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THE SOURCES OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE

A Comparative Case Study Analysis of
Yugoslavia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Kurdistan

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty
of
The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
by

Querine H. Hanlon

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation, entitled *The Sources of Ethnic Violence: A Comparative Case Study Analysis of Yugoslavia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Kurdistan*, seeks to elucidate what factors prompt ethnic groups to adopt strategies of interethnic violence over non-violent forms of interethnic bargaining and competition. Employing the “focused comparison” method developed by Alexander George and Richard Smoke (1974), this study analyzes three cases of violent ethnic conflict, using the results to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the sources of violence in ethnic conflict.

In Section I, a review of the literature (Chapter 1) is followed by three chapters which look at the question of ethnic violence from a different locus of initiative, the group level (Chapter 2), the state level (Chapter 3), and the interstate level (Chapter 4). In this section, ten propositions and related subpropositions establishing a link between ethnicity and violence are developed. These propositions are then tested in Section II across three cases studies, Yugoslavia (Chapter 5), Nagorno-Karabakh (Chapter 6), and Kurdistan (Chapter 7), to determine which of these propositions establishes a clear causal link between ethnicity and violence and which only indicates a tendency or potential for violence.

Based upon the case study findings, a conceptual framework for understanding what triggers violence in ethnic conflict is developed in the final section (Chapter 8). Four of the ten propositions identify critical sources of ethnic violence in all three cases studies, one at the group level (ethnic group leadership), one at the state level (the weak state), and two at the interstate level (international support and access to arms and financial resources). Where one or more of these critical sources of ethnic violence are present, ethnic conflict will escalate rapidly to full scale interethnic war. The remaining six propositions identify important sources of ethnic violence, but the relationship between each of these factors and the outbreak of ethnic violence is not as critical or as direct. Taken together, these ten propositions identify the critical sources of violence in ethnic conflict and are thus relevant not only to understanding the outbreak of violence in the cases examined herein, but also to identifying the sources of ethnic violence in conflicts beyond the scope of this dissertation.

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Section I

**A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
FOR UNDERSTANDING
THE SOURCES OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE**

Chapter One

APPROACHES TO EXPLAINING ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Introduction

The increased global salience of ethnic conflict has fostered a renewed interest in understanding the sources of violent interethnic warfare and the links between ethnicity and violence. One has only to look at the number of ethnic conflicts that have emerged since the end of the Cold War to conclude that ethnic conflict, while not necessarily a new phenomenon, has clearly become one of the more serious threats to international stability. Indeed, "the ubiquity, the increased frequency and intensity, of ethnic conflict, serviced by modern technology of destruction and communication, and publicized by the mass media, makes such conflict a special reality of the late 20th century."¹

Since the collapse of the bipolar, Cold War international system, the number of ongoing ethnic conflicts and the levels of violence employed by ethnic groups have indeed increased. However, neither ethnic conflict nor the increased salience of ethnic identity is a new phenomenon or even an epiphenomenon of the collapse of the international order. Indeed, "from the dawn of history, communities organized on putative common descent...have coexisted, competed and clashed."²

Ethnicity has meant not only conflict and violence but also kinship and community.³ Ethnic identities are founded upon ideas of collective ancestry which impart a strong sense of familial loyalty and obligation and explain the strong emotive appeal that inheres in ethnic ties. "Ethnic groups think in terms of family resemblances...and...bring

¹Stanley J. Tambiah, "Ethnic Conflict in the World Today," *American Ethnologist* 16 (May 1, 1989): 338.

²Milton J. Esman, *Ethnic Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1.

³Donald L. Horowitz, "How to Begin Thinking Comparatively About Soviet Ethnic Problems," in *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR*, Alexander J. Motyl, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 10.

into play for a much wider circle those concepts of mutual obligation and antipathy to outsiders that are applicable to family relations.”⁴ This antipathy to outsiders may prompt the exclusion, if not expulsion, and in cases of severe ethnic conflict, the extermination of such outsiders, ethnic strangers with whom a group may have coexisted peacefully for centuries. It is this widespread collective violence amongst people “who are not aliens but enemies intimately known”⁵ that has produced some of the most disturbing episodes of ethnic violence in the current era, prompting one writer to question whether the “chilling euphemism ‘ethnic cleansing’” has not become a metaphor for our time.⁶

The worldwide explosion of violent ethnic conflict has not been confined to any region of the world nor to any political system. Ethnic violence has emerged in modern Western societies as well as in modernizing and traditional ones, belying the conventional optimism of the postwar period that ethnic identities would be replaced by rational, occupational associations that were to be the byproducts of progress and modernization. Ethnicity has emerged as the most intense and most readily activated mass political emotion of the contemporary era⁷ and the principal source of organized violence around the world,⁸ leading one writer to go so far as to suggest that “animosity among ethnic groups is beginning to rival the spread of nuclear weapons as the most serious threat to peace the world faces.”⁹

Until the recent explosion of violent ethnic warfare, little attention was paid to ethnic *violence* although much had been written about ethnic conflict. The recent explosion of interethnic warfare in such regions as the Caucasus, the Balkans, Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East has fostered a renewed interest in understanding the triggers of

⁴Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 57.

⁵Tambiah, 335.

⁶Akbar S. Ahmed, “Ethnic Cleansing: A Metaphor For Our Time?” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18 (January 1995): 3.

⁷Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 196.

⁸Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 2.

⁹Charles William Maynes, “Containing Ethnic Conflict,” *Foreign Policy* 90 (Spring 1993): 5.

interethnic violence. What is the source of violence in ethnic conflict? Is there a causal link between ethnicity and violence? Why do some ethnic groups seem content to solve competing claims within existing structures, relying on nonviolent interethnic bargaining and competition, while other groups resort to violence, employing terrorist and guerrilla tactics, if not large scale warfare? If ethnic violence is indeed episodic, what prompts its reemergence? These questions and the factors that lead groups to make the fateful decision to employ violent means are central to understanding what prompts violence and what solutions, if any, will solve the underlying causes of conflict that fuel such bitterly violent struggles. The ubiquity of the phenomenon and the threat it presents to international peace and stability prompt closer examination of its causes.

Explaining the Postwar Resurgence of Ethnicity

Despite the increased incidence of ethnic conflict in the post-World War II period, the heightened salience of ethnicity was in large measure ignored or dismissed as an epiphenomenon of underlying conflicts until recently. Ethnic identities were viewed to be remnants of a traditionalism destined to disappear with the onset of modernization. Those ethnic identities that had managed to survive modernization were dismissed as “nostalgic vestiges of an earlier...stage of historical development.”¹⁰ Ethnic conflict was simply a manifestation of traditionalism, modernization, or class conflict “masquerading in the guise of ethnic identity.”¹¹ According to Joseph Rothschild, this “prolonged myopia” on the part of scholars meant that while approximately half the world’s states were plagued by ethnic strife, there continued to be an absence of theoretical literature upon which to draw.¹²

The failure to acknowledge, let alone explain, the increased incidence of politicized ethnicity and ethnic conflict until recently can be attributed, in part, to the episodic nature of ethnic conflict itself and the bipolar international system. Scholars that noted a decline in

¹⁰Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 12.

¹¹Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 13.

¹²Rothschild, 20.

ethnic based tensions since the end of the First World War I mistakenly concluded that such traditional identities had been supplanted when in fact ethnic tensions had only temporarily subsided. In addition, the strict bipolarity that characterized the Cold War international system prevented many of the regional conflicts that have exploded since 1989 from becoming violent, leading many scholars to conclude that ethnic-based violence had disappeared.

The primary reason for the failure to acknowledge the heightened salience of ethnicity and ethnic conflict is the misplaced optimism of both Liberalism and Marxism, which postulate that ethnic identities will be replaced. Liberalism predicts that progress will inevitably break down barriers based on parochial, ascriptive allegiances. Capitalism and economic prosperity will create “free societies with a level of political development measured by loyalty to the state rather than to the narrower ethnic group.”¹³ Underlying this expectancy of progress is an emphasis on the individual rather than the group as the primary social unit of value. Because of this individualist bias, Liberalism overlooks intrinsic aspects of ethnic politics, namely collective loyalties and demands for group rights.

The modernization variant of Liberalism similarly postulates that ascriptive loyalties lose their social function, ethnic identities and other ascriptive loyalties will be supplanted by voluntary group associations based on occupational and other “rational” interests. The educated, modern middle class will lead societies on the path to more rational, occupational group identities and away from the anachronistic and ascriptive loyalties of the past. Ethnic ties simply become relics of outmoded traditionalism, serving only as stubborn impediments to modernization.

As it became clear that ethnic identities were not being replaced by more “rational” occupational identities, however, another variant of modernization theory argued that ethnic conflict was not so much a relic of outmoded traditionalism but an integral part, if not a

¹³William A. Stofft and Gary L. Guertner, “Ethnic Conflict: The Perils of Military Intervention,” *Parameters* 25 (Spring 1995): 30.

product, of the process of modernization itself. In this variant, ethnic identities were not “an outmoded vestige,” but part and parcel of the very process of becoming modern.¹⁴ Since the benefits of modernity were not equally spread among ethnic groups, newly emerging social classes would overlap and reinforce ethnic group boundaries, making ethnic group confrontations more intense. The modern middle class, rather than leading the rest of society away from traditional ethnic loyalties, would invoke ethnic support to further its own interests.

With its focus on class rather than ethnic group as the primary social unit and basis for collective action, Marxism too overlooks ethnic group politics. While the individualist bias of Liberalism ignores group interests, the class bias in Marxist theory ensures that ethnic tensions are viewed as a mask for underlying class conflict. Ethnic conflict is considered to be artificial. It serves only to mask class interests and to divert the working class from its true enemy, the ruling class.¹⁵ Marxism thus ignores the many symbolic issues of ethnic politics, viewing them instead as manifestations of deeper underlying class and economic tensions. In addition, Marxism’s materialist bias fosters a tendency to “think of all issues as ‘bread and butter issues’” and to “neglect many issues of ethnic politics which relate to prestige, dignity, group worth, and collective ties to the land and which cannot be reduced to material issues.”¹⁶ As a result, among Marxist theorists “it was broadly held that a highly effective power apparatus and the indoctrination of the masses in Marxist-Leninist ideology had made the issue of ethnonationalism either superfluous or anachronistic.... Scholars accepted the official position of Marxist-Leninist governments that the application of Leninist national policy had solved ‘the national question.’”¹⁷

The last century, and especially the period following World War II, has witnessed the expansion and proliferation of ethnic-based political action, not only in Third World

¹⁴Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 100.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁶Horowitz, “Soviet Ethnic Problems,” 13.

¹⁷Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994)68.

“modernizing societies,” but also in Western Europe and North America, which have experienced modernization for more than a century.¹⁸ In fact, the “seeds sown after World War I are again beginning to produce a bumper harvest of hostility.”¹⁹ This upsurge of ethnic sentiment in the West cannot be explained solely in terms of a fading traditionalism that the West has outgrown.²⁰ Clearly rational and occupational groups have not supplanted “outmoded” and “backward” ascriptive affinities. The explosion of ethnic politics, particularly in the West, shows that universalistic achievement criteria have not replaced ethnic loyalties as the primary basis for collective action, even in modern Western societies.

Scholars thus failed to account for the explosion of ethnic politics in Third World modernizing societies, “its stubborn persistence below the surface of state repression in the Leninist polities of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and especially its unexpected reappearance during the 1960s in Western Europe and North America.”²¹ Explanations that attributed the resurgence in the West to an outmoded traditionalism did not address why some of the most modern states were experiencing heightened ethnic tensions. Similarly, approaches that attributed ethnic conflict in modernizing societies to the middle class’ efforts to mobilize the masses were equally incapable of explaining ethnic violence. While the middle class certainly plays an important role in ethnic group mobilization, middle class interests do not adequately explain why non-elites, “whose stakes in the benefits being distributed are often tenuous at best,”²² should follow. Finally there was no “convincing way to explain why so much ethnic conflict (and so much ethnic conflict that has gone as far as civil war) has occurred in some of the least modernized areas of the world.”²³

¹⁸Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 17-18.

¹⁹Donald L. Horowitz, “A Harvest of Hostility: Ethnic Conflict and Self-Determination After the Cold War,” *Defense Intelligence Journal* 1 (1992): 160.

²⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 97

²¹Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 17-18.

²²Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 102.

²³*Ibid.*, 102-103.

