

*A House of Cards:  
The Yugoslav Concept of Total National Defence  
and its Critical Weakness*

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For many outside observers the impressive strength and capabilities of the YPA were taken as a given throughout the Cold War. This belief was based purely on the number of soldiers and hardware that Yugoslavia possessed. What this ignored was the fact that Yugoslavia's defence policy, Total National Defence, was a highly complex policy that required a unity of purpose amongst the Yugoslav peoples to successfully implement. By 1990 the entity that was supposed to provide this unity, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was discredited as a political force in Yugoslavia. This made elements of Yugoslavia's defence forces susceptible to the new political force that was becoming dominant in the country: nationalism.

The perceived strength of the Yugoslav armed forces was such that it outlasted the state itself.<sup>1</sup> The problem with this assessment, however, was that it was not based in reality. It was true that the Yugoslav defence concept – Total National Defence (TND) – maximized the resources of a middle-power and made it a threat to any invading country by ensuring that the entire population was well-armed and trained to carry out defensive operations. Such operations that would make Yugoslavia, as one Yugoslav analyst

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<sup>1</sup> See Norman CIGAR, “The Serb Guerrilla Option and the Yugoslav Wars: Assessing the Threat and Crafting Foreign Policy,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004): 485-487.

explained, “a hornet’s nest of resistance” to any invading army.<sup>2</sup> This was done by preparing the entire population to carry out a defensive war. While this ensured that Yugoslavia’s defences were formidable it required a unity of purpose among the Yugoslav peoples in order to be effective. With the decline of Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), the organization that was supposed to provide this unity, was no longer in a position to do so. A detailed examination of Yugoslavia’s defence policy from 1969 until the collapse of the state will make it clear that although the potential physical strength of the Yugoslavia’s defence policy was great, by 1991 there was no actor that was capable of employing it effectively, which helped to facilitate the collapse of the federation.

Yugoslavia was known as a conventional military power until the adoption of TND in 1969. However, there were antecedents of irregular warfare within the defence system prior to 1969. While Yugoslavia pushed forward with a conventional army as a matter of prestige during the early years of the Cold War, certain conceptual remnants of Yugoslavia’s guerrilla army from the Second World War remained in the state. The possibility of Yugoslavia potentially needing to fight an unconventional war was not lost on Tito. In a 1955 speech Tito stressed that “[i]n a possible future war there will be no rigid fronts or frontal combat.”<sup>3</sup> Although no major action was undertaken by Yugoslavia at this time to accommodate a frontless war, some minor efforts were made. This was seen when Lt.-Col.-Gen. Milojica Pantelic, attempting to justify the adoption of TND in 1969, explained:

From 1958 onwards, [...] important qualitative changes were introduced in the system and organization of national defence in general and of the armed forces in particular. The period of 1958-1959 saw a significant turning-point in the development of the conception of [TND]. It was then that the principle of combined open-partisan warfare was adopted.<sup>4</sup>

Pantelic, in the same article, notes that in this time frame “a large number of new partisan and territorial units were formed within the [YPA]

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<sup>2</sup> Unidentified Author cited in A. Ross JOHNSON, *Total National Defence in Yugoslavia* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Collection, 1971) 4.

<sup>3</sup> Josip Broz TITO, “Address to officers of the Yugoslav People’s Army,” cited in *Borba* (Belgrade), 6 October 1955.

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Colonel-General Milojica PANTELIC, “The Role of the Armed Forces in the System of National Defence” *Yugoslav Survey* 9 no. 3 (1968) 31.

and deployed over the length and breadth of the country.”<sup>5</sup> These units, however, served only a minor role in the overall defence plans of Yugoslavia since they remained firmly within the centralized command system of the YPA.<sup>6</sup> Yugoslavia, so long as it maintained this outlook on defence, would remain vulnerable to the military forces of either NATO or, more likely, the Warsaw Pact.

