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Bridging the Macro with the Micro in Conflict Analysis: Structural Simplification as a Heuristic Device

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BRIDGING THE MACRO WITH THE MICRO IN CONFLICT ANALYSIS: STRUCTURAL SIMPLIFICATION AS A HEURISTIC DEVICE

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a theoretical argument that looking at how some grand matters of politics are simplified for practical use on the street is necessary to adequately understand how ordinary Serbs and Croats (and to a limited extent, Muslims) were transformed into enemies of their neighbors, workmates, and covillagers in the havoc wrought in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995. Locals' shifting attitudes toward consanguinal identity, expressions of greeting, and dressing patterns are found to be examples of everyday practices through which perceived differences in civilization, competitive ideas of statehood, and macro-constructions of group identity produce ethnic conflict. A broad conclusion is that attention to localized manifestations of the macro-political *will yield more comprehensive understanding in analyses of ethnic conflict.*

Explanations of collective violence based solely on the macro concepts of state, nation, religion, and history tend to remain rigid. They fail to capture the relatively unimpeded processes and mechanisms in and through which such macro concepts are appropriated at the local level to justify symbolic and physical aggression toward one's kinsmen, next-door neighbor, and fellow villager. Blaming collective political violence on differences in civilization, competitive ideas of statehood, and normative constructions of ethnonational group identity falls short of explaining how these differences, competitions, and vying constructions manifest themselves in the everyday practices of victims and perpetrators of destructive political conduct. What, then, is needed is a binocular look: one that is both aware of the defining characteristics of macrostructural phenomena[1] *and* that considers how – through which processes and mechanisms – macrostructural phenomena are embodied, internalized, and instrumentalized for aggressive purposes by real human beings in real locales. In other words, one that is both aware of the intrinsic properties of a given macrocosm and the *simplification* of overarching, conflicting political identities defining that macrocosm to a given microcosm.

In relating, then, a brief account of the havoc wrought in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, I will seek in this paper to approximate the kind of look described above. To do so, I will heed the caveat that ''In place of global explanations of [collective violence], a more particularistic approach, one that adequately deals with multiple levels – from small scale to large scale – on which collective violence occurs, yields greater understanding'' (Rubinstein, 1994, p. 986). To convey a sense of the battles fought to achieve various objectives (keeping demographics in balance, controlling access to territory, the governmental apparatus, and *the* history of the region – in other words, controlling *politics per se*), I will employ an anthropological perspective. This perspective not only looks at the grand picture painted by various social scientific accounts of the 1992–1995 Balkan War, but is also ethnographically informed as to how the macroreligious, macropolitical, and macrohistorical colors of the grand picture are fine-shaded, or localized, on the street, in the village, at the workspace, and so on. Unless we look at how grand matters of politics are or can be simplified for practical use on the street, we will fall short of adequately understanding why ordinary Serbs and Croats (and to a limited extent, Muslims) were transformed into ardent enemies of their long-time neighbors, workmates, and covillagers. In what follows, I will be relying on a limited number of ethnographies of the Balkan War as well as on some key anthropological observations by political anthropologists with view to