The strength of ethnic affiliations has made it “impossible to regard ethnic conflict as an anachronism on the verge of disappearance.”²⁴ In fact, “the politicization of ethnicity stresses, ideologizes, reifies, modifies, and sometimes virtually recreates the putatively distinctive and unique cultural heritages of the ethnic groups that it mobilizes—precisely at the historical moment when these groups are being thoroughly penetrated by the universal culture of science and technology.”²⁵ Today, “the technological and economic integration of modern international society...coexists with national struggle of the most primitive kind.”²⁶ In contrast to the Liberalist assumption, the politicization of ethnicity has transformed individual demands into group demands for power and prestige. While the increased salience of ethnic group politicization does not mean that other orientations have been neutralized, it does mean that the “ethnic dimension has become increasingly salient in an increasing number of political conflict situations in modern and transitional societies.”²⁷ In fact, “the tilt of this (im)balance toward politicized ethnicity has increased with the increasing pace of modernization and increasing levels of modernity in different countries.”²⁸ Marxist claims to the contrary, “it refuses to be dissolved into another dimension, such as class, and demands to be faced on its own political plane.”²⁹ Despite the optimism of Liberalists and Marxists alike, ethnic identities remain “powerful, permeative, passionate, and pervasive.”³⁰

Competing Terms and Concepts

In order to address the recent explosion of ethnic conflict and particularly ethnic violence, it is necessary first to address the confusing array of competing terms and approaches which have been used, often interchangeably, in efforts to address and explain

²⁴Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 97.

²⁵Rothschild, 3.

²⁶William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Furies of Nationalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 30.

²⁷Rothschild, 8.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

³⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 12.

the resurgence of ethnicity in the post-war and particularly the post-Cold War era. The confusion begins with disagreements among scholars over the very meaning of the words 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' and extends to an assortment of competing concepts for describing ethnic group interaction.

There are innumerable definitions for the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity,' and there is as yet no agreement in the literature on an acceptable definition for either term. In fact, some scholars, such as Louis Snyder, advocate abandoning the term 'ethnicity' altogether and using the term 'race' in place of 'ethnic.'³¹ The confusion stems from the manner in which the terms entered the English vernacular and the way their usage evolved after the mid-nineteenth century. It is thus useful to look briefly at the etymology of both words.

The terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' are derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, which in its early Greek usage is comparable to the current meaning for the word 'tribe,' a term describing "all political units that are not of the familiar nation and nation-state kind."³² It existed along with *genos*, a term used by Greeks for themselves. In New Testament Greek, *ethnos* was used to mean "non-Christian and non-Jewish," and the adjective *ethnikos* was synonymous with *barbaros*. A number of terms related to *ethnos*, including *genos* (Gr), *gens* and *genus* (L), *populus* (L), *tribus* (L), *natio* (L), *polis* (Gr), *barbaros* (Gr), *civis* and *civitas* (L) became the basis in modern romance languages and in English for "a rich and complex moral vocabulary, laid out along dimensions of inclusion and exclusion, dignity and disdain, familiarity and strangeness."³³

The immediate successor to these terms related to *ethnos* was not 'ethnic,' but 'gentile,' which was rendered as *gentilis* in the Vulgate version of the Bible.³⁴ After the Reformation, the term appeared in the English translation of the Bible as 'gentile.' 'Ethnic'

³¹ See Louis L. Snyder, "Nationalism and the Flawed Concept of Ethnicity," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 10 (Fall 1983): 253-265.

³² Malcolm Chapman, Maryon McDonald, and Elizabeth Tonkin, "Introduction," in *History and Ethnicity*, Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman, eds. (London: Routledge, 1989), 12. See also Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a..." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (October 1978): 377-400.

³³ Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin, "Introduction," 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

continued to be used in its Greek New Testament meaning as “an unusual intellectual synonym for ‘gentile,’ denoting ‘pagan’ or ‘non-Christian’” until the mid-nineteenth century.³⁵ At this point, scholarship began to employ the term *ethnos* to mean something approximating “a group of people of shared characteristics” and a variety of compound terms became common in academic discourse. These terms include ethnology, ethnography, ethnocentric, and ethnic and ethnicity, each of which related to the idea of race. *Ethnos* itself was not needed since it would have been no more than a redundant synonym for ‘race.’³⁶ Here we arrive at one problem underlying the disagreement over the meaning of the terms: there is no concrete noun like *ethnos*, or the French *ethnie*, in the English language.

A second source of confusion is the evolution of the usage of the term ‘race,’ which was originally synonymous for *ethnos*. In the nineteenth century, ‘race’ was not primarily concerned with biology, as it is today, but was used to express a number of commonalities. In fact, in many uses it could have been substituted by ‘nation,’ ‘society,’ ‘culture,’ ‘language,’ or ‘tribe.’³⁷ “The use of race as an acceptable substitute for nation conveyed the notion that each nation was homogeneous and therefore complete in itself.”³⁸ In the study of ethnicity and ethnic identity today, ‘race’ remains “the joker in the pack...studiously avoided by the academic proponents of ethnicity,”³⁹ a result of the revulsion over the racist doctrines that emerged in Europe in the 1930’s and 1940’s. In the post World War II period, “ethnic” emerged in its modern sense to describe something that “was very like ‘race’ without the biology,”⁴⁰ and the abstract noun ‘ethnicity,’ first used in 1953, denoted ‘what you have when you are an ethnic group.’⁴¹

³⁵Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin, “Introduction,” 14.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 215.

³⁹Robert Just, “Triumph of the Ethnos,” in *History and Ethnicity*, Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman, eds. (London: Routledge, 1989), 76.

⁴⁰Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin, “Introduction,” 14.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 15.

A third issue of confusion is that the original meaning for 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' referred to a basic human category and not a subgroup. Subsequently, American sociologists began to employ 'ethnic group' to refer "to a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a subgroup of a larger society"⁴² thereby making ethnic group synonymous with 'minority.' In the traditional sense of the meaning, an ethnic group was not restricted to a subordinate part of a larger political society but could in fact have been the dominant element of that society.⁴³ Furthermore, groups defined in the original manner could then also extend across several states, as in fact most ethnic groups do. For the purposes of this paper, 'ethnic group' will not be restricted to minority groups, but will include both dominant and subordinate groups, groups within single states, and groups spread across regions.

The lack of a concrete noun, the debate surrounding the term 'race,' and the tendency to equate 'ethnic group' with 'minority group' means that the definitions continue to vary significantly. In place of the abstract terms in English, Anthony Smith has chosen to use the French term *ethnie*, which he defines as "a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories and cultural elements, a link with an historic territory or homeland and a measure of solidarity."⁴⁴ Alternatively, ethnicity has been defined as "a plastic, variegated, and originally ascriptive trait that, in certain historical and socioeconomic circumstances, is readily politicized."⁴⁵ For Walker Connor, ethnicity is "identity with one's ethnic group,"⁴⁶ and for Brass, "ethnicity is [simply] a sense of ethnic identity."⁴⁷ Most definitions share the following elements, differing only in the degree to which primordial or instrumentalist assumptions are emphasized: a myth of common

⁴²George Theodorson and Achilles Theodorson, *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology* (New York: Thomas Crowell and Co., 1969), 135. Quoted in Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (October 1978): 386.

⁴³Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...," 386.

⁴⁴Anthony D. Smith, "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism,' *Survival* 35 (Spring 1993): 49.

⁴⁵Rothschild, 1.

⁴⁶Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...," 386.

⁴⁷Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 19.

descent, shared memories, and ascriptive traits and characteristics which constitute an ethnic group's identity and serve as a basis for group politicization and mobilization.

The confusion over terminology also extends to the appropriate term to describe conflict among and between competing ethnic groups. Within the Security Studies field, the predominant term for such competition is 'ethnic conflict,' and it is this term which will be used throughout the study below. The term 'ethnic conflict' is a broad one. It has been used extensively in the literature to explain a wide range of interaction among and between ethnic groups, from non-violent forms of interethnic bargaining and competition to violent ethnic warfare and even ethnic cleansing. Because the purpose of this paper is to address specifically the question of ethnic *violence*, it is necessary to distinguish the violent from the non-violent forms of group interaction. The terms 'interethnic warfare' and 'ethnic violence' will thus be used interchangeably when it is necessary to distinguish ethnic violence from ethnic conflict.

Although 'ethnic conflict' is used extensively within the Security Studies field, it has been rejected by some scholars for its instrumentalist bias and its failure to acknowledge that much ethnic conflict is driven by nationalist, rather than specifically ethnic, aspirations. 'Ethnic conflict,' as it is used in this study, could thus alternatively be termed 'armed national resistance' or 'collective violence,' and the ethnic groups involved could alternatively be viewed as 'incipient nations' or simply 'nationalists.' Furthermore, studies that focus on ethnic conflict have been criticized for not paying sufficient attention to the fact that much conflict between ethnic groups is really conflict between an ethnic group and the state. By divorcing the study of ethnicity from nationalism, scholars fail to pay sufficient attention to the nationalist aspirations of such groups or to categorize such conflicts for what they really are, namely nations against states.

The confusion over terminology stems from the fact that the study of ethnic nationalism and ethnic violence is subject to a host of intangibles that do not lend themselves to objective, rational analyses. Not everything about ethnic violence can be

understood. The term 'ethnic conflict' is often employed by those who view such conflict from the outside. For the participants, both the perpetrators and victims of violence, such struggles are often "national" struggles and the group is a "nation." An example of this distinction can be seen in the case of the Kurds, who are referred to in this study as an ethnic group involved in a violent interethnic war against the Arab rulers of Baghdad, but who might also be viewed as an incipient nation involved in a decades-long struggle of national resistance for independence from Iraq. Similarly, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, described below as a violent ethnic war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, could also be viewed as a struggle of nations against states, a struggle of the Armenian nation first against the Soviet Union and subsequently against the newly independent Azerbaijani state. As is clear in the case of the Kurds and the Armenians, and even more importantly in the case of the various national groups that were part of the former Yugoslavia, the study of ethnicity and ethnic conflict cannot be wholly divorced from the study of nationalism.

The choice of terminology, whether a group is an ethnic group or an 'incipient nation' and whether the conflict in which it is involved is an ethnic conflict or a struggle for national recognition, is closely linked to group legitimacy, which is discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. In short, to be an incipient nation or a nationalist and to be engaged in a struggle of national resistance lends greater legitimacy to the group and its aims and also serves to justify the actions such groups take. Indeed, the Serbs have justified the extensive ethnic cleansing that took place in Yugoslavia in precisely such terms. The Serbs are a 'nation' seeking to regain their rightful place in Yugoslavia, a goal which requires cleansing Serbian territory of ethnic strangers. Although such claims may be met with skepticism, one should not discount the very real belief held by members of an ethnic group that they are a distinct people, a nation deserving a state or territory of their own.

While ethnic conflict can be interpreted in different ways, the literature is so permeated with the language of ethnicity and violence that this study will employ the terms 'ethnic group' and 'ethnic conflict' in order not to question existing terminology but in an effort to add to it. The attempt to understand what triggers ethnic groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence, the subject of the subsequent three chapters and the purpose of the comparative case study approach adopted for this study, will not ignore the important role nationalism plays in the outbreak of interethnic violence nor the very real aspirations of the groups involved, many of whom have sought some form of independence for decades, if not centuries. Furthermore, 'ethnic conflict' is often not just a conflict among and between ethnic groups, but, as the case studies will demonstrate, conflict between ethnic groups and the state for ownership of that state. As a result, an entire chapter will be devoted to the critical role of the state, the arena of ethnic conflict. Ethnic violence is clearly related to the question of nationalism, and no attempt to describe what factors prompt groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence will be adequate or complete without a careful assessment of a group's national aspirations.

The Rediscovery of Ethnicity

Until the recent explosion of ethnic violence, most studies of ethnic conflict were studies of such conflict in a particular region. Donald Horowitz, the author of one of the most comprehensive works on ethnic group politics and one of the few exceptions to this lack of comprehensive study, noted that "the recent rediscovery of ethnicity" has led to "a plethora of more or less parochial material on ethnic conflict in scores of countries." What has not yet emerged, he notes, is "a comprehensive set of generalizations that fits the material and into which new material can be fitted."⁴⁸ In addition, "none treats the intensity and violent character of ethnic conflict as specially worthy of explanation."⁴⁹ Recent

⁴⁸Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 305.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 140.

publications, including Horowitz's *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, have greatly added to our understanding of ethnic conflict. What the literature continues to lack, however, is a comprehensive explanation of ethnic *violence*.