By adopting TND in 1969 Yugoslavia would base its claims to independence on two principles. The first was that it would decentralize command functions to prevent a blitzkrieg-style attack from devastating the country in one action, as had occurred to Yugoslavia during the Second World War and to Czechoslovakia in 1968.<sup>7</sup> The second was it would maximize the limited defensive resources of the country by attempting to integrate all of society into the defence planning. The reason that these two facets were the basis of the defence policy, as Bosko Todorovic explained in his book *Yugoslavia's Total National Defence: Origin and Development*, was that “Yugoslavia [was] only expected to wage an exclusively defensive war” due to its Non-Aligned foreign policy ideology.<sup>8</sup> There was no need to consider the offensive ramifications of the defence policy. Furthermore, Yugoslavia, being a Non-Aligned country, could not expect the support of outside countries in the face of aggression, and thus had to rely upon its own forces.<sup>9</sup> As a result, only when the afore-mentioned conditions of a decentralized command system and people in arms were met could Yugoslavia be assured of its defensive position. This was what the 1969 National Defence

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<sup>5</sup> Adam ROBERTS, *Nation in Arms: the theory and practice of total national defence* (London: Chatto and Windus for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1976) 155.

<sup>6</sup> Lieutenant Colonel-General Milojica PANTELIC, “The Role of the Armed Forces in the System of National Defence” 31.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in TITO, “President Tito on Total National Defence” *Yugoslav Survey* 18, no. 4 (1977) 14.

<sup>8</sup> Bosko TODOROVIC, *Yugoslavia's Total National Defence: Origins and Development* (Beograd: Socialist Thought and Practice, 1980) 6.

<sup>9</sup> This is why Nikola Ljubicic, writing in 1974, stated that all aspects of Yugoslav society needed to be mobilized as they were the only forces that Yugoslavia could rely upon. See Nikola LJUBICIC, “Greater Self-Reliance,” *Socialist Thought and Practice* 14, no. 12 (1974). 24-28.

Law, and the subsequent minor modifications to TND that were done until the demise of Yugoslavia in 1991, set out to accomplish.<sup>10</sup>

The National Defence Law of 1969 formally established two branches of the armed forces and the Civilian Defence Force (CDF), a non-combatant force designed to help the combat arms. The first branch, the YPA, was established as a conventional army. The YPA, in Tito's mind:

"[... was] assigned the role of battering the main force of a possible aggressor, [and] must in future, too, be characterized by unfaltering moral-political unity and equipped with the most modern armament representing the peak of world achievement in this line. It is therefore necessary constantly to develop intensive ideological-political and educational work and raise combat training to a higher level especially for anti-aircraft, anti-armoured and anti-airborne operations. We must apply ourselves steadily to strengthening the fire power, maneuverability and mobility of the operational army."<sup>11</sup>

Given the control and influence Tito exercised within Yugoslavia his conception of the YPA was exactly what was implemented. As Tito explained, the YPA would rapidly respond to any invasion and seek to repulse, or at the very minimum delay, rapid penetration of the interior of Yugoslavia by invading forces.<sup>12</sup> With a blitzkrieg believed to be the primary means of invasion by an aggressor country, it was imperative to prevent enemy forces from gaining access to the interior of the country. To ensure that this objective was achieved, the armaments emphasized by Tito for the YPA – anti-aircraft, anti-armoured, and anti-airborne – targeted those sections of an opposing army that were decisive to a blitzkrieg offensive achieving rapid results.<sup>13</sup> If Yugoslavia was able to disrupt enemy armour

<sup>10</sup> TND had several incarnations up until 1980. However, the only substantive change to the policy during this time frame was allowing slightly more federal influence in shaping the policy as compared to the 1969 National Defence Law.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in TITO, "President Tito on Total National Defence" 22.

<sup>12</sup> Dennison I RUSINOW, "The Yugoslav Concept of All National Defense" In *South East Europe Series: Flagstaff Reports*, 1971. 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> Yugoslav society placed great emphasis on being as independent as possible in arms production so that, in case of war, they would not be susceptible to an arms embargo. As a result, by 1986, not only was Yugoslavia self-sufficient in producing the majority of arms needed for Yugoslavia's security, but was

and airborne formations a blitzkrieg offensive was unlikely to succeed.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the face of all-out invasion, the YPA would prevent Yugoslavia from being overrun in the first round of hostilities while allowing time for Yugoslav society to be mobilized on a war footing.

