of the extensive coordination required to write them, NIEs and SNIEs were sometimes criticized for being the "lowest common denominator" judgments available in the analytic community. Nevertheless, they were broadly considered the analytic profession's most prestigious products, and they were sometimes controversial if major disagreements among analysts did emerge or if their conclusions were at odds with an administration's policies. In some circles, an analyst could not convincingly claim the status of a proven veteran until he or she had participated in a NIE or a SNIE.

Physically located at CIA's headquarters building in Langley, Virginia, the NIC was composed of veteran analysts from throughout the Intelligence Community, including the Cabinet-level departments

and the CIA; the Council occasionally included former diplomats, retired flag officers, and prominent academics who had demonstrated an understanding of the policy process. As in other analytic components at lower levels, the National Intelligence Officers (NIOs) who comprised the Council focused on specific regions, such as the NIO for Europe, or on specific topics, such as the NIO for Warning. Assignment to the NIC was considered the mark of senior, "topgun" status among analysts.

Over the many years since the establishment of the Intelligence Community, analysts and policymakers had come to an elaborate though largely implicit understanding of the relationship between intelligence analysis and policy formulation. Both sides revealed an understanding of the relationship, although its nuances in any particular case were subtle and sometimes obscure. Analysts took the dynamics of the relationship seriously, as evidenced by the occasional articles on this topic published in professional journals, including the CIA's in-house journal, Studies in Intelligence, to highlight controversial issues and record important milestones in the intelligence profession.

At the core of the relationship, from the analysts' perspective, was the analysts' right to "speak truth to power," and to say what they thought. Analysts insisted on this intellectual independence to the point of being combative about it; analytic training at CIA, for example, explicitly included a consideration of how to recognize policymakers' attempts at "politicitization" of analysis and what to do about it. Analysts who had stood their ground in the face of political pressure sometimes achieved almost legendary status in the analytic culture.

From the policymakers' viewpoint, the mutually agreed limit to analysts' right to free speech was an absolute injunction against delivering policy advice in a finished intelligence artform. The foreign policy decision-makers for whom the analysts were writing considered themselves the masters of policy formulation, and the analysts existed to serve them by delivering the analysts' best judgments, which the policy community was then free to consider and either accept, reject, or something in between. But whatever the outcome, it was the policymakers – appointed by the president – and not the civil service analysts who would be responsible for the decisions.

In those cases in which the policy-making intelligence consumer was a highly qualified veteran, this often meant that considerable skepticism awaited an analytic judgment at odds with the

Administration's views on a subject. For example, at the time of the Yugoslavia NIE in October 1990, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was retired General Brent Scowcroft, who was abundantly qualified to serve as an analyst of Eastern European affairs and in fact had done so during his earlier assignment as the defense attaché in Belgrade many years before. Equally important, Brent Scowcroft and then Deputy Secretary Eagleburger were close friends and had served together under Henry Kissinger in previous administrations.

NIE 15-90: "Yugoslavia Transformed"

Veteran CIA analyst [redacted] was the senior Yugoslav analyst in the DI in the late 1970s. He [redacted] later went to the NIC as Assistant NIO for Eastern Europe. [redacted] recalled later that there was a widespread assumption among Intelligence Community analysts in the early 1980s that Yugoslavia probably would survive Tito's death. The Serbs – numerically the dominant group, although scattered among several of the republics other than Serbia – had long sought to be in a single sovereign entity; the officer corps of the Yugoslav Army, known in the vernacular by the acronym JNA – was overwhelmingly Serbian, and as one of the few truly "national" institutions in Yugoslavia was thought to be in a position to prevent the nation's collapse. Moreover, economic incentives for remaining integrated were strong, since the republics' economies by themselves were too small to be viable.