Much of our understanding of the sources of ethnic violence is based on conceptual frameworks and typologies of ethnic groups or multiethnic states which focus primarily on the process whereby ethnicity becomes politicized and deal with the issue of ethnic violence only as a corollary of the broader process of group mobilization and political interaction. The literature that has emerged following this "recent rediscovery of ethnicity" relies in large measure on classifications of multiethnic states, typologies of ethnic groups, and conceptual frameworks for understanding "the causes, options, and consequences of bringing ethnicity into the political arena."⁵⁰ Each of these can be placed within a broader discussion of the strength of ethnic identities, whether such identities are thought to be "primordial" or "instrumental."

Primordial explanations view ethnic conflict as a function of a group's biological, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity. These identities are innate and unchanging and are acquired at birth. They are natural, "primordial givens" which a group acquires through descent. For some primordialists, historic antipathies and ancient hatreds are the source of ethnic violence and the primary explanation for its frequent resurgence. For primordialists, ethnic sentiment itself is the main cause of violent conflict.

Instrumentalist explanations view ethnic conflict as a rational choice motivated by cost-benefit analyses of a group's environment and its opportunities for action. Ethnicity is viewed as a social construct, the creation of elites, and "a weapon in social competition."⁵¹ It is thus political, contingent, situational and circumstantial. For the instrumentalist, ethnic violence flows entirely from calculated choice as formulated and promoted by ethnic leadership.

⁵⁰Rothschild, 1.

⁵¹M. Crawford Young, "The National and Colonial Question and Marxism: A View From the South," in *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR*, Alexander J. Motyl, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 72.

Neither the primordialist nor the instrumentalist approach fully explains the numerous and interrelated sources of ethnic violence. This binary opposition of the primordialist and instrumentalist approaches creates two extremes for understanding ethnic violence either that fail to recognize that violence is adopted by choice and that ethnic leadership plays a crucial role in the outbreak of violence, or that wholly ignore the emotional content of ethnic mobilization and suggest that conflict is an entirely objective phenomenon subject to rational analysis. Indeed, the “instrumentalist interpretation founders badly when seeking to account for the propensity for violence by certain factions within ethnonationalist movements.”⁵² Understanding the outbreak of violence requires both an understanding of the enduring quality of ethnic identity and the deeply emotive aspects of ethnicity, and a recognition of the fact that violence is a calculated choice that flows from a group’s environment and its opportunities for mobilization and collective action.

Two of the most comprehensive and valuable studies on ethnic conflict are Ted Robert Gurr’s *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, which adopts an instrumentalist view of ethnic conflict, and Horowitz’s *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, which supports the primordialist argument. Both studies are extensive in their coverage of groups geographically and in their comparative and systematic exploration of the politics of ethnic group conflict. Both Gurr and Horowitz note the lack of comprehensive explanations for what is a growing, “world-wide,” and “recurrent phenomenon.”⁵³ Gurr argues that no study prior to his Minorities at Risk Project is “based on the analysis of information and coded data for *all*...politically significant communal groups.”⁵⁴ Horowitz, who focuses on

⁵²William A. Douglass, “A Critique of Recent Trends in the Analysis of Ethnonationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11 (April 1988):197.

⁵³Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 3-4.

⁵⁴Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), x.

ethnic groups in Asia, Africa, Southwest Asia, and the Caribbean, argues that while “we do not lack basic data...we lack explanations...that will hold cross culturally.”⁵⁵

Gurr employs a typology of communal groups divided into subcategories according to group goals. He identifies two major groupings of ethnic peoples: “national peoples” and “minority peoples.” National peoples are “regionally concentrated groups that have lost their autonomy” but maintain a degree of “their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and want to protect or reestablish some degree of politically separate existence,” whereas minority peoples “have a defined socioeconomic or political status” which they seek to protect or improve.⁵⁶ This distinction is founded upon group goals: national peoples seek separatism or autonomy while minority peoples seek greater access or control.

National peoples can be further subdivided into two groups, “ethnonationalists” and “indigenous peoples.” Ethnonationalists are defined as “relatively large, regionally concentrated peoples who were historically autonomous and who have pursued separatist objectives at some time in the last fifty years.” Indigenous peoples are also “fundamentally concerned about group autonomy,” but can be distinguished from ethnonationalists by the fact that they are “more sharply distinct from the centers...of authority.” Typically indigenous peoples live in peripheral areas, are preindustrial, and until quite recently, have lacked modern political organizations, strong group identity, and common group purpose.⁵⁷ Both ethnonationalists and indigenous peoples aim at “exit” over “voice” and “loyalty.”⁵⁸

These communal groups have a choice of three different strategies for political action: nonviolent protest, violent protest, and rebellion. Whereas non-violent protest occurs in sporadic and unplanned ways, often in reaction to the activities of the police or military, rebellion involves concerted campaigns and armed attacks, ranging from political

⁵⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, xi.

⁵⁶Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 15.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 115.

banditry and terrorism to all-out warfare.⁵⁹ Drawing upon the empirical data collected from the study, Gurr concludes that “national peoples,” and in particular “ethnonationalists,” are most prone to “persistent communal rebellions.”⁶⁰ In fact, ethnonationalist rebellions, which experienced a fivefold increase between 1950-1980⁶¹ are “the most protracted and deadly conflicts of the late twentieth century.”⁶²

On the basis of this typology, one would conclude that ethnonationalist rebellions are a function of ethnonationalist goals. While the study does establish a link between ethnonationalism and violence, it fails to answer why national peoples, and particularly ethnonationalists, adopt a strategy of violent interethnic warfare. What prompts ethnonational groups to opt for rebellion over violent and nonviolent protest? Certainly group goals are an important element, but they alone cannot answer the question of means.

Using the empirical results of this study, Gurr develops “a general theory of ethnopolitical action that is applicable to a wide spectrum of groups.” This “process model of ethnic and communal mobilization,” as he later terms it, introduces a series of propositions that explain ethnopolitical “activism” as a consequence of the strength of a group’s identity, its deep-seated grievances about its collective status, the extent of its collective disadvantage, its potential for mobilization, and the scope and strength of its organizational networks.⁶³

None of these propositions directly explains the incidence of violence nor the factors prompting the choice of rebellion over nonviolent protest. Even Gurr’s discussion of factors that “influence the making of communal decisions”⁶⁴ fails to deal specifically with the issue of violence or “rebellion.” In conclusion, Gurr remarks that the actual processes by which a group’s grievances and its potential for mobilization are translated

⁵⁹Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 93.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 318.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 115.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 319.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 124-129

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 130.

into protest and rebellion “are too complex and contextually specific to be summarized in general propositions.”⁶⁵

Neither the process model of ethnic and communal mobilization nor the factors that influence communal decisions explains why groups adopt rebellion over nonviolent protest. In fact, Gurr’s earlier conclusions regarding the link between ethnonationalism and violence are contradicted by the general ethnopolitical theory which provides the framework for the process model. Each of the propositions that make up the general theory of ethnopolitical action are limited to “disadvantaged communal groups,”⁶⁶ despite the fact that much ethnic conflict is waged by advantaged communal groups, including ethnonationalists who “seem to want out of the system that rules over them more to protect their relative prosperity or categorical advantages” than to protect their collective identity.⁶⁷

The failure to include ethnonationalists severely limits the explanatory power of Gurr’s general theory on ethnopolitical action. Although Gurr notes that the theory is “potentially applicable to advantaged minorities,” the caveat that it is applicable only when such minorities “are threatened by the loss of their advantages”⁶⁸ serves to exclude ethnonationalists by definition. According to Gurr’s earlier discussion of national peoples, ethnonationalists are precisely separatist, and thus most prone to violence, because they seek the realization of their goals, autonomy or secession. Consequently, according to Gurr’s earlier discussion, ethnonationalists are not rebelling because their advantages are about to be lost, since many lost those advantages centuries ago,⁶⁹ but because they seek to regain them. Without Gurr’s process model of ethnic and communal mobilization, we are left with his typology of communal peoples which conclusively demonstrates that ethnonationalist groups are the most violent communal competitors and which seems to conclude that violence is a function of group goals without addressing the issue of means.

⁶⁵Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 129.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 133.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 193.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 124.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 20.

Gurr's comprehensive study of communal groups thus fails to provide a definitive answer to the questions regarding ethnic violence.

A second, comprehensive source for understanding ethnic violence similarly employs a typology to explore the logic and structure of ethnic conflict in divided societies and measures to abate it. Horowitz assumes that "ethnic conflict embodies regularities and recurrent patterns that are, in principle, discoverable" and that ethnicity is a force that is "community-building in moderation, community-destroying in excess."⁷⁰ Employing a primordial view of ethnic identities and ethnic violence, Horowitz notes that it is "fruitless and undesirable to attempt to abolish ethnic affiliations, but not at all fruitless to attempt to limit their impact."⁷¹ To do so, however, requires an understanding of the structure of group relations.

To explain the structure of group relations, Horowitz develops a classification of ranked and unranked ethnic groups, a distinction which "rests upon the coincidence or noncoincidence of social class with ethnic origins."⁷² Where class and ethnic origins coincide, ethnic groups can be said to be ranked, with one group subordinate and the other superordinate. Where groups are "cross-class," they are said to be parallel or unranked. The distinction between ranked and unranked systems flows from their different origins: ranked systems are produced by conquest or capture, whereas unranked systems are produced "by invasion resulting in less than conquest, by more or less voluntary migration, or by encapsulation within a single territorial unit of groups that formerly had little to do with each other."⁷³ Unranked systems thus function like incipient whole societies.

Horowitz concludes that "ranked and unranked systems are susceptible to different forms of ethnic conflict." Ranked and unranked systems, however, do not differ in the degree to which they are susceptible to serious conflict and violence. Their differences stem

⁷⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, xiii.

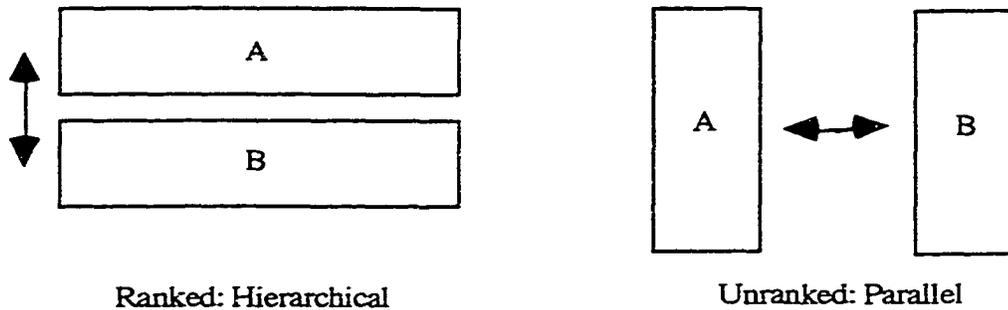
⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 22.

⁷³Ibid., 29.

from the goals for which violence is adopted. In ranked systems, ethnic conflict has “a

Ranked and Unranked Systems⁷⁴



class coloration” and violence is aimed at social revolution.⁷⁵ In unranked systems, however, ethnic conflict resembles conflict in the international system.⁷⁶ “When ethnic violence occurs, unranked ethnic groups usually aim not at social transformation, but at something approaching sovereign autonomy, the exclusion of parallel ethnic groups from a share of power, and often reversion—by expulsion or extermination—to an idealized, ethnically homogeneous *status quo ante*.”⁷⁷ The structure of relations between ethnic groups, whether they are ranked or unranked and “how they are distributed in relation to territory and state institutions,” thus provides a framework for understanding both why ethnic conflict occurs and the direction in which it occurs. “If ethnic groups are ordered in a hierarchy, with one superordinate and another subordinate, ethnic conflict moves in one direction, but if groups are parallel, neither subordinate to the other, conflict takes a different course.”⁷⁸

Gurr’s argument that ethnonationalists are most prone to violence due to their goals is similar to Horowitz’s argument that unranked systems experience violence due to

⁷⁴ see figure 1, Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 29.

⁷⁵ Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 30-31.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

unranked groups' goals. In fact, Gurr's "communal contenders" are similar to Horowitz's "unranked groups."⁷⁹ Thus, Gurr's ethnonationalists can also be defined as unranked groups, although Horowitz's category is a broader one, including both geographically intermixed and regionally discrete groups. The goals for which violence is adopted for both groupings are also similar. For Gurr, a desire for autonomy prompts sustained rebellion among ethnonationalist groups. For Horowitz, unranked groups employ violence for "something approaching sovereign autonomy," including the expulsion of ethnic strangers and the return to a putatively historic ethnic homogeneity.