The YPA would consist of three combat arms: ground, navy, and air forces. The latter two, in their conception, were auxiliaries to the ground forces, which in Yugoslavia's concept of TND would be the principle arm of resistance. The Yugoslavs themselves put it bluntly that the army "is numerically the strongest and the most important [branch] of the Yugoslav People's Army."<sup>15</sup> The Yugoslav concept of strength was directly tied to the flexibility of the organization. Col.-Gen. Dusan Pekic, a high ranking officer who helped implement defence policy, further elaborated that the strength of the army was based on the fact that it was "trained for conducting all types of combat operations and for resorting to various forms and methods of fighting."<sup>16</sup> By refusing to acknowledge that the YPA would function most effectively as a conventional force combating a similarly composed army, Pekic overstated this fact. However, the YPA was certainly better off from training to conduct irregular operations than nearly any other conventional army as a whole.

The navy and air force, as mentioned, were auxiliary arms to the ground forces within the YPA. They existed simply to compliment the army in maintaining an unoccupied and independent Yugoslavia. According to TND the navy's role was to "[...] in coordination with other services of the Yugoslav People's Army and territorial defence to defend Yugoslavia's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Adriatic, and to operate on navigable

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also one of the larger arms exporters in the world, with Yugoslavia earning 3.1 billion US dollars from 1983-88. See: Marko MILIVOJEVIC, "Yugoslavia's Military Industries", *Studies of Yugoslavia* (Bradford, University of Bradford, 1990) 8, 15.

<sup>14</sup> This is why, when Tito's death seemed imminent in 1980, Admiral Mamula was inspecting anti-tank and anti-air-craft defences in case an outside power attempted to invade in Yugoslavia's moment of weakness. See: "Never Say Die," *The Economist*, 2 February 1980.

<sup>15</sup> Col.-Gen. Dusan PEKIC, "Ground Forces of the Yugoslav Armed Forces," *Yugoslav Survey*: 20, no. 4 (1979) 37.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

rivers and lakes.”<sup>17</sup> Given Yugoslavia’s extensive coastline, preventing uncontested landings by enemy forces was a priority.<sup>18</sup> In the navy’s doctrinal principles there was no mention of a proactive stance as they would be subsidiary to the ground forces.

The same held true for the air force and air defence elements. Air force and defence doctrine, as defined by Lt.-Col. Gen. Stevan Roglic, was for it to be: “directed towards focal points of Army and Navy operations for the purposes of detecting and tracking the movements of the enemy’s main forces, primarily of his fast moving and air landing units, protecting the main groupings of Army and Navy units against enemy air reconnaissance operations or raids, fighting enemy armoured, mechanized and landing forces, supplying friendly units with critical materiel, making possible evacuation of gravely wounded and seriously sick personnel, and allowing army units to manoeuvre.”<sup>19</sup>

Lt.-Col. Gen. Roglic further elaborated that “the decisive operations against any aggressor will take place on the ground and by the ground forces and that other services of the Yugoslav People’s Army[,] and therefore the [air force] and [air defence,] must be qualified and always ready to provide successful support to the ground forces.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, it should come as no surprise that, by the time of the collapse of Yugoslavia, the navy, air force, and air defence elements had been in a serious state of technological neglect due to their subsidiary role in Yugoslav doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

While the YPA was engaging the main body of the enemy forces the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF), the second branch of the Yugoslav Defence Forces, would begin mobilizing. The TDF consisted of individuals who had served in the YPA as conscripts for 15 months and were then required to

<sup>17</sup> Cptn. Zoran NIKOLIC, “The Yugoslav Navy”, *Yugoslav Survey* 19, no. 2 (1978): 47-54.

<sup>18</sup> Marko MILIVOJEVIC, “The Yugoslav People’s Army: The Military Dimension,” in *Studies on Yugoslavia* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1988), 39-41.

<sup>19</sup> Lt. Col. Stevan ROGLIC, “Yugoslav Air Force and Air Defence” *Yugoslav Survey* 20, no.3 (1979) 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* 6.