1   developing a conceptual tool with which macro- and micro-level factors can
    be bridged to yield a better understanding of collective violence and its
3   consequences.
        In a recent, insightful article, the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins created
5   the phrase ''elementary form of structural amplification'' (Sahlins, 2005,
    p. 25) with which he intended to capture the process in which a conflict
7   characterized by its local nature is *inflated* to the supralocal level. Charting
    the course of Cuban and US governments' and publics' heavy involvement
9   in what was otherwise an oft-repeated and ordinary state of affairs,[2] Sahlins
    documents how the little Elian Gonzalez became entangled in discussions
11 of communism, freedom, and the Cold War. The fight over Elian's custody,
    waged initially between Elian's relatives in Miami and Cuba, engaged the
13 larger ideological opposition between American and Cuban governments
    and publics. Sahlins refers to the process wherein a minor, localized
15 dispute engages a broader set of opposition as ''structural *amplification*''
    which makes a macrohistory out of a microhistory (Sahlins, 2005). In my
17 discussion below, I chart the course of a reverse process – one in which an
    ethnonationalist and exclusivist discourse gets appropriated in a village
19 whose inhabitants have otherwise been living in relative peace and harmony.
    In other words, I look at how ethnonationalist macropolitics gets *deflated*
21 only to be reconfigured within the power relations in a rural context. I will
    thus appropriate Sahlins' term with a slight modification: ''Structural
23 *simplification*'' of ethnonationalist exclusivism in a central Bosnian village,
    or the reconfiguration of power relations in a rural context out of
25 macropolitical discourse.
        In the first section below, I will provide a brief account of the 1992–1995
27 war in the Balkans which ended with the peace agreement signed in Dayton,
    Ohio in 1995 during the Clinton presidency. The second section discusses
29 some macrolevel phenomena whose on-the-ground appropriation will be
    treated in the third section, where I rely on Bringa's (1996) ethnographic
31 analysis of a village in central Bosnia called Dolina (a pseudonym). In the
    fourth section, I seek to shed some anthropological light on the subject
33 matter with reference to the work of such political anthropologists as
    Friedman (1998) and Tambiah (1996). I end the paper with some concluding
35 thoughts, inspired by Lewellen (2003) and Gledhill (2000), on the benefits of   AU :1
    anthropological thinking for a better understanding of the processes in
37 which grand concepts such as history, ethnicity, and religion get dissolved
    and find parochial manifestation. As a result, power relations in a given
39 microcosm may come to be conceptualized rather differently compared to
    how they were before, with the end result being ''collective violence.''

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 1992–1995 WAR IN BOSNIA[3]

After Josip Broz's (Tito) one-party socialist rule over former Yugoslavia ended in 1980 with Tito's death, a struggle ensued over the federal republic's economic, political, and military resources among representatives of the six republics and two autonomous regions that had constituted the federal Yugoslav Republic. Through his control of the party apparatus which outlived Tito and with his influence over national media, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic gained immense political power. He used that power to amend the Serbian constitution to strip Kosovo[4] of its autonomy. Witnessing Milosevic's repressive policies against Kosovars (namely the Albanian Kosovars) and his maneuvers to capture the federal government apparatus, other entities in former Yugoslavia[5] sought to separate themselves entirely from the federal structure by declaring their independence through their governments, which had been recently elected before the onset of the war in 1991. By that time Milosevic had acquired the tools that he thought would help him create the "Greater Serbia": political power and total control of the military. To Croatia's vote for secession from the federal structure, the Milosevic-controlled Yugoslav National Army responded by seizing one-third of Croatian territory and massacring thousands of Croatians. The Bosnian declaration of independence was followed with the siege of Sarajevo – the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina in early April, 1992. Commanding the heavy and sophisticated artillery of the army of former Yugoslavia, Milosevic and his Bosnian Serb compatriot Radovan Karadzic engaged in systematic ethnic cleansing throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina with the aid of fierce nationalist propaganda emanating mainly from Serbia. The end result of 4 years of war was the killing of some 200,000 Bosnians,[6] organized use of rape as a military tactic against Muslim and Croatian women, severe instances of torture, and destruction of infrastructure such as power systems, schools, hospitals, transportation networks, etc. The war officially ended with the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Accords in Dayton, Ohio, in December 1995. Serbians were granted 49% of the territory they occupied in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the remaining 51% is now the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina composed of Muslim and Croat rotating leadership, each governing its own territory with a separate government, police force, and military but being subject to a central government's rule in matters of finance and foreign policy.[7]

What should the war in former Yugoslavia be blamed on at a macrophenomenal level? How was the road to genocide paved in Bosnia?

1 Relying on Norman Cigar's (1995) benchmark study *Genocide in Bosnia*, I would like to emphasize in concise form some of the important overarching
3 factors instrumentalized by the Serbian political decision-making mechanism to induce Serbian public opinion into believing in the legitimacy of Serbian
5 government's dream of achieving a pure "Greater Serbia" at the expense of other ethnic, non-Serb groups populating Bosnia-Herzegovina. These factors
7 pertain to competitive ideas of statehood in the post-Tito era, normative constructions of ethnic superiority and vulnerability, and the supposed threat
9 of escalating radical religious (Islamic) fundamentalism. Two other factors, voiced by some American writers such as Robert Kaplan and Samuel
11 Huntington, include the idea of the ever-presence of historically embedded ethnonational rivalry and hatred, and the notorious "clash of civilizations"
13 thesis as they apply to the region. Whereas Cigar's account of macrolevel factors is well documented and evidenced, Kaplan's journalistic impressions
15 regarding the causes of violence and Huntington's remarks, which I briefly look at below, will exemplify in particular why top–down analyses should be
17 corrected and complemented by views "from below."