Both typologies thus establish a link between group goals and violence. For Horowitz, however, "the sources of ethnic conflict...cannot be understood without...an explanation that takes into account the emotional concomitants of group traits and group interactions."⁸⁰ In order to deal with the symbolic issues in ethnic conflict and "the important role of ethnic group anxiety and apprehension,"⁸¹ Horowitz employs a framework of advanced and backward groups and advanced and backward regions which becomes the basis for his theory of group entitlement. Horowitz thus takes the question of violence a step further.

According to Horowitz, the theory of group entitlement has predictive power. "Merely to know the position of a group in terms of worth and legitimacy is probably to be able to forecast what political claims it makes, what idiom it speaks in, what issues divide it from others, what counterclaims the others make, and generally how each will behave in and out of power."⁸² Advanced groups in advanced and backward regions are thus less likely secessionists than backward groups, who are among the "most frequent and precocious secessionists."⁸³ In fact, "backward groups are more frequent initiators of

⁷⁹Ted Robert Gurr, "The Internationalization of Protracted Communal Conflicts Since 1945: Which Groups, Where, and How" in *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, Manus I. Midlarsky, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 21n8.

⁸⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 182.

⁸¹Ibid. 140.

⁸²Ibid., 228.

⁸³Ibid., 259.

ethnic violence and advanced groups more frequent victims.”⁸⁴ Thus, it is the “interplay of

Theory of Group Entitlement⁸⁵

Group & Region	Political Claims	Precipitants	Calculations	Timing; Relative Frequency
Backward Group in Backward Region	Proportionality in civil service, occasionally also in revenues	Denial of proportionality in civil service; symbolic issues such as language and religion; influx of advanced settlers	Secede despite economic costs	Early; Frequent
Advanced Group in Backward Region	Non-discrimination; no revenue issue	Severe discrimination; repeated violence, migration back to home region	Secede only if economic costs are low	Late; Somewhat Frequent
Advanced Group in Advanced Region	Non-discrimination; spend revenue where generated	Severe discrimination; violence and migration back to home region if population exporter	Secede only if economic costs are low	Late; Rare
Backward Group in Advanced Region	Proportionality in civil service; spend revenue where generated	Denial of proportionality; political claims made by immigrant strangers in the region	Secede regardless of economic benefits or costs	Early; Rare

relative group position and relative regional position [that] determines the emergence of separatism.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 166.

⁸⁵Table 3, “The Disposition to Secede” in Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 258.

⁸⁶Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 235.

Gurr and Horowitz's emphasis on group goals fails to answer what prompts ethnonationalists and unranked groups to adopt violence over other, nonviolent forms of interethnic bargaining to secure group aims. Certainly group goals are an important element, but they alone cannot answer the question of means. Horowitz's theory of group entitlement, however, does bring us closer to understanding the sources of violence in ethnic conflict. Although he does not specifically address the issue of violence *per se*, paying more attention to secession, his discussion of the tendency of certain groups to be separatist and whether such groups will act upon their grievances is illustrative of some of the factors that motivate groups to adopt violent measures. We will return to the details of this theory in subsequent chapters as we examine the sources of ethnic violence in greater detail.

In addition to the two major studies undertaken by Gurr and Horowitz, a third, less recent study that is of interest for understanding the relationship between ethnicity and violence is *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* by Joseph Rothschild. As one of the first to look at the politicization of ethnicity as an independent phenomenon, Rothschild develops a number of typologies comprising a conceptual framework that focus "on the political dimension and the political-structural problematics of ethnicity."⁸⁷ None of these typologies deals directly with the sources of violence in ethnic conflict. The focus of Rothschild's work is more on the process whereby ethnic groups become mobilized and politicized and the crucial role political entrepreneurs and group leadership play in this process than on the sources of violence. From this discussion, however, some observations relevant to ethnic violence should be examined.

Rothschild begins by describing the politicization of ethnicity as a "dialectical process that preserves ethnic groups by emphasizing their singularity and...by transforming them into political conflict groups for the modern political arena."⁸⁸ This

⁸⁷Rothschild, 303.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

process by which an ethnic group moves from an “aggregation of sharers of primordial markers” through mobilization and on to politicization is “extremely difficult to reverse.” Once politicized, “an ethnic group is unlikely thereafter to be satisfied with economic concessions alone.” Indeed, Rothschild notes, “once corporate demands have been put on the political agenda, the upward mobility of individual members no longer suffices.”⁸⁹ Not every group takes this process to “the highest level of militancy,” notes Rothschild. Whether or not “the highest level of militancy,” or violence, is reached, depends upon “the groups’ members’ and leaders’ perception of the states’ social and political system as a whole—its nature, flexibility, and resilience; the benevolence and strength (or the reverse) of its authorities; and the possibilities and necessities of coalition politics.”⁹⁰ Thus, for Rothschild, the structure of the polity in which the ethnic group finds itself and the group’s perception of this structure determine whether it becomes militant.

Modern societies are characterized by several overlapping patterns of stratification and cleavage. For Rothschild, ethnic stratification manifests certain unique operational and theoretical issues that are slighted, blurred, or distorted by attempts to fold it into analyses of other types of stratification, particularly the class approach which denies any intrinsic significance to ethnicity and ethnic differences in the structure of social relationships.⁹¹ To understand the importance of ethnicity in multiethnic states, Rothschild employs a multidimensional model of ethnic stratification. States may stratify their ethnic groups according to three models: vertical hierarchy, parallel segmentation, and cross-patterned reticulation.⁹²

The vertical hierarchy model is the “only one where there is a categorical correspondence among all dimensions—political, social, economic, and cultural—of ethnic superordination and subordination.”⁹³ Like Horowitz’s ranked system, one group is

⁸⁹Rothschild, 28.

⁹⁰Ibid., 29.

⁹¹Ibid., 67-68.

⁹²Ibid., 80.

⁹³Ibid.

consigned and confined to the poorer and disparaged rungs and roles of society while the other group monopolizes all positions of wealth and power. Similarly, this model is maintained through structural and, if necessary, coercive sanctions in the same manner that an unranked system is retained. When this model begins to disintegrate, Rothschild notes that it is “difficult to halt short of collapse and revolutionary upheaval because the system has neither normative procedures of gradual change nor ethnic institutional solidarities. In fact, the “past compounding of cleavage lines...now also compound[s] the intensity of the convulsion.”⁹⁴ One could thus conclude that Rothschild, like Horowitz, foresees that violence in this model would take the form of social revolution.

The second model employed by Rothschild is the “parallel ethnic segmentation model.” In this model, each ethnic community is internally stratified, has its own political elite, and relates to other communities “in a manner comparable to an interstate system.”⁹⁵ This second model could also be termed an unranked system since the two groups function as incipient whole societies. However, Rothschild makes no mention of the potential for violence based on this particular form of ethnic stratification, whereas Horowitz argues that such systems tend to aim at the expulsion of ethnic strangers and autonomy, if not secession.

The third model of ethnic stratification is the “reticulate model” in which ethnic groups and social classes “cross populate each other—but the distribution is not random or symmetrical or egalitarian.” Each economic class and sector thus “organically incorporates members of several ethnic categories.”⁹⁶ In this model, members of each group compete intensely for certain rewards they value highly. Value-sharing, however, “is not necessarily conducive to harmony, nor is mutual isolation necessarily prone to conflict.”⁹⁷ When the system violates its professed norms and individuals suspect that they are targets of

⁹⁴Rothschild, 80.

⁹⁵Ibid., 81.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid., 82.

ascriptive and stereotypical judgments rather than judgments and assignments based on their functional role performances, or when individuals fear “their ethnic group as a collectivity is disproportionately and systematically relegated and confined to the lower and weaker rungs of the socioeconomic and political structures;” or finally, when generally dominant ethnic groups fear their position is in jeopardy, then “ethnicity is likely to become intensely politicized and assertive—reticulate differentiation notwithstanding.”⁹⁸ Thus, as this model shifts from its professed norms, ethnicity is likely to become politicized.

For Rothschild, politicized ethnicity “surfaces and hardens along the most accessible and yielding faultline of potential cleavage available.”⁹⁹ Groups that are “politicized to a highly militant edge” tend to be those that fear for their survival or are being “swamped” on their own ancestral territory. Where groups are conflicting over interethnic division of shares in “normal” politics, however, high levels of group militancy are more difficult to achieve.¹⁰⁰ Two issues, “swamping” and “survival,” thus have the potential to push groups to the highest levels of militant politicization. Whether that high level of politicization is translated into violence, however, must be examined further.

Like Gurr and Horowitz, Rothschild employs typologies of ethnic groups based on group goals. He proposes that “the mythic thrust of a subordinate ethnic group’s freshly assertive cultural historical consciousness may be directly correlated to its particular political plight.” A group threatened with fragmentation, either within or between two states, has an “incentive to emphasize the historic unity of its culture and to claim collective kinship descent from a putatively common ancestry,” while a group exposed to “unwelcome assimilation pressure” has an incentive to stress its “ethnocultural distinctiveness and...to try to revitalize its historic language.” Finally, autochthonous groups that once enjoyed statehood, a category that is similar to Gurr’s ethnonationalists, or groups that retain vivid memories of distinctive political institutions, are “more

⁹⁸Rothschild, 85-86.

⁹⁹Ibid., 96.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 97.

prone...to entertain secessionist or parallel segmental visions of political reconstruction.”¹⁰¹ This typology, however, only refers to the “potential to entertain” certain tactics, without exploring what factors would prompt those groups actually to adopt violent measures. Again, this typology establishes a link between group goals and violence but fails to discuss why violent means are adopted.

In a more recent book on ethnic politics, Milton J. Esman also turns to a typology of ethnic groups to explore the dynamics of ethnic politics. His typology is based on two broad categories, “homelands societies” and “immigrant diasporas.”¹⁰² Homelands societies are minority groups within a multiethnic state who claim long-time occupancy of a particular territory. This “native status” implies that the land “belongs to them” and that they have a “moral right to rule.”¹⁰³ These groups insist on control over their territory and refuse to adjust rules to accommodate immigrant groups, employing both fact and myth to “vindicate disputed claims” to their homeland status. Homeland societies are thus similar to Gurr’s ethnonationalists and Rothschild’s “autochthonous groups that once enjoyed statehood.”

Immigrant diasporas are formed as a result of migrations and can be classified as three types: settlers who subordinate, exterminate, or expel existing inhabitants and take effective possession of the territory by virtue of their numerical, military and technical superiority; bourgeois diasporas who arrive with superior skills but remain politically powerless and are thus vulnerable to scapegoating; and finally, labor diasporas who are the result of large scale migrations from poor, overpopulated, labor surplus countries to labor scarce economies.¹⁰⁴ Although of interest as yet another classificatory system of ethnic groups, Esman’s typology is of little analytical value for understanding what prompts these homelands societies and immigrant diasporas to adopt violent means.

¹⁰¹Rothschild, 127.

¹⁰²Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 6.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 8.

Esman also introduces a dichotomy based on how groups are structured within a system, similar to Horowitz's ranked and unranked groups and systems and Rothschild's three models of ethnic stratification. Esman's "stratificational" and "segmental" categories, which by definition are the same as Horowitz's ranked and unranked categories, respectively, do not bring the discussion of ethnic politics closer to understanding ethnic violence. In fact, Esman, unlike Horowitz and Rothschild, does not even predict whether there is a potential for violence or a tendency to secede as the other two authors have done.

For Esman, who clearly adopts an instrumentalist approach, it is the ethnic "entrepreneurs" who are responsible for precipitating violence. These entrepreneurs mobilize and politicize the ethnic group due to "a genuine concern for their people" as well as "a desire to build a constituency in pursuit of personal political ambitions." They "precipitate conflict by politicizing collective identity, that is, by dramatizing grievances or threats to common interests or by pointing out opportunities to promote and further such interests by organized action."¹⁰⁵ Approaches such as Esman's which place sole responsibility for the outbreak of violence on a group's ethnic leadership are only partial explanations for ethnic violence. Elite ambition is only one, albeit important, factor in understanding the decision to adopt violent means. It cannot explain the outbreak of violence in all cases, and, even in cases where leadership plays an important role, it is not the sole factor. Even this most recent publication has not provided a clear or definitive answer to the relationship between ethnicity and violence nor has it brought the debate any closer to understanding the sources of ethnic violence beyond the contributions made by Gurr, Horowitz, and Rothschild.