<sup>21</sup> The air force was in greater decline, materially, than the navy due to the fact that for the majority of the 1970s the Yugoslav People’s Army Chief of Staff, and later Defence Minister, was Admiral Mamula, who saw to the modernization of the navy. See Marko MILIVOJEVIC, “The Yugoslav People’s Army: The Military Dimension” 27-28.

serve part-time until the age of 60 as members of the TDF. Periodic training would ensure that the soldier's individual skills, in theory, would not deteriorate.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, it would be able to act in a variety of manners.

As Tito explained: "Territorial Defence, the most massive part of our armed forces, is distinguished by a wealth of organizational forms and ability to engage in fast, effective, elastic and varied forms of combat and all other forms of struggle and resistance. I specially wish to stress that Territorial Defence should retain and nurture the specific features of its internal organization and methods of most adequate use. In line with this, it is imperative further to create latitude for development of self-management initiative and responsibility of working people and citizens, young people and women, organization of associated labour, neighbourhood communities and organizations, in relation to Territorial Defence. Training and preparation for combat and all other forms of struggle and resistance should embrace a still larger number of people, both men and women, and young people as well."<sup>23</sup>

In order to fulfill the above principles, the TDF were broken down into two distinct branches. The first branch, the manoeuvring brigades, could be seen as an addition to the traditional reserve of the YPA. These units, Col. Mihajlo Canovic explained, would "depending on their equipment, fire power, and combat capacity and mobility, [...] operate as modern combat formations."<sup>24</sup> Evidently, while there was much desire to completely decentralize command functions, this was not completely the case, as "if necessary, some of such units can be converted into YPA units [...]"<sup>25</sup> This mixed approach to the manoeuvring brigades, effectively YPA formations but organized at the republic level, shows the tension that existed within Yugoslav military thought between centralists and those who wished for greater devolution of military powers to the republics.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Col.-Gen. Milan JOVANOVIĆ, "Compulsory Military Service" *Yugoslav Survey* 21, no. 3 (1980) 49.

<sup>23</sup> TITO, "President Tito on Total National Defence" 23.

<sup>24</sup> Col. Mihajlo CANOVIĆ, "Territorial Defence of the SFRY" *Yugoslav Survey* 21, no. 1 (1980) 57.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The YPA was one of the most ardent centralist forces in Yugoslavia, and hence emphasized the Maneuvering Brigades to a great extent in the literature. For

The second part of the TDF, the 'Tactical Units of Territorial Defence', was much closer to the partisan roots of the YPA. Col. Canovic in 1980 described these units as being "designed for operations in a narrow territory; they are made up of numerous units of varied kind, organized, outfitted, and trained for carrying out various missions within the territory which they cover."<sup>27</sup> What was meant in this context by the term "various missions" was that the units would conduct any armed resistance that forced an invading army to commit significant troops to maintain control of the region. This would allow the YPA and TDF manoeuvre brigades to gain an advantage elsewhere on the battlefield and eventually re-capture the occupied territory.<sup>28</sup> In order to ensure that the Tactical TD units would be well-suited to the area where they were operating in they were "formed at the level of communes, local communities and organizations of associated labour" within the area that they would operate.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, arms depots were decentralized to the different communes to ensure that arms would be available, and resistance possible, even if Yugoslavia's major cities were taken.<sup>30</sup> By emphasizing local roots the tactical units, although not as well-trained as a traditional army, were able to compensate through their specialization in local terrain.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, being decentralized entities, the Tactical TD units would not be vulnerable to a blitzkrieg offensive, fulfilling one of the primary requirements of TND.

By having both branches of the TDF organized at the republic level, Yugoslavia significantly decentralized command functions, which created

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an example of this see Branko MAMULA, "The Irrevocable Yugoslav Course," *Socialist Thought and Practice* 27, no. 1-2 (1986).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 56.