19

The Grand Picture and Its Dominant Colors

21

Cigar (1995) traces the roots of Serbian nationalist expansionism, whose
23 culmination was the war, to the goals explicitly voiced in a document produced in 1986 by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, the *Serbian*
25 *Memorandum*. Drafted in a Westphalian spirit, this document envisaged the foundation of a pure Serbian state encompassing all Serbs regardless of
27 which former Yugoslav republic they were living in. In Cigar's words, "Coming at a time of impending change and uncertainty, the *Memorandum*
29 seemed to answer the need for a national strategy blueprint for Serbia" (Cigar, 1995, pp. 23–24). The implementation of the *Memorandum* could
31 only come about by uprooting other ethnicities of the former Yugoslav republic, which is precisely what Serbian nationalism sought to do with the
33 war, as indicated by the forced displacement of several hundred thousands of Bosnians now scattered across Europe and the United States. Thus, the
35 post-Tito Serbian nationalism found its most obvious expression in the statements of Serbia's academic elite. This was followed by the stereo-
37 typification of would-be victims, in particular Bosnian Muslims, in and through popular culture. An example discussed by Cigar (1995) is the
39 description of Bosnian Muslims as aliens, inferiors, and cold-blooded murderers by a best-selling novelist named Vuk Draskovic, whose writings

1 influenced no less a figure than the commander of the Serbian Guard,who
   admitted to having beaten Muslims (and Croatians) because of the fury
3 ingrained in him through these writings (1995, p. 25).
        Next came the work of Serbian scholars specializing in the study of Islam.
5 This work represented Islam and its adherents as backward, hostile to
   European civilization, and fundamentalist masterplanners of Serbian
7 destruction. This work further disseminated the idea, frightening to the
   average Serb, that there were plans to repatriate more than a million Turks
9 to Bosnia, which clearly would contribute to the Islamization of Bosnia-
   Herzegovina in the post-Tito era (and would indicate a reembracing of the
11 spirit of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over the Balkans for more than
   four centuries). Serbian scholars felt that these developments should be
13 countered by any means possible. This academic effort was then bolstered
   by the efforts of the Serbian Orthodox Church whose representatives
15 evidenced their claim of Muslim primitiveness by pointing to the fact that
   walls were built around (Muslim) Albanian houses, which to them
17 demonstrated that Muslims (especially Muslim women) were not liberated,
   and ''hidden behind walls'' (Cigar, 1995, pp. 27–32). The *Memorandum*,
19 Serbian popular literature, the denigrating work by Serbian scholars of
   Islam, and the Serbian Orthodox Church's efforts were thus factors in
21 the escalation of Serbian ethnonationalist exclusivism which culminated in a
   4-year war between 1992 and1995 against non-Serb ethnicities. Although
23 the macrophenomenal reality of these factors and their influence are well
   illustrated in Cigar's work, a more comprehensive understanding requires
25 ethnographic particularism to visualize the processes and mechanisms in
   and through which such macrophenomenal realities are effectively
27 parochialized – or structurally *simplified*. This will help in answering the
   question: ''How were people [of the Balkans] who had lived quietly together
29 as neighbors for forty-five years [since the end of second World War]
   manipulated into killing one another and burning each other's houses
31 down?'' (Besteman & Gusterson, 2005, p. 7)
        Whereas accounts of the conflict in the Balkans such as that of Cigar
33 would get enriched and not necessarily refuted or corrected by an
   anthropological approach, other works on the Balkans would probably
35 have to be rewritten in view of the insights provided by an anthropological
   perspective. Such two works on the two supposed causes – ancient hatreds
37 and civilization clash – of the war are Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (1993)
   and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993). Following is a
39 brief overview of the arguments of these two works, and anthropological
   critiques of them.

1   For Robert Kaplan (1993), the collective violence in the Balkans was a modern-day reincarnation of ancient ethnonational feelings of hatred that
3 all sides partaking of the violence had been breeding against one another since time immemorial. The "Balkan syndrome," as he termed it, was
5 something like an evil gene predisposing Balkan people toward erupting in violence. Hence, there is not much reason to be startled at the atrocities that
7 the Balkan people meted out against one another.

