I appreciate the chance to respond to the comments on my book by Gordon, Roger and Sasha.

The book is not meant to be an exhaustive history of the Yugoslav wars. Rather, it is an attempt to highlight important aspects of those wars that had tended to be ignored or downplayed, and to tell the story from that perspective. What I describe in the book is a much more complex story than the simplistic “ethnic conflict” narrative that we have become so familiar with. Indeed, the book is meant to problematize exactly that narrative.

Particular elites went to great efforts to strategically plan and execute policies of massive violence. Members of the ruling parties in Croatia and Serbia recruited and armed paramilitary groups, and sent them into specific ethnically heterogeneous areas. The violence did not happen in a vacuum, nor was it a spontaneous eruption from below. Rather, it was the result of conscious strategic planning from above. I think everyone recognizes this strategic dimension. What remains to be explained is why these policies were pursued, and how the wider population fits into the story.

Why did particular elites pursue these strategies? I do not deny that national sentiment or ethnic identity played some role in the processes that took place over the course of the 1990s. But such sentiment or identity itself does not explain the specific policies or goals pursued by elites, including the structural form of the states they sought to establish. Those goals were determined by the interests of those elites in Serbia and Croatia who controlled the state, who were very much opposed to and threatened by the strong trends for a liberalized economic and political system — pressure coming in the 1980s from above, first from within the League of Communists, and then from Ante Marković; and from 1989 onward from outside, especially from events in the rest of Eastern Europe, and from below, in the form of growing pressure from the wider population for liberalization.

Demobilization was essentially about buying time within this context of strong pressure for fundamental change. The decade between 1990 and 2000 was not one of stasis for the conservative elites. Rather, they used the time gained through the demobilization strategy very well. If the HDZ and SPS had not won elections in 1990, it would have been very difficult for the conservatives to have stopped the changes, and they would have suffered significant losses, since their control over and access to resources depended on their positions within a ruling party that controlled the state and the economy. By 2000, this was no longer true. Large parts of the formerly state-owned economy had been privatized in a much guided way, such that there was actually a significant continuity in terms of who had control over and access to resources. This meant that by 2000, the ruling parties’ loss of power was much less threatening to large parts of the original conservative coalition, because their control
over and access to resources no longer depended on the HDZ or SPS remaining in control of the state. They were now actual owners of property; their power no longer depended on their role or position within the ruling party, or on that party controlling the state, but flowed instead from actual ownership, something that did not change because of electoral outcomes. Likewise, informal distribution networks (mafias) had accumulated enough wealth that they themselves had become power brokers, rather than depending on a particular political party's patronage.

Sasha asks "how the actual practices of violence... affected the situation in Serbia and/or Croatia." Indeed, why did Tudjman and Milošević not just resort to rhetoric and images? First, because actual warfare is a very powerful demobilizer. We saw this especially in Serbia, where throughout the 1990s, time after time, massive numbers of people went out into the streets demanding fundamental changes. And time after time, the eruption of warfare effectively demobilized those people and silenced the opposition to the ruling structures. When the war ended, the massive political mobilization started up again, beginning a new cycle. The unavoidable holding of multiparty elections - such elections were being held throughout the region as well as in Yugoslav republics in 1990 - made a strategy of demobilization necessary in a way it had not been when the arena of political contention was limited to the League of Communists.

Second, Milošević's pre-1990 strategy of provoking conflict in an attempt to recentralize the League of Communists under his leadership set in motion a train of events that made a violent outcome more likely. His decision in June 1990 to "throw Slovenia and Croatia out of Yugoslavia" using military force is one example. One could ask why, if this was his main goal, he didn't just tell them to leave, as Yeltsin told the various Soviet republics at the end of 1991. Indeed, it seems inarguable that Milošević instrumentalized the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia for his own goals, as Tudjman did with the Croats of central and northern Bosnia.

Why? Again we need only look at what happened in Serbia each time a war ended. When the war in Croatia ended, the streets of Serbia were again flooded with people calling for fundamental change. When the war in Bosnia ended, the same thing happened, but on an even larger scale. And when the war in Kosovo finally came to an end, the street movements succeeded in the goal they had sought since March 1991.

Actual warfare is an extremely powerful tool for elites. I would argue that despite the claims of many IR theorists to the contrary, many interstate wars are fought for a goal that is ultimately at home, rather than abroad. I do believe that was the case in Yugoslavia.

One of the themes that runs through all three sets of comments is the question of ethnic identity and "nationalism." Gordon asks why elites embraced nationalism and why the masses responded if ethnic identities are not mono-

32. The Myth of Ethnic War, pp. 92-93.