<sup>28</sup> Article 238 of the 1974 Constitution of the SFRY made it explicit that "No one shall have the right to acknowledge or sign an act of capitulation, nor to accept or recognize the occupation of the [SFRY]." This made units that were organized at the local level and could function outside central authority imperative, hence another reason for decentralizations incorporation into TND. *The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (Ljubljana: Dopolna Delavska Univerza, 1974)

<sup>29</sup> Canovic 57.

<sup>30</sup> David C. ISBY, "Yugoslavia 1991 - Forces In Conflict", 3 *Jane's Intelligence Review* 397 (1991), 398.

<sup>31</sup> See Ibid.



another important obstacle for aggressors attempting a blitzkrieg-style offence. While command functions were re-centralized to a certain extent in the 1981 National Defence Law at the insistence of the YPA, the republics still played a large role in defence planning. The inability to centralize defence functions was attributable to the fact that: first, it was a constitutional requirement and; second, the republics funded their TDF units, not the federal government.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the TDF consisted of one million active members throughout Yugoslavia in 1987, five times the active members of the YPA.<sup>33</sup> The experience the republics gained from organizing what amounted to de-facto armies would prove critical when political factors caused Yugoslavia to collapse.

While each component of the armed forces in Yugoslavia had a specific task, it is important to note that any element was supposed to engage in all varieties of armed conflict depending on the circumstances. The optimal form of defence was the combined form, which would allow the YPA and Manoeuvring Brigades to engage in a war of position and tactical units were to harass and pin down units that would otherwise be committed against them.<sup>34</sup> Yugoslav doctrine, however, kept open the possibility that in case of a limited conflict a pure war of position would be conducted, or in the dire circumstance that the country was overrun, a pure guerrilla warfare campaign would result.<sup>35</sup> Much like the YPA, the tactical units were best at their specialized tasks, but the willingness to adapt any means of resistance shows the extent that Yugoslavia was willing to go in order to remain independent, a fact of which the outside world was well aware.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See Maj.-Gen. Nikola CUBRA, "Financing Total National Defence" *Yugoslav Survey* 25, no. 3, (1984) 17-26 for a complete outline of how the responsibilities for funding TND were broken down.

<sup>33</sup> *The Military Balance, 1987-88* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1987) 48-49, 90.

<sup>34</sup> *Yugoslavia's Armed Forces*, trans. Kordija Kveder (Beograd: Narodna Armija, 1980), 56.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 57.

<sup>36</sup> The limited number of outside sources that published on TND held great respect for the capabilities of the Yugoslav Army. In fact, the YPA and the system of TND were generally perceived to be the third most powerful army in Europe. Marko Attila HOARE, *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books, 2005) 1-4.

Finally, an invading army would be forced to confront an additional element: the CDF. Although technically not part of the armed forces, the CDF was composed of all segments of society that chose to participate by either aiding the YPA or impairing the ability of an aggressor army. As Col.-Gen. Dolnicar explained:

The doctrine and strategy of total national defense rests on unity of objectives and assumes that various forms of struggle and resistance will be offered to an attacker: it means all-inclusive and continuing resistance, brooks no narrowness in the choice of forms of struggle and resistance, no standstills or interruptions, and recognizes no extenuating circumstances that would make resistance impossible.<sup>37</sup>

Resistance needed to be organized in all forms, and CDF fulfilled this role in Yugoslav society. In terms of aiding the Yugoslav Army, the CDF would provide stabilizing functions within a region that would otherwise be the responsibility of the armed forces or other government agencies in peacetime – an example being the provision of medical services to injured civilians and soldiers within the warzone.<sup>38</sup> This task, however, was secondary to the task of opposing an invading army. Maj-Gen. Zdravko Kolar, writing in 1975, argued that “of especial significance is resistance on temporarily occupied territory which the aggressor would try to organize an occupation system [...]”<sup>39</sup> This sentiment was strong enough within Yugoslav society that it was codified in the 1974, and subsequent, National Defence Acts. Article 7 of the 1974 act specifically states:

“If an enemy has temporarily occupied part of Yugoslav territory, working people and citizens, units of the armed forces, agencies ... organization and communes ... which operate on this territory, shall continue to fight and engage in other forms of total national resistance to the enemy, implement Yugoslav rules and regulations, and carry out decisions and or-

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<sup>37</sup> Col.-Gen. Rajko TANASKOVIC, “The Armed Forces” In *Total National Defense in Theory and Practice*, edited by Rajko Tanaskovic. (Belgrade: Narodna Armija, 1975) 181.