A few additional authors are of interest for addressing the question of ethnic violence. Although none has written as extensively or comprehensively on ethnic politics as the four authors reviewed above, their discussion of various factors that may increase the incidence of violence or precipitate violence should be discussed and then examined in

¹⁰⁵Milton J. Esman and Shibley Telhami, "Introduction," in *International Organizations and Ethnic Conflict*, Milton J. Esman and Shibley Telhami, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 10.

greater detail in a more extensive explanation of ethnic violence in subsequent chapters. One such author, M. Crawford Young, who like Esman and Gurr adopts the instrumentalist approach, argues that the critical precipitants of ethnic conflict fall into two major categories: resource distribution and domination.¹⁰⁶ For Young, “distribution and domination are...the fundamental issue matrices conditioning cultural activation, competition, and conflict.”¹⁰⁷

A second author, David Carment, approaches the issue of violence by distinguishing between instrumental and affective motives in elite decision making.¹⁰⁸ For Carment, variations in the levels of violence are “primarily accounted for by the degree of affect and instrumental-laden group behavior and the levels of subsequent mobilization of ethnic groups by elites toward the pursuit of collective goals, ranging from greater access to resources to self-preservation, to the creation of a new state.”¹⁰⁹ When affect is the salient aspect of the conflict, there is an increased potential for violence. Similarly, the “presence of ‘policies of denial’ on the part of at least one group towards the mobilization of another will determine whether an ethnic conflict has the potential for violence.”¹¹⁰ Carment argues that what motivates an ethnic leadership can increase the potential for violence. Both authors thus look to ethnic leadership as an explanation for violence, but neither author addresses the actual sources of ethnic violence.

Another recent article by V.P. Gagnon does address the issue of violence directly.¹¹¹ Gagnon questions whether there is a causal link between ethnic nationalist sentiment and interstate violence and asks, what causes violent conflict along ethnic lines? After examining the Serbian case, Gagnon concludes that the source of violence is “the

¹⁰⁶Young, 76.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 77.

¹⁰⁸David Carment, “The International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict: Concepts, Indicators, and Theory,” *Journal of Peace Research* 30 (1993): 138.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁰Carment, 139.

¹¹¹V.P. Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia,” *International Security* 19 (Winter 1994/95): 130-166.

dynamics of within-group conflict.”¹¹² “Violent conflict along ethnic cleavages is provoked by elites in order to create a domestic political context where ethnicity is the only politically relevant identity.”¹¹³ This strategy of mobilizing the community in terms of a threat defined in ethnic terms is adopted by endangered elites in order to fend off domestic challengers who seek to mobilize the population against the status quo and to position themselves better to deal with future challenges. Gagnon’s conclusion is of interest for understanding the violence in the former Yugoslavia, one of the case studies to be investigated below, but it is unclear whether his conclusion will hold when applied to other incidents of ethnic violence beyond the case of Serbia. Nor is it clear that “within-group conflict” can explain the choice of ethnic violence in all, if not a large number, of cases of ethnic violence.

This emphasis on within-group conflict is given greater explanation in a recent publication entitled *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* by Paul R. Brass. Like Rothschild, Brass argues that ethnicity and nationalism are not givens, but “social and political constructs,” the “creations of elites.”¹¹⁴ Brass explores the circumstances under which cultural differences are converted into bases for political differentiation, arguing that this very process of ethnic identity formation has consequences for the definition of the ethnic group. In fact, he argues, “the cultural norms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage.”¹¹⁵

For Brass, this theory of elite competition explains the basic dynamic which precipitates ethnic conflict.¹¹⁶ As “ethnic and nationalist elites increasingly stress the variety of ways in which the members of the group are similar to each other and collectively different from others,” they may be led into “expansionist military adventures and conflicts

¹¹²Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict, 131.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 132.

¹¹⁴Brass, 8.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 13.

with other states when the drive to achieve congruence involves irredentist claims.”¹¹⁷ Brass thus argues that this process itself, whereby elites select multiple symbols in competition with other elites, can propel ethnic leadership into violent confrontations. Gagnon’s conclusions regarding the Serbian leadership’s role in the outbreak of violence in the former Yugoslavia support Brass’s theory of elite competition. For Brass, it is the actual identity formation process which is created and led by elites that has an impact on whether violence may erupt or not. Brass does not address the issue of violence in any further detail since his efforts are aimed at outlining more precisely the process of nationality formation, which for Brass precedes and possibly precipitates violence.

Anthony Smith is similarly interested in the processes whereby *ethnies* are mobilized by ethnic nationalism and how they are transformed into ethnic nations. Smith identifies three basic processes: vernacular mobilization, cultural politicization of the vernacular heritage, and ethnic purification.¹¹⁸ The logic of these three processes is common to all nationalisms, whether of small, struggling minorities or large, dominant ethnic nations. For Smith, the potential for violence, for “explosive and radical collective action, derives from the resources unfolded by the three processes.”¹¹⁹

To understand the sources of violence thus requires an understanding of the process whereby ethnic groups emerge, mobilize and contemplate adopting a strategy of violence over other forms of non-violent interethnic bargaining and competition. Whether a group’s identity draws on primordial markers that are viewed as givens, according to the primordialist perspective, or whether these identities are selected and crafted by ethnic entrepreneurs, according to the instrumentalist perspective, group mobilization precedes the outbreak of violence.

¹¹⁷Brass, 21.

¹¹⁸Smith, 56-57.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 58.

Boundary-Making and Group Mobilization

Ethnic groups are communal groups, “psychological communities...whose core members share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on cultural traits and lifeways that matter to them and others with whom they interact.”¹²⁰ Ethnic identities are ascriptive, collective identities that stem from myths of common ancestry and draw upon familial bonds and obligations. Ethnicity is a “kinlike affiliation... [that calls] into play the panoply of rights and obligations, the unspoken understandings, and the mutual aspiration for well-being that are so characteristic of family life.”¹²¹ It is not about blood and genes as such, but about myths and beliefs in a common origin that all members of the group share. “It is, in the end, ascriptive affinity and disparity, and not some particular inventory of cultural attributes, that found the group.”¹²²

There are many bases for communal identity, including ethnicity, language, skin color, dress and diet, shared historical myths and experiences, ideas of inheritance, ancestry and descent, place or territory of origin, the sharing of kinship, and a link with a particular homeland. No one set of traits will define all ethnic groups, nor do objective lists of cultural markers define an individual group. Each group’s identity is molded out of its historical experiences, its mytho-historical legacies, and the particular traits the group believes are its innate possession. These identities are believed to be bounded and to be self-producing and enduring through time.¹²³

Not only do these traits define the group, but they also set the group apart from other groups with whom it interacts. All politically active, mobilized ethnic groups appeal to this strong, underlying collective identity that sets them apart. The group’s traits are “activated by the presence of one or more communities of strangers—other ethnic groups—as actual or potential competitors within the relevant political or economic space of the

¹²⁰Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 3.

¹²¹Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 64.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 69.

¹²³Tambiah, 335.

ethnic group.”¹²⁴ Through a growing awareness of those properties that serve as identifying commonalities within the group and those distinctive markers that set the group apart from other ethnic groups, group identity is further strengthened.

A group that uses these symbols to differentiate itself from other groups is establishing criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Ethnic identities serve to demarcate the boundary of the group with “the other” and establish patterns of behavior and interaction to shore up those boundaries and maintain the group’s distinctiveness. Ethnic identity is thus a matter of comparison, and in cases where there is violence, of contrast. Indeed, “the intensity of any conflict is, in large part, a function of the relative strength of group claims. The more invidious the intergroup comparison...the more intense the conflict, all else being equal.”¹²⁵

When political and economic competition between groups intensifies, or when a group’s position is threatened, these identities are strengthened and the primordial and historical claims which form the basis of group identity are united with the “pragmatics of calculated choice and opportunism.”¹²⁶ The group’s boundaries become sharper, its symbols acquire a new subjective significance, and the multiplicity of symbols and attributes which define the group are brought into greater congruence with each other.¹²⁷ “These partitioning properties progressively acquire greater saliency, even in instances where within recent memory cultural boundaries were fuzzy and indistinct.”¹²⁸

The process of formation, consolidation, demarcation, and politicization is led by a group’s elite to secure or protect a group’s collective interests and aspirations. It seldom occurs spontaneously.¹²⁹ Whether a group’s mobilization is offensive or defensive, it is

¹²⁴Milton J. Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors in Ethnic Conflict” in *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, Joseph V. Montville, ed. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 53.

¹²⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 215.

¹²⁶Tambiah, 336.

¹²⁷Brass, 63.

¹²⁸Young, 74.

¹²⁹Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 31.

not possible without an underlying core of shared traits, memories, and experiences.¹³⁰ “Once such groups have been consolidated from among the sharers of primordial cultural markers..., then the achieved solidarity and fraternity become the bases for intragroup obligations, for intergroup demarcations, and, finally, for pressing group interests in the teeth of competition and resistance.”¹³¹ It is at this point in the process of mobilization, where calculated choice intercepts these enduring identities, that violence becomes a justifiable alternative to other forms of ethnic competition. It is at this point in the process of “ethnic transformation”¹³² that the conditions that prompt the adoption of a strategy of violent interethnic conflict must be examined.

The Ongoing Search for an Explanation of Ethnic Violence

Explanations that focus on group goals or group status fail to address the issue of means, namely violence. Similarly, systems of ethnic stratification and group position as well as instrumentalist explanations that focus on leadership and ethnic entrepreneurs do not provide a comprehensive approach for understanding the sources of violence and the factors that lead groups to adopt violent over nonviolent strategies of ethnic conflict. The link between ethnicity and violence must thus be examined further. How does a history of autonomy, however distant, become linked to violence? Does the simple existence of separatist aims provide sufficient incentive to choose violence over interethnic bargaining and competition within existing political structures? Can goals alone really provide an explanation for the more atrocious forms of ethnic violence such as ethnic cleansing that have become the preferred strategy among some of the most violent ethnic competitors?

Ethnic conflict is a phenomenon that requires further study. This dissertation will attempt to further the understanding of ethnic violence by introducing a conceptual framework for understanding the sources of ethnic violence based on a comparative case

¹³⁰Brass, 14.

¹³¹Rothschild, 62.

¹³²Brass, 63.

study analysis of three violent ethnic conflicts. In the next three chapters, a series of propositions and subpropositions will be introduced addressing the issue of means, namely violence. Each of these chapters will focus specifically on *ethnic* violence as opposed to violence adopted by the state. Each will approach the question of violence from a different locus of initiative. Chapter two will focus on the sources of ethnic violence at the group level, chapter three will look at violence at the state level, and chapter four will focus on ethnic violence at the interstate level. In each of these chapters, propositions and related subpropositions will be developed in an effort to distinguish those factors which prompt mobilized ethnic groups to employ force to achieve their goals, regardless of whether they seek to secede or to improve their status within the community vis-a-vis other ethnic groups.

In chapters five through seven, the propositions and subpropositions developed in Section I will be applied across three case studies of violent ethnic conflict to determine which of these propositions establishes a clear causal link between ethnicity and violence, which only indicates a tendency or potential for violence, and how these propositions are interrelated in practice, working together to influence the adoption of strategies of violence. Chapter five will focus on the sources of violence in the former Yugoslavia. Chapter six will analyze the triggers of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh, and chapter seven will focus on the sources of ethnic violence in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Based upon the conclusions drawn from the application of the propositions above and an in-depth analysis and investigation of the factors that led to the adoption of strategies of violence in each of the three case studies, the third and final section of this dissertation will attempt to draw some broader conclusions about the sources of ethnic violence and the potential for peaceful resolution of conflict following severe, sustained ethnic violence. The differences and generalizations that emerge from the comparative analysis of the three case studies will provide the basis for a conceptual framework that may be applied to potential or escalating conflicts beyond the scope of this dissertation to determine the likelihood such

conflicts will erupt into violent interethnic warfare. In addition, these generalizations and differences will provide the foundation upon which to base broader conclusions about the prospects and mechanisms for peace following violent ethnic war. To begin to address the claims of the ethnic groups and to resolve ethnic conflicts once they emerge, requires an understanding of the forces that motivate such groups to employ violent tactics in the first place. Understanding the motivations that lead to violent warfare is a crucial step in creating lasting and peaceful solutions to violent interethnic warfare.