   In a devastating critique of Kaplan's *travelogical* assumptions (my term,
9 by which I intend to convey a sense of the unreliability of such sweeping generalizations which *do* call for an attention to detail of the anthro-
11 pological kind), anthropologist Tone Bringa (2005) sets the record straight. Building on her fieldwork in central Bosnia (which I relate in more detail
13 below) for a total period of 6 years, from 1988 to 1993, Bringa notes in her critique of Kaplan's work that before the war in the ethnically mixed village
15 (Muslim Bosnians and Catholic Croats) where she carried out her fieldwork, adherents of the two separate religious communities helped each other build
17 the village church and the mosque, attended one another's holy days, and extended a hand to one another while building houses. These observations
19 on the ground refute Kaplan's overgeneralized, impressionistic statements about the violent nature of the region's inhabitants. The "ancient hatreds"
21 argument is further contradicted by the work of another anthropologist Lockwood, who, as early as the 1970s, documented in his ethnography
23 *The European Moslems* (1975) how Serbs, Croats, and Muslims were peacefully woven into the social fabric through the integrative mechanism of
25 the marketplace.

   In a tone somewhat more sophisticated and ostensibly more scholarly
27 than that of Kaplan, Samuel Huntington sees the violence in Bosnia as an instance of a clash of three civilizations, namely the Western, Islamic, and
29 Eastern Orthodox ones. This was a war occurring at what Huntington (1993) named a civilizational faultline. His analysis was contradicted when
31 the Christian United States brokered the peace agreement – thus possibly saving Bosnian Muslims from extinction on a much larger scale than had
33 happened thus far – and also accommodated hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslims as refugees during and after the war.[8] As noted by
35 anthropologist Brown (2005), Huntington's theory that countries belonging in the same "civilizational kin group" (a term invented by Huntington, who
37 is not a kinship theorist) was discredited by on-the-ground empirical reality. Based on his fieldwork in the region, Brown exposes how the kin links that
39 Huntington thought were so clearly identified were much more complex given the institution of *fictive kinship* in the Balkans whereby people became

related to one another through *kumtsvo* (godfatherhood) ties, which crosscut so-called civilizational attachments.

I suggested at the beginning of this paper that explanations of collective violence based solely on the macro concepts of state, nation, religion, and history tend to remain rather rigid. With reference to various treatments of the Bosnian war, I emphasize that a view from below would either substantially complement such accounts (as in the case of Cigar's macrophenomenal account of the causes of Serbian atrocities) or expose the irrelevance of them to concrete situations experienced by real human beings in real locales (as in the case of Kaplan's and Huntington's accounts of the factors behind the escalation of collective violence). An anthropological approach seems better suited to help understand otherwise unexpected cases of violence: How did ethnonationalist exclusivist discourse get structurally simplified to the village level, as a result of which neighbors, covillagers, perhaps old-time friends and confidantes turned against one another?[9] The following section seeks to describe instances of structural simplification by relying on the ethnographic work of anthropologist Tone Bringa in a central Bosnian village. By *structural simplification*, I mean that process in which a larger opposition between two overarching identities gets parochialized through the identification of any such overarching identity with its local counterpart. In this process, the differences invoked at the macrolevel (discursive, or otherwise) between the larger forces of opposition are simplified and selectively appropriated to forge new identities, filling in, or overriding, a preexisting set of local relations with new and mutually oppositional content.

The following brief discussion seeks to demonstrate the dissolution and parochialization of exclusivist nationalism in the context of the relations between Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians. Although the foregoing discussion has focused on the development and outcomes of Serbian nationalist aggression, in this paper I am less concerned with the origins of the ethnonationalist discourse than with the actual dynamics involved in the process of structural simplification.

STRUCTURAL SIMPLIFICATION OF ETHNONATIONALIST EXCLUSIVISM: BRINGA'S CASE OF DOLINA IN CENTRAL BOSNIA

The village where Bringa conducted her fieldwork over a period of 6 years is a mixed (Muslim–Croat) village located in central Bosnia, and a 2 h drive to

the capital Sarajevo. Bringa refers to the village with the pseudonym Dolina. A simplified, parochialized version of national superiority voiced at the macrolevel by such figures as Serbian leader Milosevic (or, alternatively, in the case of Croatian nationalism, by Croat President Tudjman) in the village is seen in the remarks of the only Serbian inhabitant of Dolina vis-à-vis his Muslim covillagers. Bringa notes that this man would say that his fellow Muslim villagers had, in fact, Serbian blood in their veins (Bringa, 1996, p. 30), which seems to be a telling example of what may be termed "consanguinal expansionism."[10] This demonstrates the structural simplification of Serbian academic exclusivism (which considers Bosnian Muslims nonentities except when they are considered Serbs) to the village context.