<sup>38</sup> Maj-Gen. Zdravko KOLAR, “Total National Defence.” *Yugoslav Survey* 16, no. 1 (1975): 90.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

ders of the bodies in charge of total national defence on the respective territory.”<sup>40</sup>

What was left vague in this explanation is what specific actions unarmed resistance entailed. Maj.-Gen. Kolar clarified this point and provided several possibilities for unarmed resistance: political propaganda; resistance in the spheres of production and services; participation of the population in production, and other activities associated with resistance; cooperation with, and support of, the armed forces; and finally, resistance in the spheres of education, science, culture, among others.<sup>41</sup> What is important is that not only was this a theoretical possibility, but the people themselves actually believed in the policy. During the ‘Freedom ‘71’ Yugoslav army training manoeuvres, the opposing side was constantly harassed by the civilians, to the extent that the government was forced to remind the civilians in the region that the ‘invading’ force were themselves Yugoslav citizens doing their duty.<sup>42</sup>

The above example, and other successes of the CDF, convinced the Yugoslav government to expand the policy. While it was true that the focus was, and would remain, on armed struggle, Yugoslavia realized that the country would be significantly stronger if it could engage all its non-combatants in activities that would benefit the soldiers’ struggle against the invader.<sup>43</sup> The same individual who emphasized armed struggle, Maj.-Gen. Milan Jovanovic, also stated that “in view of the fact that all duties and tasks in the armed forces are not equally difficult and complex and their performance does not require the same state of health, the view was taken [in the 1980 Compulsory Military Service Act] that training for defence could best be achieved by subjecting to military service all persons having general working ability.”<sup>44</sup> Although military service in this instance was in the non-combat arms, it still provided a vital component of the overall policy of TND. In addition to the incorporation of men who were physically unfit for standard military service, women, who were excluded from military ser-

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<sup>40</sup> Article 7 of the national Defence Act, cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> RUSINOW 7.

<sup>43</sup> Even when Yugoslavia gave attention to the unarmed struggle the emphasis was still, by far, on armed struggle. See Col.-Gen. Milan JOVANOVIĆ, “Service in the Yugoslav Armed Forces”, *Yugoslav Survey* 20, no. 1 (1979) 28.

<sup>44</sup> JOVANOVIĆ, “Compulsory Military Service” 47-48.

vice, were given increased training to ensure that all who desired to do so were engaged in defence of the country.<sup>45</sup> While armed struggle and the multi-faceted combined strategic approach of the YPA and TDF would remain the mainstay of TND, one cannot discount the unarmed resistance techniques. By 1987 over two million individuals were formally members of the CDF.<sup>46</sup>

TND was an all-encompassing defence policy. In adopting it, Yugoslavia hoped that it would simply intimidate an opposing nation into not invading the country. Tito explained that “the system of [TND] also acts as a deterrent to enemy intentions to commit aggression against our country.”<sup>47</sup> He went on, in a 1971 press conference, to describe TND as “the main obstacle to any policy from positions of force vis-a-vis our country.”<sup>48</sup> Clearly, Tito was being rhetorically aggressive in order to instil a sense of respect, if not fear, for Yugoslavia’s defence policy. Yugoslavia was not modest in proclaiming the potential danger faced by countries seeking to invade the country, or the military means that would be needed to succeed. Yugoslav self-estimates, as cited by American A. Ross Johnson, predicted that “an occupational force in excess of 8.5 soldiers per square kilometre, or two million men, would be required to truly subdue the country”<sup>49</sup> – not an easy number for any country to martial for the protracted period needed to pacify of the country. If the invasion was part of a larger conflict in the Cold War, as Yugoslavs suspected it would be given their strategic location, this number would be simply unobtainable unless the aggressor wished to put itself at a decisive disadvantage in another theatre of operation.