Chapter Two

THE SOURCES OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE AT THE GROUP LEVEL

Introduction

An explanation of the sources of ethnic violence begins at the group level. Here factors internal to the group will be examined for their role in prompting ethnic groups to adopt strategies of interethnic violence. This chapter will look at ethnonationalism, ethnic chauvinism, threats to ethnic group survival, and the role of ethnic group leadership for an explanation of ethnic violence. It will introduce four propositions and a number of subpropositions which utilize aspects of the competing primordialist and instrumentalist viewpoints to show that violence at the group level may be adopted for defensive as well as offensive purposes.

The first proposition flows from Gurr's *Minorities at Risk* project and looks at the link between ethnonationalism and violence in greater detail. The second proposition examines ethnic chauvinism and its role in prompting the adoption of some of the more atrocious forms of ethnic violence, including ethnic cleansing. The third proposition suggests that threats to group survival motivate violence. Finally, the fourth proposition flows from an examination of the crucial role ethnic leadership plays in the process whereby groups become mobilized and adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

Ethnonationalism

The proposition that ethnonationalism inspires ethnic groups to resort to rebellion rather than non-violent protest flows from Gurr's *Minorities at Risk* study which conclusively demonstrates that ethnonationalist groups are the most violent communal competitors and ethnonationalist rebellions "the most protracted and deadly conflicts of the

late twentieth century.”¹ Gurr defines ethnonationalists as “relatively large, regionally concentrated peoples who were historically autonomous and who have pursued separatist objectives at some time in the last fifty years.”² Ethnonationalists seek autonomy because of “the historical fact or belief that the group once governed its own affairs.”³ They are rarely motivated by grievances and inequalities. Instead, they are motivated by “demands for the restoration of group autonomy and desires for revenge against old enemies.”⁴ Gurr concludes that while “political and economic disadvantages motivate [other] communal groups to demand greater access to the political system and greater economic opportunities,” ethnonationalists, with their goal of political autonomy “attempt secession.”⁵ On the basis of this typology, one would conclude that ethnonationalist rebellions are a function of ethnonationalist goals: ethnonationalists adopt a strategy of violence to restore group autonomy or to secede.

Is a history of autonomy and previous separatist attempts sufficient explanation for the adoption of violent over non-violent means? Why do ethnonational groups opt for rebellion over violent and nonviolent protest? Certainly group goals are an important element, but they alone cannot answer the question of means. While Gurr’s study does establish a link between ethnonationalism and violence, it fails to answer why ethnonationalism prompts groups to adopt a strategy of violent interethnic warfare.

Ethnonationalism is loyalty to the “nation,” simply defined as a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related.⁶ A group views itself as a nation when its ethnic identity, based on a myth of common ancestry, ideas of kinship, common traits and shared experiences, becomes fused with a popularly held awareness of the group’s uniqueness. Objective traits that seem to define the group are important only to the degree that they

¹Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 319.

²Ibid., 18, 20.

³Ibid., 76.

⁴Ibid., 62.

⁵Ibid., 86

⁶Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, xi.

strengthen the commonly held belief in the uniqueness of the group. In the absence of this sense of uniqueness, there is no nation, simply an ethnic group.⁷ It is this belief that “one’s own group is unique in a most vital sense” that is “a prerequisite of nationhood.”⁸

Nations are the product of history, and history is one of the well-springs of ethnonationalism.⁹ “To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have accomplished great things together, to wish to do so again, that is the essential condition for being a nation.”¹⁰ Close ties to a special territory or ethnic homeland, historic events, past glories, and critical battles against historic enemies are the bases upon which “myths of ethnic chosenness”¹¹ are founded, inspiring belief in a common fate. Such myths produce the conviction that the group is a separate, distinct, and unique entity, a nation.

Ethnonationalism is thus loyalty to the essence of the ethnic group, its sense of vital uniqueness. Ethnonationalism is not to be confused with the nationalism which connotes loyalty to a state. Rather, it is a form of nationalism that connotes loyalty to the essence of the group. This essence is never tangible, for it is psychological and emotional, “a matter of attitude rather than fact.”¹² It is a “psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way”¹³

Ethnonationalism “emanates from an aspiration for the regeneration of a collective identity, unity, and autonomy and from the demands of popular participation and cultural authenticity, including a return to symbolic roots, past myths, and historical memories.”¹⁴

⁷Walker Connor, “Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?” *World Politics* 24 (April 1972): 337.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Smith, 49.

¹⁰Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce Qu’un Nation?” in *Nationalism*, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18.

¹¹Smith, 53.

¹²Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 42.

¹³Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...” 379.

¹⁴Hooshang Amirahmadi, “Toward a Conceptualization of Ethnic Politics,” *International Journal of Group Tensions* 24 (Summer 1994): 122.

Ethnonationalists seek to realize in the present the past glory and greatness that the myths foretell.

For ethnonationalists, the nation is linked to two issues, group autonomy or possession of a special territory or homeland. The first, autonomy, is viewed as a source of group identity, the foundation of the group's essence. Once lost through conquest, colonialism, or immigration, autonomy is intuitively and emotionally linked to the nation. It is thus imperative for the group to reclaim that autonomy and thereby regain the group's sense of identity and uniqueness. To fail to regain that autonomy threatens the very essence of a group's identity. Ethnonationalists thus embark upon "a domestic version of *revanche*"¹⁵ against the ethnic strangers deemed responsible for this loss of identity. Ethnonationalists such as the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh or the Serbs outside of Serbia would rather be governed poorly by their ethnic brethren than wisely by aliens, occupiers, and colonizers, despite the potential costs reclaiming a group's historic autonomy might entail, for "the latter is worse than oppressive, it is degrading."¹⁶

The second issue, group possession of an ethnic homeland or special territory, symbolizes the source of an ethnic group's unique traits, a real or mythical greatness to which the group seeks to return, the site of an historical event deemed crucial to the group's identity, or the location of a great cultural center or past empire that emerged by virtue of the group's possession of this particular territory. Kosovo is such a homeland for the Serbs in the former Yugoslavia, as is Nagorno-Karabakh for the ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. "What is vital for ethnicity is the sense of attachment to a particular land, the fervently held belief in an historical connection of this people with that land and the desire to return to its sacred centers—those hallowed places where ethno-history intersects with the decisive turning-points in the trajectory of the community: birth,

¹⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 30.

¹⁶Alexis Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1991), 8.

liberation, victory or defeat, revelation, sanctification, fulfillment.”¹⁷ Possession of this homeland forms a vital element in returning to this golden age and realizing in the present the past greatness of the group.

The link between ethnonationalism and violence becomes clearer when the realization of a group’s right to self-government based on a past history of autonomy or the possession of an ethnic homeland or special territory is popularly held to be a vital element of the group’s uniqueness. Without its historic autonomy or possession of its homeland, the nation is viewed as incomplete. Autonomy or possession of a homeland is what makes the group unique in the most vital way: it is the essence of the nation. Ethnonationalists thus embark upon an effort to claim their legitimate right to self-government, separatism or secession and to control of their homeland.

Where the legitimacy of group claims is contested, symbolism is effective in cloaking them in ideas and associations that have moral force beyond the particular conflict, obscuring the segmental character of group demands by linking them with universals and masking demands that would otherwise be controversial.¹⁸ Indigenesness is one such symbolic claim that publicly affirms a group’s legitimacy. It provides legitimacy to group demands, for to be indigenous means to “own the country” and to own it even if the group constitutes only a small minority of the population within that separatist region or special homeland.¹⁹ To be indigenous does not mean that a group arrived first, nor does immigration mean that a group arrived later. The claim to indigenesness is rarely a matter of actual history.²⁰ Rather, it is a matter of ideas about migration and prior occupation, a claim based on perception rather than fact.²¹

¹⁷Smith, 51.

¹⁸Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 217-218.

¹⁹Ibid., 202.

²⁰Ibid., 202-203.

²¹Walker Connor, “Ethnonationalism,” a lecture presented at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, September 26, 1994.

Once a group believes in its legitimate right to regain control of an ethnic homeland or region in which it was historically autonomous, then it is an easy step also to claim a moral right of occupation. Indigeneity morally entitles groups both to possession and governance of that homeland. Groups assert that the land belongs exclusively to them and that they consequently have a moral right to rule there. The indigenous group's rights transcend those of any other group within the territory, including a group who may constitute a majority of the population, and supersede any claims by a central government controlled by "aliens" and "ethnic strangers." The homeland belongs to the homeland people, the indigenous group.²²

Moral justifications may in turn be further strengthened by the propagation of a special mission, often expressed in religious terms, that the group seeks to perform in that homeland or special territory. Symbolic claims of a special mission, the legitimacy of indigenesness, and the moral right to pursue a group's goal to exclusive possession of a homeland or to autonomy, if not secession, are vocalized and given emotional meaning by group leadership.²³ They become imbued in the essence of the nation and strengthen ethnonationalists' loyalty and shared identity.

When autonomy and possession of a special homeland become imbued in the essence of what constitutes a nation, the source of the group's uniqueness, and the group views its right to autonomy or possession of a special homeland as both legitimate and morally justified, groups may turn to violence to realize their demands. Buttressed by the symbolism associated with the group's indigenesness, special mission, and moral rights, ethnonationalism may prompt groups to resort to violent means. The first proposition for understanding the sources of ethnic violence is thus as follows:

If autonomy or the control of a special homeland is viewed as the essence of a group's identity by members of that group, then ethnonationalism may inspire an ethnic group to resort to strategies of interethnic violence. (P1)

²²Walker Connor, "Ethnonationalism" lecture presented at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, September 26, 1994.

²³Rothschild, 27.

Is violence the only alternative for achieving ethnonationalists' aims? Ethnic conflict is often in the zero-sum category. When the occupation of an homeland or group autonomy is thwarted by the presence of ethnic strangers in the territory or when ethnic strangers deny ethnic groups a right to even a limited form of self-government, ethnonationalists may conclude that there is neither an alternative means to violence nor room for compromise.

To realize their demands, ethnonationalists must attempt to regain their lost autonomy, which in regions where the ethnonationalists constitute only a small portion of the population in the territory they claim a right to administer, may require relegating members of other groups to the status of guests, barring these ethnic strangers from any role in the governance of the territory. Ethnic strangers may be compelled to acknowledge the preeminence of the ethnonationalist group within the territory and their exclusion from it. Alternatively, reclaiming a homeland or special territory may involve efforts to impose a homogeneous identity on the region by expelling ethnic strangers or by eliminating ethnic diversity in the physical sense through ethnic cleansing, as the nationalist Serb campaign to reclaim Greater Serbia has done.

The legitimacy of group claims and their moral justification strengthen ethnonationalist arguments for a departure from strict equality.²⁴ They also justify violence, which in the case of a demand for territory, sovereignty, separatism, secession, or possession of an ethnic homeland, the goals of ethnonationalist groups, almost invariably require violent tactics, if not the more atrocious forms of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Gurr's study provides an incomplete explanation for why ethnonationalism prompts violence. An explanation for ethnic violence cannot be founded solely upon identifying group goals. Ethnonationalism is clearly linked to ethnic violence, but violence is not a function of ethnonationalist goals. The choice of means, interethnic violence, is a function of the importance that autonomy or possession of a special homeland has for the group's own sense of uniqueness, the basis for it constituting a nation, and the foundation for its

²⁴Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 201.

loyalty to that nation. To ignore the loss of autonomy or the control of the group's special homeland by ethnic strangers is to deny the central role both have in the group's identity and to refute the basis for the group's cohesion and loyalty.

Ethnonationalists embark upon a strategy of violent interethnic warfare to achieve their goals of autonomy or possession of an ethnic homeland because of the vital role this possession or right assumes in their self-identification. The emotional power that ethnonationalists derive from their identity with the nation provides strong motivation to achieve group goals despite the costs. To fail to secure group autonomy or group possession of an ethnic homeland is equated with denying the very basis of group identity, the essence of their nation. Without this very possession, group survival is perceived to be threatened. Thus violence becomes a choice strategy, a decision further strengthened by a popularly held belief that the mission of the ethnonationalist group is both legitimate and morally justified. The group must fulfill its mission and to do so, requires removing ethnic strangers or restricting them from access, both of which require violence. To compromise and bargain within existing state structures, alternatives that do not connote violent means, is to deny the nation's essence. Thus, it is not ethnonationalists' aspirations alone that prompt violence, as Gurr's typology would suggest. Rather, it is the vital place these aspirations occupy in the concept of the nation that prompt the adoption of a strategy of violent interethnic warfare.