Another instance indicative of the simplification of supralocal nationalist rhetoric becomes manifest through villagers' changing greeting practices. While in the public space of communal interaction, village inhabitants came to use ethnicity-or religion-neutral phrases of greeting when they encountered one another during various times of the day and on different occasions (on the road, while attending a feast, in neighborly visits, etc.), and they reserved exclusive greetings for intraethnic encounters (Croat vs. Croat, or Muslim vs. Muslim). Eventually, the escalating symbolic-discursive and physical violence found a localized manifestation: once Croat forces gained control of the municipality to which Dolina belonged, Croat-specific greetings dominated the public realm (for example, the dealings at administrative offices and in the marketplace), thus extending macrolevel ethnic exclusivism (the idealized "Greater Croatia") to the parochial level by exerting linguistic dominion over a particular portion of everyday life through the imposition of a new greeting *structure*. As Bringa notes: "Indeed, the Catholic Croats were redefining the whole area (market town and surrounding villages) as "theirs" and transforming the local Muslims into outsiders, people who did not belong, [which] was one of the many steps in a long series of more or less violent measures to squeeze the Muslims out of their villages and the municipality" (1996, pp. 57–58).

Yet another example of the simplification of high-level nationalist politics whereby Bosnian Muslims were represented as remnants of Asiatic darkness and backwardness, relates to Dolina's Catholic (Croat) girls' changing perceptions of Muslim girls' dressing patterns. One of Bringa's Croat informants in the village notes that whereas they have left the ways of their parents' choices in clothing behind (and have thus become less and less separable from the modern urban woman), Muslim girls keep more and more to their ways. The expression seems to be a subtle practice of "othering" whereby Muslim girls are pushed into the categories of rural and

1 traditional (Bringa, 1995, pp. 61–62). What is interesting, of course, is the
   emergence of an otherwise nonexistent practice. Although each group of
3 girls' parents did not conceptualize one another in terms of their differing
   clothing practices, the nationalist rhetoric – disseminated through broadcast
5 media, enforced as law in the emerging, ethnically-drafted constitutions
   (Hayden, 1996) – results in the creation of a simplified mirror image of
7 differentiation and othering in the village context via changing perceptions
   regarding a group's dress.
9   With reference to Bringa's work, we have seen some examples of how
   macrolevel nationalist discourse manifests itself in a village in the context of
11 consanguinal perceptions, expressions of greeting, and dressing patterns.[11]
   What follows is review of some key observations made by a number of
13 political anthropologists regarding localized manifestations of macrolevel
   discourses which may result in changed perceptions of old friends and
15 existing relations.

17

ETHNIFICATION, FOCALIZATION, AND
19 TRANSVALUATION: RELEVANCE OF POLITICAL
ANTHROPOLOGY TO ANALYSES OF THE
21 WAR IN BOSNIA

23

   The structural simplification process as a result of which old-time fellows,
25 covillagers, and neighbors begin to subtly perceive one another through a
   reconfigured framework of relations – that is, perceive one another as
27 belonging to different natures, historical roots, and linguistic groups – can
   be referred to as a case of "ethnification." Although anthropologist
29 Friedman (1998) uses the term ethnification as part of his Marxist approach
   with which he seeks to explain expressions of declining hegemony, the term
31 has descriptive utility in the context of the war in Bosnia. In particular,
   Friedman suggests that ethnification, the turn toward an understanding of
33 the nation-state "…in which the nation is dominant, where the nation-state
   is converted from a contractual to a familistic-ascriptive model" (1998,
35 p. 288) is an expression of the decline of a civilizational perspective based
   on commercial capitalism. Thus, from the Titoist social contract in which
37 Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Slovenes, and Montenegrins were "Yugoslav"
   emerged exclusivist, ethnified understandings of separate families of nations
39 (for instance, the Serb nation idealized in the *Memorandum* as the
   "Greater Serbia") which admitted of no aliens: hence, Balkanization ensues