Despite these reasons for remaining unified, [redacted] continued, throughout the 1980s there were increasing signs that the Tito-era glue that held Yugoslavia together was beginning to melt. "This was especially true of Slovenia and Croatia," [redacted] stated. "For them at least, the economic reasons for remaining in the Yugoslav federation were evaporating." Moreover, [redacted] said, throughout the 1980s the Embassy in Belgrade was constantly under pressure to over-emphasize encouraging economic indicators that portrayed the Yugoslav economy as healthier than it really was. "The Embassy didn't want to cause concern among US and other Western investors," [redacted] claimed.

The NIO for Europe during these events was Marten van Heuven.* Van Heuven also was closely acquainted with Zimmermann and Eagleburger. A historian by training and a graduate of Yale Law

* Robert Hutchings had been Assistant NIO for Europe, responsible for Eastern Europe, during the first part of Van Heuven's tenure as NIO. Hutchings became NSC Director for Eastern Europe prior to the production of the Yugoslav NIE.

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School, van Heuven was a career foreign service officer. He retired from the State Department in 1987 and joined the NIC. Van Heuven stated that by late 1989, he shared the widespread US and Western European perception that instability in Yugoslavia would invite Soviet meddling, provide an unfavorable precedent for other parts of the former Warsaw Pact, and might threaten NATO. The prevailing US vision for a post Cold War Europe, van Heuven stated, could be characterized as "Europe whole and free," and the collapse of Yugoslavia would, he and others believed, hinder that objective.

In November 1989, van Heuven attended an experts' conference on Yugoslavia at which the country's prospects were carefully reviewed. Van Heuven left the conference with a sense that the forces for disintegration were considerably stronger than the US foreign policy establishment appeared to realize. He stated later that it was at this point that he realized the need for an NIE on Yugoslavia that might jar loose the Administration's apparently sanguine assumptions.

In May 1990, van Heuven went to Yugoslavia to conduct his own assessment of the situation. From Belgrade, he wrote a cable in which he described Yugoslavia as "in permanent, low-level crisis," with pressures building for a collapse of the federation that had held together since 1945. The ethnic problems alone, van Heuven believed, were fast becoming irresolvable. Still, he recalled later, he did not believe that disintegration was a foregone conclusion.

Soon after he returned from Belgrade, van Heuven assigned the task of drafting an NIE to the NIC staff. Van Heuven chose as the first principal drafter a retired State Department officer who was a veteran analyst and was considered well-informed on Yugoslavian and Eastern European affairs. In the first draft, which was completed during the summer of 1990, the author reviewed the evidence for and against the probability of Yugoslavia's disintegration, and concluded that there was more reason for the republics to stay together than to split apart. "They will muddle through, because the collapse of the nation is so dark a future that the Yugoslavs, especially the JNA officer corps, won't allow it to happen" was how van Heuven characterized the analytic conclusion of the first draft of the NIE.

Van Heuven was not satisfied. His trip to Yugoslavia the previous May had convinced him, he said later, that the prospects for a unified Yugoslav federation were far less rosy than the first draft suggested. Moreover, unless Yugoslavia's unraveling could be accomplished in a controlled, graduated way – something the Yugoslavs themselves

were unlikely to be able to do – the outcome was increasingly likely to be violent. Others at the NIC and elsewhere in the analytic community agreed. Van Heuven then assigned the task of drafting the NIE to other experienced observers of events in Yugoslavia, including CIA analyst [redacted] who in earlier assignments had served in the region and was intimately familiar with the issues involved.

[redacted] believed that it was principally the Soviet threat of possible intervention that had held Yugoslavia together after Tito's death. After the Soviet Union itself began to unravel in 1989, this threat diminished to the point where it could be disregarded, especially in Slovenia and Croatia, to which [redacted] had traveled frequently. "I could see they wanted out of Yugoslavia," [redacted] recalled:

> The Serbs didn't care much about Slovenia, since there were no Serbs there, but they did care about Croatia, which has a large Serb minority. They knew also that if Slovenia seceded, Croatia would follow. The Serbs also were becoming increasingly nationalistic at this time, led by Milosevic, who had come up through the Communist Party but was a crafty politician and could see that communism was fading, particularly as a mechanism for keeping him in power. At the same time, the Slovenes and Croats were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with staying in the federation on what they regarded as Serbia's terms: a Yugoslavia that really amounted to a "Greater Serbia."

