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Trends. Psychopolitical Action in Yugoslavia: With Friends Like These

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The United States Government (USG) has been effecting psychopolitical action within Macedonia and Serbia to affect the outcome of the impending elections for the presidency of Yugoslavia. Specifically, the USG has provided money and materiel--e.g., computers and broadcasting equipment--to formal and informal organizations and leaders in opposition to the incumbent, Slobodan Milosevic, and for his main opponent, Vojislav Kostunica. Activities stemming from the aid include polling, demonstrations, mass media communications, and the many other tasks integral to a well-run opposition campaign--e.g., advertising, printing. The aid and activities subsumed by psychopolitical action are being technically effected quite in an adequate fashion.

However, tangible data identifying USG aid for all these activities are being irrepressibly employed by the Milosevic campaign team to support the contention that the opposition is bought and paid for by the USG (the bomber of Serbia and Macedonia) and singing to its tune. In a land where nationalism is a very salient issue that affects political behavior, the more the USG successfully effects psychopolitical action, the more it directly feeds Milosevic's own psychopolitical action. In essence, the USG is unavoidably funding both sides.

One way out might be to effect psychopolitical action covertly to avoid the malignant contribution to Milosevic's theme of nationalism. However, in a poor, repressive environment, an influx of money and equipment would suggest the obvious source. Another might be for the opposition to develop the best defense through the best offense: accusing the Milosevic regime of being hurtful to nationalist strivings through his many ill-fated ventures and policies and claiming the mantle for the opposition. One might conclude, however, that the USG is actually advocating that the opposition push the combined theme of rejecting nationalism and of embracing, instead, democracy and free markets, as if nationalism cannot be compatible with the latter.

Whether playing into Milosevic's main political theme and advocating a problematic theme for the opposition will still lead to victory or at least not prevent it will become apparent in a few days. At present, however, one might conclude that the political opposition should be significantly ambivalent towards its USG friends. (See Erlanger, S. (September 20, 2000). Milosevic, trailing in polls, rails against NATO. *The New York Times*, p.A3; Farmer, S. M., & Maslyn, J. M. (1999). Why are styles of upward influence neglected? Making the case for a configurational approach to influences. *Journal of Management*, 25, 653-682; Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1999). Everyday persuasion knowledge. *Psychology and Marketing*, 16, 185-194; Rodrigues, A., & Lloyd, K. L. (1998). Reexamining bases of power from an attributional perspective. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28, 973-997; Tepper, B. J., Eisenbach, R. J., Kirby, S. L., & Potter, P. W. (1998). Test of a justice-based model of subordinates' resistance to downward influence attempts. *Group and Organization Management*, 23, 144-160.) (Keywords: Elections, Macedonia, Milosevic, Nationalism, Serbia, Yugoslavia.)