1 (1995, p. 291). In other words, regional disorder was followed by huge AU :2
migratory flows and demographic exchanges in the Balkans, specifically
3 in Bosnia, as the result of a war guided by a macropolitical *ethnified*
perception of state which dictated intrastate homogeneity (that is, Serbia for
5 Serbs, Croatia for Croats). The term can have both macrolevel and
microlevel application. The Serbian villager's remark that the others too are
7 of Serbian blood may be considered an expression of homogenizing
ethnification by which the "others" are precluded from having the right to
9 their own identity. Furthermore, the increasing visibility of Croat-specific
greetings in the public space could be seen as another expression of
11 homogenizing ethnification by which the "others" are precluded from the
reconstructed public space should they decline to conform to the new
13 linguistic habits.

Two other concepts by another anthropologist Stanley Tambiah (1996)
15 may serve as useful heuristic devices in the context of the analysis of the
war in Bosnia: *focalization* and *transvaluation*. "By *focalization* [Tambiah
17 means], the process of progressive denudation of local incidents and
disputes of their particulars of context and their aggregation. *Transvaluation*
19 refers to the parallel process of assimilating particulars to a larger, collective,
more enduring, and therefore less context-bound, cause or interest"
21 (Tambiah, 1996, p. 192). I introduce these terms not because they are
used in Tambiah's (1996) work to describe processes similar to those I have
23 called instances of structural simplification, but because they illustrate
the reverse trends (in other words, they capture what Sahlins would call
25 *structural amplification*). For example, Tambiah employs these two terms
while describing "how the original issue of the death of a schoolgirl
27 ballooned into a more general protest against the inequities of the public
transport system, and that, again, into an anti-Pathan backlash" (1996,
29 p. 191). As I noted in the beginning, I am interested in the reverse process
by which general, macrolevel conflicts and exclusivist discourses are
31 parochialized by the receivers of such discourses. Tambiah's terms may
help describe the process whereby, for example, Serbian historiography
33 strips the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 (where Serbs were defeated by the
invading Ottomans) out of its context, and instrumentalizes that event by
35 trying to assimilate the memory of it into the larger Serbian macropolitical
objective vilifying the Muslims of Bosnia (who converted to Islam following
37 the Ottoman conquest, and therefore, assumed the identity of the invader,
as claimed by Serbian historiography). Thus, by placing these two terms
39 against structural simplification, I hope to have made my terminological
suggestion clearer.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this chapter, I first raised the idea that blaming collective political violence on differences in civilization, competitive ideas of statehood, and normative constructions of ethnonational group identity reveals very little, if at all, about how these differences, competitions, and vying constructions manifest themselves in the everyday practices of victims as well as perpetrators of destructive political conduct. In fact, interpreting collective violence as mere consequences of top–down orchestrations is limiting *the political* to the realm of governments, political parties, nationalist leaders, etc. Without looking at how the political is embedded in everyday practices, how it manifests itself through real human beings' dealings in such real locales as the village, the street, and the marketplace, one is unable to understand in their multifaceted dimensions the complex processes as well as instruments in and through which objectives declared, legitimized, or forced by the governmental or ruling elite get accepted and/or rejected by their addressees. Thus, when critiquing political scientist David Easton's view that there existed no such thing as political anthropology because "practitioners of this nondiscipline had utterly failed to mark off the political system from other systems of society" (Lewellen, 2003, pp. x–xi), Lewellen notes that the attempt to locate politics in everyday routines is in fact political anthropology's greatest virtue. The discussion in this paper of some instances of structural simplification would show to some extent that events in former Yugoslavia at the level of what Easton would call the "clearly marked off political system" need to be complemented and/or corrected with an eye on micropolitics. Unless we conceptualize the increased use of Croat greetings in public spaces, the commentary on Muslim girls' ("backward, rural") dressing patterns, the attempt by the Serbian villager at enhancing the scope of consanguines as *truly political* phenomena in view of the then-reigning nationalist rhetoric, we are bound to fall short of understanding the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia in its complexity. The heuristic devices of structural amplification, focalization and transvaluation, are useful in conceiving of the aspect pertaining to how historically specific, localized cases are ballooned or inflated for utilization as part of larger nationalistic discourses. With the idea of structural simplification, however, we can conceptualize how broader macrophenomenal realities are locally parochialized and manifested in everyday practices. My hope is that structural simplification will yield greater understanding of what happened in Bosnia as well as serve as a useful conceptual tool in future research on political conflict.