[redacted] described the first draft of the NIE as similar to what he himself might have written immediately after Tito's death. It presented an accurate picture of the situation then, but in the years since then, the situation had changed. The forces of nationalism had grown much stronger, especially in Serbia and Croatia, at a time when the reasons for staying together had all diminished, at least in the perception of the Yugoslavs themselves, and the Soviet threat had vanished.

"There was little internal disagreement among the major contributors [at the NIC]," [redacted] recalled, "and there were no footnotes [suggesting dissent] from the conclusions of the NIE."

The View From Belgrade

From Belgrade, Ambassador Warren Zimmermann had been steadily reporting on the unfolding situation. In early February 1990, he noted in a cable that unrest in Kosovo was growing, despite a "show of force" by the JNA apparently intended to cow the Albanian population into continued acceptance of Serbian dominance. In March, Zimmermann traveled to Macedonia, where he found signs of increasing nationalism along with growing support for a multi-party system. "The United States continues to support the unity of a

democratic Yugoslavia," was the message Zimmermann tried to convey, according to his cables in March and April.

In April and May, Zimmermann cabled that Yugoslavia's existence probably was at stake in the coming elections in Slovenia and Croatia. If the elections brought to power those who favored a looser confederation or even independence, he wrote, many feared that the break-up could not be achieved peacefully, as the increasingly bellicose Serbs led by Milosevic asserted dominance. Zimmermann strongly urged greater US support for Yugoslavia's beleaguered president, Ante Marcovic, a former business executive widely regarded as a political reformer and principled anti-communist. Later, Zimmermann reported on Milosevic's 26 June 1990 speech in Belgrade in which Milosevic raised the prospect of an independent Serbia outside the Yugoslav federation and outlined tough terms for Kosovo's Albanians: submit to Serb control or face the threat of force. In August, Zimmermann described growing unrest among the Serb population of Croatia as the Serbs there set up roadblocks and called for a referendum to claim Serbian autonomy within Croatia.

On 27 September, about two weeks before the release of NIE 15-90, Zimmermann sent a comprehensive cable to State Department headquarters in which he outlined his personal views on Yugoslavia's future. The nation's unity had substantially decayed, he wrote, over the past six months, mainly as the forces of nationalism had grown to the point where political decentralization was almost inevitable:

> Kosovo may well prove to be the rock on which Yugoslavia founders. It is difficult to imagine a way in which Yugoslavia could be reconfigured to allow Serbs, Albanians, and Slovenes/Croats to want to live together voluntarily in the same country. Serbs are determined to pay any price to keep Kosovo within Serbia, in spite of the fact that the province's population is less than 10 percent Serbian. Albanians seem equally determined not to remain voluntarily in any form of union with Serbia. Slovenes and Croats, for their part, have no interest in a Yugoslavia that employs the kind of repressive measures that Serbia is using to work its will on the Kosovo Albanians.

CIA analyst [redacted] was returning to the United States from temporary duty in the Persian Gulf in the late summer of 1990. He traveled by way of Belgrade, and while visiting the US embassy there, received a summons from Ambassador Warren Zimmermann, who had just seen a copy of the second draft of NIE 15-90. [redacted] recalled that Zimmermann was very upset with the draft. "He said it was too pessimistic, and would prove to be self-fulfilling," [redacted] stated.