TND, as is evidenced by the outline above, also sought to address the material imbalance in armed forces that existed between it and the superpowers. Yugoslavia could never hope to compete materially with the superpowers.<sup>50</sup> Yugoslavia could, however, compensate through complete

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid 52-53.

<sup>46</sup> See *The Military Balance, 1987-88* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1987) 90.

<sup>47</sup> Cited in TITO, “President Tito on Total National Defence” 8.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Ibid 14.

<sup>49</sup> JOHNSON 4.

<sup>50</sup> Even at the height of Yugoslavia’s arm productions capabilities, it was still quantitatively and qualitatively behind the superpowers in terms of heavy arms. For an outline of these deficiencies see Figure 1 in Marko MILIVOJEVIC,

mobilization of the human element. Bosko Todorovic, in his survey of TND, was bold enough to say “a population fighting a total national defensive war is indestructible and invincible, whatever the military might or technical superiority of the aggressor.”<sup>51</sup> Hyperbole aside, this quotation shows the belief that Yugoslav society held for the human element in warfare.<sup>52</sup> A country, when choosing a defence policy, must realize the limitations and resources it has in comparison to other countries that it perceives as potential threats. Yugoslavia, as a result of its Non-Aligned policy, was forced to rely solely on its own people to achieve its end, and thus TND provided them with an element in which they would have a decided advantage.

In order to ensure that Yugoslavia always possessed a defence policy that would allow it to achieve its independent foreign policy objectives, the core tenets of TND were integrated into the 1974 Constitution. To this end, an entire section of the Yugoslav constitution was devoted to enshrining some of the core tenets of TND.<sup>53</sup> The League of Communists (LCY) did this in order to ensure that TND would be a constant within Yugoslav society, no matter the changes that might occur in the future. This, admittedly, is a bit of an exaggeration, as Yugoslavia possessed several constitutions during its existence.<sup>54</sup> Tito’s death in 1980, however, largely halted these changes due to the lack of a central figure to push through necessary reforms.

The major limitation of TND was that, given its complex encompassing social nature, it required complete unity of purpose among the Yugoslav nations and nationalities. The approximately 200,000 strong YPA, 1,000,000 TDF, and 2,000,000 CDF (as of 1988) necessitated a coordinating

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“Yugoslavia’s Military Industry,” in *Studies of Yugoslavia* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1990).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>51</sup> TODOROVIC 18.

<sup>52</sup> Yugoslavs, to justify their belief in the human element, would constantly reference the National Liberation War to justify how a technically deficient country can overcome the superior technological might of an invading army through being superior in the human element. See Ibid 9-19.

<sup>53</sup> Chapter VI (National Defence) of *The Constitution of the SFRY*.

<sup>54</sup> Yugoslavs, however, argued that the constant changing of their constitution was due to the fact that their society was developing at such an advanced rate. See: Edvard KARDELJ, “Principle Causes of Constitutional Changes” *Socialist Thought and Practice* 13, no. 3 (1973) 3-27

agency to ensure they acted in an efficient manner. In order to facilitate all elements of society working in unison, the LCY was assigned role of coordinating these disparate groups. As Tito explained at the IX Congress of the LCY “the [LCY] has been and remains the principal propulsive and leading ideological-political force in all activities related to [TND].”<sup>55</sup> In order to ensure the clarity of this point, the statute of the LCY had a clause which stated that:

Communists – members of the Yugoslav People's Army – are separately organized within the Yugoslav People's Army with a view to carrying out tasks stemming from the function and character of the Yugoslav People's Army. [...] Its duty is to act towards the development and strengthening of the Yugoslav People's army, which is the common armed force of the working class and all the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia.<sup>56</sup>

By political force it served the afore-mentioned coordination purpose in Yugoslav society at the general level. As an ideological force it tried to indoctrinate the armed forces, as it did with the rest of civil-society, with a sense of Yugoslavism. Lt. Col. General Dzemil Sarac explained the LCY had to prevent “the various nationalistic, pseudo-liberal and bureaucratic-technocratic forces” from damaging the integrity of TND.<sup>57</sup> The integrity of TND was paramount; without unity in the system it simply could not function. As Tito later explained in an interview to the journal *Vojno Delo*, “without a unified doctrine [...] there can be no successful defense.”<sup>58</sup> Even after Tito's death this point was reiterated at the XIII Congress of the LCY in 1986, where Vidoje Zarkovic, then President of the Presidency of the LCY, stated:

The capability of our country for defence and self-protection depends on the over-all internal situation, on our capability to overcome standstills, shortcomings and crises in internal relations and in the development of self-management. Accordingly, our constant concern for the devel-

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<sup>55</sup> Tito, cited in Lt.-Col.-General Dzemil SARAC, “Communists in the Army in Developing and Implementing the Policy of League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In TODOROVIC 84.

<sup>56</sup> “Statute of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia,” *Socialist Thought and Practice* 14, no. 6-7 (1974), 333.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 92.

<sup>58</sup> TITO, cited in Ibid 94.

opment of the system of total national defence and social self-protection is connected with the efforts to emerge from the difficulties and for the further socialist development of our society in self-management.<sup>59</sup>

The problem that Zarkovic failed to address was that without Tito there was no real way of resolving the internal disputes. While Tito was alive, he, not the LCY, would be the primary force of unity. By creating a cult of personality it was he, not the LCY, to whom people assigned priority.

Thus, while TND functioned admirably as long as Tito lived, it was at a significant disadvantage once he died, and increasingly became susceptible to republic interests. This was for two reasons. First was the fact that the TDF were units whose membership consisted of individuals from the local communities in which they were based, and that they were organized by the republics.<sup>60</sup> As a result, rather than adhering to a pan-Yugoslav ideal like the multinational YPA, the TDFs were more invested at the local and republic levels of government. This would facilitate their use by Slovenia and Croatia during their pushes towards independence, albeit in a manner unique to each republic's political circumstances.

The other major limitation to the policy was that the lack of a unified ideology greatly hindered the utility of the YPA. The army, like other federal institutions within Yugoslavia, used a quota system to ensure that all ethnic groups were adequately represented. At the conscript level this result was roughly achieved, as it was simply a matter of ensuring the amount of conscripts entering the YPA roughly corresponded to their proportion of the overall Yugoslav population.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the highest command levels of the YPA also ensured that there was ethnic balance amongst the nationalities, with Croats even being over-represented relative to their overall population at 38% of general officer positions by 1990.<sup>62</sup> Thus at the basic and highest levels of command the YPA was truly a multi-ethnic force. The issue that this created was that a multiethnic army, in a climate

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<sup>59</sup> Vidoje ZARKOVIC, "The League of Communists of Yugoslavia in the Struggle for the Further Development of Socialist, Self-Managing and Nonaligned Yugoslavia," *Socialist Thought and Practice* 26, no. 6-7 (1986), XXXI.

<sup>60</sup> Maj.-Gen. Nikola CUBRA, "Financing Total National Defence" 17-26.

<sup>61</sup> David C. ISBY, "Yugoslavia 1991 – Forces in Conflict" in *Jane's Intelligence Review* 3 (1991): 397.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

that was increasingly being dominated by nationalism, was severely compromised. It could not reasonably ask members of a specific nationality to attack their home republic. This issue would severely compromise the YPA's ability to serve as a cohesive force during the disintegration of the state.

The result of the TND system losing its unity of purpose was that not only was its great physical strength unemployable against an outside aggressor, but that the policy would be readily exploitable by internal actors who sought to destroy the state. In 1991 physically little had changed from the 1970s and 1980s, besides cosmetic changes to the command structure by the YPA, when Yugoslavia's defence forces had been greatly respected. Politically, however, a great deal had changed, which inhibited the ability of Yugoslavia's defence forces to act in a coherent manner. With TND being a society encompassing defence policy, it needed a group, individual, or ideology to bind it together in order to be effective. By 1990, Yugoslavia possessed none of these factors. Thus when the country fell into civil war in 1991, not only was the federal army inhibited in responding to the crisis, but Slovenia and Croatia in particular would have the physical means necessary to assert their claims of independence.

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