Ethnic Chauvinism

The emergence of ethnic chauvinism among members of a politicized ethnic group can prompt the decision to employ a strategy of violence against ethnic strangers with whom the group may have lived peacefully for centuries. Ethnic chauvinism tends to emerge among dominant ethnic groups. They become mobilized when changing external conditions either threaten their superior position or present opportunities to increase their status within the polity. A group that has a dominant position in the polity may mobilize to

protect or improve its position in the polity. In either case, mobilization is offensive rather than defensive.

The group's identity, its sense of uniqueness, and its loyalty to the nation are strengthened on the basis of an ethnic group's perceived innate superiority. Superiority becomes an attribute of group identity, and dominance of the polity is popularly held to be a group right among members. Because of the nature of an ethnic group's demands and the measures such demands involve, violence becomes an attractive strategy. Group mobilization to protect or improve dominance of the polity prompts adoption of an offensive strategy of ethnic violence. A second source of ethnic violence is thus reflected in the following proposition:

If ethnic chauvinism is propagated by members of an ethnic group, then there is a strong tendency for the ethnic group to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers. (P2)

The strengthening of group identity is founded upon drawing out those characteristics of group identity that are distinctive. Distinctiveness, which in cases of ethnic chauvinism is based on a belief in group superiority, necessarily involves comparison. The group or groups that are perceived as the source of the threat become the basis for this comparison. If these ethnic strangers provide an unflattering contrast to the group, there is an added incentive to demand their exclusion, for "homogeneity would remove the irritating comparison."²⁵ The comparison with ethnic strangers will also lead to stereotyping. The ethnic group and the "other" are demonized, stereotyped into "starkly polarized images of virtue and menace, images that telescope past conflicts and misproject their oversimplified recollection into the present context such as to exacerbate it."²⁶ They become "dirty outsiders and fifth columnists."²⁷

²⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 186.

²⁶Rothschild, 63.

²⁷Ahmed, 8.

The comparison with the other that accompanies the emergence of a chauvinistic form of ethnonationalism involves not simply distinguishing a group on the basis of language, race, religion, shared historical experience or common mission, traits which are the key to identifying ethnic groups and nations, but also determining that one's mission or distinguishing traits make the group superior to and more powerful than the "other" who forms the basis of this comparison. It is not simply believing in the innate uniqueness of the group, that essence of the nation, but in the group's innate superiority. Because one's mission is seen as more legitimate, and because one's language or race is seen as superior, members believe that the means they employ to secure their survival, independence, or dominance are both legitimate and justified.

There is a sense of moral righteousness in this superiority. It promotes patterns of exclusivism, intolerance, and hatred, elements that characterize normal interethnic conflicts, and takes them to the extreme. A popularly held belief in the group's innate superiority justifies measures to ensure a group's predominance and to ensure the purity of its culture and language. By virtue of its claimed racial or cultural superiority, the group may believe it has the right to dominate others. In fact, the very survival of the state may depend upon the group's hegemonic political or cultural domination.²⁸ Dominance of the polity necessarily requires either further restricting the access of ethnic strangers or removing it altogether.

Claims of cultural superiority may also involve efforts to preserve the culture by purging and purifying it of elements that are foreign. A group's claimed superior culture must be kept unadulterated, and its adherents must be "kept away from...undesirable influences through the relegation, segregation, expulsion, deportation, and even extermination of aliens."²⁹ Group members may come to believe that the group must stand together to withstand a 'global conspiracy' aimed at keeping their nation down and

²⁸Myron Weiner, "Peoples and States in a New Ethnic Order?" *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1992): 319.

²⁹Smith, 57.

preventing it from becoming great and fulfilling its destiny.³⁰ Claims of group superiority are thus used to mobilize the group, further solidify group identity, and build a sense of mission that legitimizes violence. Violence is not just a means of achieving a group goal. It is a historically validated, morally justified means that the group, by virtue of its special place, employs to justify a “departure from strict equality.”³¹

Militant nationalism and ethnic chauvinism in turn create an environment that is viewed as zero-sum. “Either Your Destruction or Ours,” the title of an article published by a Serb journalist in Zagreb in 1902, is illustrative of the zero-sum environment that accompanies ethnic conflict.³² Because of their superiority, groups believe that there is no room for negotiation, for working within existing structures, for compromise with other ethnic groups because group members believe that to fulfill their goals, they must exclude, if not annihilate, the “other.” The expulsion of ethnic strangers and the more gruesome forms of ethnic cleansing, accompanied by the deliberate use of mass rape as an instrument of ethnic cleansing,³³ and ethnic genocide become choice strategies for groups motivated by a militant ethnic chauvinism. The more militant the group and the stronger the sense of group superiority, the greater the propensity to justify atrocities such as ethnic cleansing against ethnic strangers.

Ethnic chauvinism does not have to emerge among the population as a whole. Rather, violent and extremist minorities may attempt to intimidate, neutralize, or even dominate moderates within their own community.³⁴ In such cases, violent strategies may be adopted by factions within the mobilized ethnic group, despite efforts by moderates to resolve tensions by non-violent means. Once conflict emerges, these factions may further divide into splinter groups, making the efforts to halt violence even more daunting. As

³⁰Ahmed, 12.

³¹Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 201.

³²Article by Nikola Stojanovic. See Pfaff, 198.

³³Cheryl Bernard, “Rape as Terror: The Case of Bosnia,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6 (Spring 1994): 29-43. See also Ahmed, 39.

³⁴Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 56.

violence intensifies and moderate elements in the groups are targeted for their failure to support militant aims, groups become further factionalized, and some moderates may adopt increasingly militant positions. Indeed, moderates may be silenced or killed by more militant factions, especially if moderates begin to gain a following among the population that threatens the power base of militant leaders and undermines the chauvinist policies of militant factions. The propagation of chauvinist attitudes among the ethnic leadership may thus broaden the base of support for militant tactics among the leadership of more moderate groups and among the population at large.

The violence in Yugoslavia can in large part be explained by the program of aggressive Serbian nationalism adopted by a wide coalition of conservative leaders within Serbia that included conservatives in the Serbian communist party leadership, local and regional party elites, orthodox Marxist intellectuals, nationalist writers, and parts of the Yugoslav army. Led by Milosevic, it adopted a strategy to destroy the Yugoslav state and create a new, Serbian-majority state.³⁵ The propagation of a policy of ethnic chauvinism fueled the outbreak of extreme violence in regions of Croatia and Bosnia where relations between Serbs and non-Serbs were historically harmonious.³⁶ Ethnic chauvinism promotes the adoption of violence. Its emergence does little to create an environment conducive to peaceful negotiation and non-violent measures for resolving interethnic group tensions. A group whose identity is fused with a feeling of innate superiority has little incentive to bargain, negotiate, or compromise with the inferior "other."

The emergence of chauvinism and militant nationalism among members of a mobilized ethnic group thus plays an important role in the decision to adopt a strategy of violent interethnic conflict. It directly creates an environment which is conducive to violence and conditions members to believe that compromise and negotiation are inadequate means of resolving group claims and realizing group goals. Rather, the innate superiority

³⁵Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia: 1962-1991*, 2d edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 228.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 132n10.

of the group inspires the adoption of measures aimed at the ethnic homogenization of the state and the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers.

Ethnic Group Survival

The outbreak of violent interethnic conflict can be traced to a real belief among members that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened by the policies or actions of ethnic strangers. When a group experiences “a serious and manifest threat to [its] vital interests or established expectations..., to its political position, cultural rights, livelihood, or neighborhoods”³⁷ to the extent that group members conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is imperiled, then a group will mobilize rapidly. Defensive group mobilization in response to a clear and present threat to the continued survival of an ethnic group will produce a more rapid and aggressive collective response than offensive group mobilization to exploit opportunities for uncertain future benefits.³⁸ A clear threat to group survival will lead groups to mobilize in self defense and adopt a strategy of interethnic violence against the ethnic strangers deemed responsible for the group’s precarious position. A third proposition to explain ethnic violence is as follows:

If group members commonly believe that their very survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened, then there is a strong tendency for the group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense. (P3)

A collective group grievance is not sufficient in itself to prompt the adoption of a strategy of interethnic violence. Many aggrieved and disadvantaged communities have suffered grievances and discontents without mobilizing, let alone adopting violence as a strategy to redress those grievances. Rather, group members must share the conviction that the source of these grievances and discontents present a threat to the group’s continued survival. Only when group members believe that the challenge is one that threatens their

³⁷Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 54.

³⁸Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 30.

continued existence does violence become a likely and sustainable strategy to redress those grievances and ensure the continued survival of the group.

The fear of imminent group extinction is not solely the purview of subordinate groups. Advanced groups too may conclude that their survival is threatened. Horowitz employs a dichotomy of advanced and backward groups and advanced and backward regions to explain how group position and group location together determine the tendency of certain groups to seek secession.³⁹ Using these four categories we can examine the adoption of ethnic violence as a defense against imminent group survival more closely. While the focus of this study is not necessarily secession, which is a species of ethnic conflict, but violence, this dichotomy is important for understanding how issues pertaining to group survival among dominant and subordinate groups prompt interethnic violence. It is also useful for underlining that no two groups will interpret a threat to their continued survival in the same way. Such threats are highly contextual and vary over time and by region.

Advanced groups are those that have benefited from opportunities in education and non-agricultural employment, and are generally regarded by themselves and others as highly motivated, diligent, and intelligent. Backward groups tend to be stereotyped as indolent, ignorant and not disposed to achievement and have not benefited to the same degree from educational opportunities and non-agricultural employment. Backward and advanced regions are in turn characterized by the relative economic position of the region, where backward regions tend to be deficit regions, dependent on subsidies from the center.

From these definitions, Horowitz identifies four categories of potential secessionists and four different paths to secession.⁴⁰ Backward groups in backward regions are early seceders and characterize the largest number of secessionists. Because these regions are deficit regions that tend to receive subsidies from the center, the decision

³⁹For a more detailed discussion see chapter one, pp. 20-23.

⁴⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 235.

to secede is taken despite the costs of secession. Often the backward group in the backward region has been subjected to policies aimed at homogenization or has had special concessions granted to it by the central government cancelled. Such groups are overwhelmed by “an avalanche of ethnic sentiment that the undivided state is intolerable,”⁴¹ prompting a sense of desperation that leads to secession.

Advanced groups in backward regions are late seceders and have a higher threshold of tolerance for discrimination than backward groups because advanced groups in backward regions tend to be population exporters. For these groups, survival has depended upon the search for opportunities outside the backward region. Push migration has meant that members of the group may be spread throughout the state, thus ensuring that secession is costly. The fate of kinsmen outside the backward region and the loss of extra regional income sources make secession an unlikely measure, a measure of last resort. Advanced groups in backward regions will thus attempt secession only when all hope of salvaging their position is dashed and when the costs of remaining in the undivided state are perilously high.⁴²

Advanced regions are far less inclined to separatism than backward regions. Advanced regions frequently have a regional economic grievance since they tend to generate more income and to contribute more revenue to the state than the region receives. Advanced groups in advanced regions tend to export surplus capital and people outside their region. Advanced groups in advanced regions will thus secede only if the economic costs of secession are low. “A powerful secessionist movement is not impossible among advanced groups in advanced regions but it takes some extraordinary conditions to bring it about.”⁴³

Finally, backward groups in advanced regions are quite likely to be separatist since secession seems to promise economic benefits, but are rarely numerically dominant in the

⁴¹Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 238.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 244.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 253.

region. Like backward groups in backward regions, those in advanced regions are fearful of domination. They seek to end their subordination to advanced groups in the region and to control its resources. However, it is rare for backward groups in advanced regions to attempt secession because of their weak position within the region.

What factors lead ethnic groups to perceive a threat to their survival? One clear factor is the decrease in the *absolute* size of an ethnic group through out-migration, forced resettlement and assimilation policies, massacre, and declining birth rates. As the size of the group diminishes, whether it is backward or advanced, group members may fear that their continued survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. This first element is laid out in the following subproposition:

If an ethnic group experiences a decrease in its *absolute* size within the same state or region, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.1)

As their group declines in absolute size, ethnic groups, whether they are advanced or backward, fear that the demographically dominant population of ethnic strangers may attempt to gain advantages over them and introduce elements of social, political, economic, and even religious discrimination and asymmetry, thereby incorporating them into the polity on unequal terms.⁴⁴ They fear the erosion of group boundaries and the potential for eventual assimilation. As their size declines, groups fear the potential loss of group status and legitimacy, particularly if their legitimacy is linked to the possession of a particular homeland or territory. Without adequate numbers to possess this territory or to ensure their continued distinct identity, groups will mobilize in self-defense.