In his later recollections, Zimmermann described the NIE as bold, clear, and objective. He had seen intelligence "shaped" to fit policy in the Vietnam experience, he said, and so he favored the intellectual independence from policy that the NIE's authors had obviously enjoyed. "But I sat in a different seat from the authors of the NIE," Zimmermann said:

> It was my duty to carry out US policy, which was to favor continued unity, mainly through trying to help Marcovic. We in Belgrade were advocates, not analysts, so the NIE caused me huge problems. Its message was that there was nothing we could do to change the outcome, a conclusion that made it much harder for the policy to work. I feared that State [Department headquarters] and the National Security Council would read the NIE as indicating that the situation was hopeless, so I urged top officials to continue with the policy. I foresaw violence if Yugoslavia fell apart, so I tried to focus on getting people not to give up on Yugoslavia, even though I knew that the chances of peaceful transition were dwindling.... The NIE was based on powerful evidence, but the outcome it predicted was not inevitable. I wanted to prevent the NIE from becoming a "self-fulfilling prophecy." [A peaceful transition] was still worth fighting for, even if the chances of achieving it were diminishing. I would say that even as late as September there were at least two options we could have envisioned: a gradual, balanced transition to a loose confederation of some kind, or at least what I would call "managed disaster." But we didn't get either one.

Soon after its publication, the NIE evidently was leaked to the New York Times. Under the headline "Yugoslavia Seen Breaking Up Soon – CIA Paper Predicts Action in 18 Months and Adds Civil War Is Likely," reporter David Binder revealed the NIE's conclusions in detail. Binder also claimed that "the CIA's pessimism" was shared by some State Department officials, including Lawrence Eagleburger.

US policymaker attention by this point was in large measure focused on the Middle East following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in early August 1990, and several analysts who participated in the NIE and its subsequent fate agreed that it was increasingly difficult to capture the attention of the policy community for an issue that had long been considered basically marginal to US interests, and in any case, mainly a concern for the Western Europeans to address. Nothing much happened as a result of its publication. "No one was providing any alternatives," [redacted] said. "Politicians like to feel that they can influence events, but in this case the message was that there was nothing they could do."

CIA's then Deputy Director for European Analysis (and later Deputy Director for Intelligence) John Gannon had supervised Agency analysis of Eastern Europe and had watched events in Yugoslavia carefully. "The Estimate was correct, but it was issued at a time when the Administration had a different view; policymakers

believed it was not in US interests to develop a policy based on the break-up of Yugoslavia, which was an outcome they did not want to occur. Further, the NIE did not engage the policymakers in ways that were useful. And it is important to remember that the break-up was not in fact inevitable. Tito showed that strong leadership could hold Yugoslavia together. In retrospect, analysts may not appreciate that their certainty was not entirely justified."

Asked why the NIE had so little apparent impact, analyst [redacted] said that there was a lack of policy concern. "The United States simply stopped caring about Yugoslavia," [redacted] said. "If Yugoslavia had fallen apart without bloodshed, we would have seen no US interest at all. It is only atrocities that catch our attention…"

"[The Yugoslavs] would have been better off if they had stayed together," according to General Brent Scowcroft's later recollections, "but their collapse was not central to US interests as long as it could be contained. As for the NIE, I certainly read it but I don't remember if it influenced me or not. I thought it was skewed against the Serbs, and it seemed unduly pessimistic. Its conclusions suggested that there was nothing that we could do to alter the outcome. It left the reader with the sense that there were no options beyond accepting the inevitable."

David Gompert, who was a senior member of the National Security Staff at the time of the NIE's publication, recalled that there was in fact considerable NSC and other top-level concern regarding Yugoslavia's future. "What we wanted was a slow-motion collapse, if we could get it," Gompert said, "but that turned out to be impossible." Resolution of the conflict would have required armed US intervention, he added, an option that was never even mentioned at the time:

> The fuse had already been lit before the NIE came out. So the NIE wasn't "news" for those of us who had been following developments there. It was not a surprise. I thought it would have greater impact than it did. The Administration was stuck with an irresolvable dilemma: we couldn't favor a break-up, and we couldn't favor forced unity. We knew that the status quo was unacceptable to the Slovenes and the Croats, and we told them, "If you declare independence unilaterally, you will start a war." Their response, basically, was "So what?"

Secretary of State James Baker made a last-ditch effort to push the various factions into more conciliatory positions when he visited Belgrade and other capitals in June 1991. This effort failed. Slovenia declared independence immediately after Baker's visit; this was followed quickly by a similar declaration by Croatia. As predicted, the Serbs made only a token effort to suppress the Slovenes' bid for independence, since there were almost no Serbs in

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Slovenia. The Croatian secession drew a sharp but limited response from the JNA, by that point a Serbian and no longer a Yugoslavian army. After mounting evidence of Croatian military effectiveness, Serbian forces withdrew.