NOTES

1. Including, but not limited to, so-called ancient ethnonational hatreds, religious radicalism, and historically motivated territorial irredentism. In general, the adjectives *macropolitical, macrostructural*, and *macrophenomenal* are used in this paper to refer to those supraindividual groups, entities, or factors ("the nation," "the state," "history," "religion," etc.) otherwise claimed to have an exclusive causative impact on the emergence and sustenance of political conflict.

2. By which Sahlins (2005) means a group of Cubans escaping Castro, traveling in a boat (or some other craft), fighting sharks across the straits of Florida as well as the US Coast Guard, and, if successful, landing in Miami.

3. I recognize that the history of the 1991–1995 Balkan conflict, which resulted in the collapse of former Yugoslavia, is a contested one. But this paper should essentially be construed as a theoretical exercise, rather than as an attempt to explain why one set of contested explanations is preferable over another. My broader aim is to apply an inversion of anthropologist Marshall Sahlins' theoretical constructs with a view to developing a heuristic device to link macrolevel factors to microlevel practices. Given the limits of this paper, I cannot do justice to all accounts of the conflict that seek to explain it from various angles. Readers interested in getting a much fuller discussion of the contested accounts may consult Ramet (2005).

4. Kosovo was an autonomous region under the Serbian republic in the former federal Yugoslav state.

5. In particular, Croatia, Bosnia, and Slovenia.

6. Including Bosnians of different ethnic backgrounds, that is, Bosnian Muslims (major victims), Bosnian Croats, and even Bosnian Serbs who refused to acquiesce to the cleansing project.

7. For more detailed accounts of the war, see Cushman and Mestrovic (1996), Mestrovic (1997), Cohen (1997), and Burg and Shoup (2000).

8. I do not have the space here to extend this critique of Huntington's work. I offer a longer discussion in Keles (2007).

9. One reviewer who commented on this article suggested that "it seems to be the macro-level politics and rhetoric (the ethno-nationalist ideal of ethnically pure interaction) that is a simplification of the complex pattern of interaction on the local level," rather than local level interactions being simplified, less complex versions of macrolevel discursive battles. Ultimately, this boils down to the question of whether macrolevel factors (for instance, nationalist, political leadership) met the public already raising exclusivist sentiments, or whether the public (otherwise *relatively* peacefully interwoven through the marketplace, intermarriage, and educational institutions) subsequently grew suspicious of one another's neighbors, coworkers, etc. Following the first track runs the risk of feeding fodder to the uncritical thesis that imagines the Balkans as a land of perpetual violence, where past grievances are never settled and latent hate is the order of the day. I am more inclined to the latter track, in view of the former U.S. President Clinton's foreword to the volume by Swanee Hunt (2004), former U.S. Ambassador to Austria, where Clinton noted: "As the war raged in Bosnia, Hunt… brought to my attention news not making headlines: that the women of Bosnia had been organizing to try to prevent the war, and they were still doing what they could… to hold together their culturally diverse

communities.'' Consider also what one Bosnian woman, Nurdzihana, said after the war: "I've never accepted ethnic divisions. The way I was raised, we didn't say someone belongs to this or that ethnic group. The atrocities I witnessed had no ethnicity, no religion. We lived together until the day before" (Hunt, 2004, p. 95).

10. By which term I want to refer to that effort to expand one's range of blood relatives, hence including them into an imaginary "one of us" category.

11. I acknowledge that the illustrations excerpted from Bringa's work tell only part of the story in the run-up to the war. For more detailed examples of pre-war (that is, pre-1990) happenings, one can peruse Bringa's ICTY testimony available at http://www.un.org/icty/transe16/990712it.htm (I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing the testimony to my attention). There, Bringa discusses at some length how the increasing Croat military presence in the region and the repeated, Croat-controlled media broadcasts instilled a sense of fear which reconfigured the way in which Croat inhabitants came to see their long-time covillagers as ethnic others. What seems to have emerged from complex military objectives and carefully planned broadcasts is a divisive process that produced simple, previously nonexistent, and ethnically defined "us versus them" perceptions of a hostile nature.

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