A prolonged civil conflict followed, lasting for the next several years. It was marked, as the NIE had predicted, by vicious behavior on all sides, mostly by the Serbs and particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo. An estimated 200,000 people were killed, and many more displaced. Eventually, US and NATO forces intervened to put an end to the fighting. Several leaders of the former Yugoslavia, including Prime Minister Milosevic – who was overturned by a popular uprising in Serbia – were later arrested for a variety of war crimes and other offenses.

Study questions:

1. What is your assessment of the reasons why NIE 15-90 had so little apparent impact on the formulation of US policy in the former Yugoslavia?

2. What changes in the analytic process would you recommend, if any, to address the problems you have identified?

3. Were policymakers at all to blame for inattention to IC analysis? How might they have acted otherwise?

4. How could personalities and key bureaucratic interests have influenced policymakers' views on Yugoslavia?

(Continued...)

Exhibit 1: the Key Judgments of NIE 15-90 (October 1990)

The old Yugoslavian federation is coming to an end because the reservoir of political will holding Yugoslavia together is gone. Within a year the federal system will no longer exist; within two years Yugoslavia will probably have dissolved as a state.

Although elsewhere in Eastern Europe economic and political reform will be interdependent, Yugoslavia's future will be decided by political and ethnic factors. Even successful economic reforms will not hold the country together.

The strongest cohesive forces at work in Yugoslavia are those *within* Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. They are a mix of national pride, local economic aspirations, and historically antagonistic religious and cultural identifications. In Slovenia, and to a lesser extent Croatia, the new nationalism is westward looking, democratic, and entrepreneurial; in Serbia, it is rooted in statist economics, military tradition, and a preference for strong central government led by a dynamic personality.

Neither the Communist Party nor the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) will be able to hold the federation together. The party is in a shambles; the army has lost prestige because of its strong Community Party identification and because much of the country considers it a Serb-dominated institution. No all-Yugoslav political movement has emerged to fill the void left by the collapse of the Titoist vision of a Yugoslav state, and none will.

Alternatives to dissolution now being discussed in various quarters are unlikely to succeed. A loose confederation will appeal to Croatia and Slovenia, but Serbs will block this in an effort to preserve Serb influence. Moreover, a Serb-dominated attempt to muddle through, using the old federal institutions and military brinksmanship to block independence, will not be tolerated by the newly enfranchised, nationalistic electorates of the breakaway republics. Serbs know this.

It is likely that Serbian repression in Kosovo will result in an armed uprising by the majority Albanian population, supported by large Albanian minorities in Macedonia and Montenegro. This, in turn, will create strong pressure on those republics to associate themselves closely with Serbia.

A slide from sporadic and spontaneous ethnic violence into organized interrepublic civil war is also a danger, but it is unlikely during the period of this Estimate. Serbia's commitment of resources to pacification of the Albanians in Kosovo will constrain its ability to use military means to bring Serbian minorities in the western part of the country under its direct control. The Serbs, however, will attempt to foment uprisings by Serb minorities elsewhere – particularly in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina – and large-scale ethnic violence is likely.

The United States will have little capacity to preserve Yugoslav unity, notwithstanding the influence it has had there in the past. But leaders from various republics will make claims on US officials to advance their partisan objectives. Federal and Serb leaders will

emphasize statements in support of territorial integrity. Slovenes, Croats, and Kosovars, however, will play up US pressure for improved performance on human rights and self-determination. Thus, Washington will continue to be drawn into the heated arena of interethnic conflict and will be expected to respond in some manner to the contrary claims of all parties.

The Soviet Union will have only an indirect influence – for example, through multinational forums – on the outcome in Yugoslavia. The Europeans have some leverage, but they are not going to use it to hold the old Yugoslavia together.