The loss of group members in absolute terms can occur among both backward and advanced groups in backward and advanced regions. Backward groups may fear that their diminished size will further their backward status, decreasing the subsidies or special concessions they may have secured in the past, while advanced groups may fear that diminished size will threaten their dominant status and control of resources. In both

⁴⁴Tambiah, 346.

scenarios, the absolute loss of group members presents a real threat to group survival and may lead to group mobilization and violent conflict.

A second related factor is the fear of domination and demographic imbalance created by the decline of a group's size *relative* to ethnic strangers. These fears are precipitated by the in-migration of ethnic strangers, declining birthrates, and government settlement and forced assimilation policies. In each instance, the absolute size of the group may not be declining, but the size of the group relative to ethnic strangers has declined. The influx of ethnic strangers creates frictions and apprehensions about demographic imbalances. Government-supported in-migration, resettlement, and assimilation schemes threaten to shift the population balance of these strangers, provoking a separatist response⁴⁵ which invariably leads to ethnic violence. Indeed, the incidence of ethnic conflict reflects the motivating force of fears of domination.⁴⁶ A second subproposition relating to group survival is as follows:

If an ethnic group experiences a decrease in its group size *relative* to ethnic strangers within the same state or region, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.2)

Advanced groups may seek domination, not the avoidance of it, and will be mobilized by the influx of ethnic strangers which weakens their relative position in the polity and threatens either their dominant position or their plans for securing dominance within the polity. Backward groups will seek to protect endangered group boundaries and the threat of a demographic imbalance through measures that involve the expulsion of ethnic strangers from a share of the power and possession of homeland territory. Ethnic group survival requires the removal of ethnic strangers and their exclusion from the polity, measures which invariably require violence and provoke a violent, if not separatist, response.

⁴⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 263.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 189.

A third factor that leads groups to conclude that their continued survival is threatened is the loss or lack of cultural autonomy. Cultural autonomy relates to “the rights and symbolic dignity”⁴⁷ accorded to an ethnic group’s language, culture, history, and religious practices. The loss of group members or the decline of an ethnic group’s position relative to ethnic strangers is often tied to cultural autonomy, particularly when forced assimilation policies lead individuals to stop identifying themselves as members of the ethnic group. The central issue, however, is whether the group is granted the rights and symbolic dignity that ensure that members, particularly younger generations, continue to identify themselves as members of the ethnic group. Thus, a third subproposition relating to ethnic violence is as follows:

If a group experiences a loss of cultural autonomy or lacks any measure of cultural autonomy, then the group will conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.3)

Conflict over cultural autonomy is based on any combination of a number of issues. These include whether an ethnic group has the right to pursue openly its culture, whether it can educate its children in the group’s language (and to what level), whether it can use the group’s language in state institutions or in the regional administration of a homeland or special territory in which the group predominates, whether its language has official status in the region or state, whether cultural institutions are allowed to flourish, whether group members may publish in their language, whether they may teach the group’s history to their children, and whether state or regional policies encourage the legitimization of the group’s culture or whether they ensure or promote assimilation with the culture and practices of ethnic strangers.

A group’s culture is a vital element of group identity for both advanced and backward groups. For advanced groups, the influx of backward strangers may place pressure on current language and education policies which favor the advanced group. They will seek to keep their advantaged position and to prevent backward groups from

⁴⁷Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 59.

encroaching upon their favored access and the cultural legitimacy it brings. Advanced groups “may claim, and indeed believe, that what is being demanded of them is not really this or that discrete concession or issue-compromise, but rather the surrender of their entire ethnic value universe, group identity, and future existence.”⁴⁸ Violence may thus be a necessary measure to ensure the continued dominance, and hence survival, of the group. Backward groups who may lack any form of cultural autonomy or who are threatened with a loss of some degree of cultural autonomy at the hands of advanced strangers, will conclude that their survival is threatened. For both backward and advanced groups, violence may be necessary to ensure group survival.

When public policy fails to legitimize, dignify, and reward ethnic pluralism, when it encourages cultural and social assimilation of minorities into the dominant community of ethnic strangers, and when it enforces legal or de facto inequality in status and treatment,⁴⁹ groups readily conclude that their survival is threatened. A group’s culture is a vital element of group identity. A group such as the Kurds in Iraq that is unable to pass this identity on to its children or finds that its past ability to do so is threatened, will mobilize to secure these rights, strengthen group boundaries against ethnic strangers, and possibly seek secession from the dominant polity controlled by ethnic strangers.

A potential fourth factor that may lead groups to determine that their survival as an ethnic group is threatened is economic discrimination or deprivation. Long-standing discrimination, particularly in resource distribution, rising expectations that fail to reflect existing rates of growth or development, and restricted access to wealth, including land, and to employment opportunities combine to mobilize ethnic groups to fight for access, equality, and in many cases, the exclusion of ethnic strangers.

While economic discrimination or deprivation is an important factor in the mobilization of an ethnic group, it is unclear whether this issue alone creates a sense of

⁴⁸Rothschild, 59.

⁴⁹Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 59.

imminent group extinction. In many cases, arguments based on severe discrimination or deprivation are in fact indications of an underlying grievance that has more to do with issues that endanger group identity rather than economic position. As Connor notes, “economic considerations may be an irritant that reinforces ethnic consciousness.” However, when competing with “the emotionalism of ethnic nationalism,” these economic factors “come in a poor second.”⁵⁰ Horowitz similarly notes that “when ethnic conflict occurs, materialists tend to see it as an epiphenomenon, a manifestation of deeper economic conflicts that lie beneath the surface.” Such a view is one that “systematically undervalues ethnicity and misunderstands ethnic conflict even when it perceives it to be present.”⁵¹

The self-defense of an ethnic group based on arguments of economic discrimination or deprivation is employed to protect a group’s relative prosperity equally often as it is used to secure access to resources necessary for a group’s collective economic advancement. The indigenous-ethnonationalist distinction that Gurr employs in his typology of communal contenders underlines the fact that ethnonationalists seek autonomy more to protect their relative prosperity than to protect their collective group identity, while indigenous peoples seek to gain access to resources they need to improve their collective condition.⁵² In the former Soviet Union, groups such as the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh that enjoy a relatively higher standard of living than the Azerbaijanis have in fact justified employing strategies of violent interethnic warfare on economic arguments of self-preservation.

In areas of the Third World or in the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, however, similar arguments are based on real economic grievances. These groups do tend to be the least integrated and live in the poorest and least developed areas, such as the Tajik Mujaheddin and the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. For both types of claims, however, survival based on economic deprivation or discrimination is not central to

⁵⁰Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 47.

⁵¹Horowitz, “Soviet Ethnic Problems,” 13.

⁵²Monty G. Marshall, “States at Risk: Ethnopolitics in the Multinational States of Eastern Europe,” in Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 193.

understanding the outbreak of violence. Rather, these issues serve as “irritants” that facilitate mobilization. The true underlying causes for justifications based on survival are more likely founded on the absolute or relative decline of the ethnic group and on issues relating to a group’s cultural autonomy.

However, the pressure on group lands and resources, what Gurr terms “ecological stress,” is an important element of the economic argument that does lead groups to mobilize based on arguments of ethnic group survival. According to Gurr, “ecological stress...is the single strongest correlate of separatism among most of the regionally concentrated minorities, including ethnonationalists, militant sects, and indigenous peoples, but not communal contenders.” These groups may perceive a threat to their survival based on their particular link to an ethnic homeland or historically significant territory. When this fear is combined with “cultural differentiation,” groups will mobilize and rebel to secure access to resources and land that are deemed crucial to their survival. For Gurr, it is ecological stress, not economic discrimination, that leads to separatism, and thus violence.⁵³ Economic discrimination alone is insufficient for explaining the choice of violent means. A fourth subproposition is thus adapted from Gurr’s *Minorities at Risk* project:

If an ethnic group’s lands and resources are encroached upon by ethnic strangers or by the state controlled by ethnic strangers, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.4)

The importance of group lands is a clear factor in prompting group mobilization and the potential adoption of a strategy of violence. It is an important factor for ethnonationalists, for whom group lands may symbolize the essence of the nation, a vital source of group identity, thereby motivating ethnonationalists to adopt a strategy of violence to protect and secure those lands. Similarly, a threat to group lands and resources may lead groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened, thus leading such groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense. In both cases, it

⁵³Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 79.

is clear that group lands and resources are an important factor in understanding ethnic violence.

Each of these factors, the absolute and relative decline of group size, fear of domination and loss of group status relative to other groups, and ecological stress, provides sufficient cause for group mobilization and the adoption of violent means. An ethnic group fighting for survival will be willing to pay almost any price and to suffer enormous losses. The fear of imminent group extinction will prompt groups to justify a wide range of measures to ensure their survival. Whether groups are backward or advanced, group survival provides a strong motivation for the adoption of a strategy of violence in self-defense.

Ethnic Group Leadership

Ethnic mobilization is a process whereby an ethnic community “becomes politicized on behalf of its collective interests and aspirations.”⁵⁴ It requires an awareness on the part of the ethnic community that political action is necessary to promote or defend the community’s vital collective interests.⁵⁵ Ethnic mobilization rarely occurs spontaneously. It requires leadership. The charisma, character, quality, appeal, and organizational ability of group leaders are central to the mobilization process that leads groups to adopt a strategy of violence.

Ethnic mobilization is a prerequisite for the process whereby an ethnic leadership promotes the adoption of a strategy of violence. Collective grievances alone will not precipitate group mobilization. While periods of transition will accelerate group mobilization, a group will not mobilize without effective leadership. “An agglomeration, or category, of sharers of primordial markers that is without an elite, or whose incipient elite is consistently coopted away, will not be mobilized into an ethnic group unless and until

⁵⁴Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 28.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

this pattern changes.”⁵⁶ Mobilization translates a personal quest for meaning and belonging into a group demand for respect and power.⁵⁷ This transformation is fundamentally tied to group leadership, whose vision, energy and persuasiveness shape the original direction of the movement. Leaders symbolize the movement. They “bear major responsibility for guiding it, for articulating its values, for defining collective interests, for setting strategies, for managing relations with outsiders and for resolving internal conflicts within the membership and among factions within the movement.”⁵⁸ They are also critical in the decision to employ violent means

Communal grievances are unlikely to come to the attention of governments and outside observers, or even to certain members of the ethnic group itself, unless these grievances are given coherent expression by ethnic leaders. “An able leadership that commands respect and wields authority should ideally be one that articulates the values and motivations, the aspirations and expectations of the in-group and induces a course which is rewarding.”⁵⁹ “Where ethnic mobilization has been weak but ethnic identity and solidarity are latent forces waiting to be activated, there are strong incentives for political entrepreneurs to identify instances of neglect or injustice to their ethnic brethren by the authorities and to mobilize along ethnic lines—under their leadership, of course—to overcome these injustices by impressing their particular needs on the public agenda, promoting and defending their just claims, and combating the unjust and threatening action of ethnic enemies or the state apparatus.”⁶⁰

An essential ingredient to successful group mobilization is the development and articulation of a coherent group ideology by the ethnic group’s leadership. This ideology is essential for a number of reasons: first, it must “define the collective identity and criteria for membership” by emphasizing the group’s “common endowments, entitlements, grievances

⁵⁶Rothschild, 29.

⁵⁷Ibid., 6.

⁵⁸Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 33.

⁵⁹Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 34.

⁶⁰Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 60.

and aspirations.”⁶¹ Second, it must identify “the other,” the outsiders who challenge or thwart group members’ legitimate aspirations. Third, group ideology must justify the need for the movement, the struggles it undertakes, and the often high costs of participation. Finally, group ideology must visualize the ultimate success of the goals for which the group is fighting, thereby making the sacrifices seem worthwhile. Ethnic leaders must also persuade group members that group solidarity is an individual obligation as well as a “necessity dictated by common fate,”⁶² thereby expanding support for the leadership and group goals from a smaller group of dedicated followers to the larger population of group members.

A well-articulated ideology will mobilize group members in response to the threats or opportunities that the ethnic leadership has defined. Where the ethnic leadership determines that violence is either a necessary or optimal strategy to meet group goals, group members will adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. Thus, the final proposition for understanding ethnic violence at the group level is as follows:

If an able ethnic leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy and if it successfully articulates a group ideology and mobilizes the ethnic group around its source of grievances, then the group will adopt a strategy of interethnic violence. (P4)

The adoption of a strategy of interethnic violence is influenced by two kinds of group leaders: the ethnic leadership who guides the group militarily and politically and the “ethnic entrepreneurs” who define group identity and heighten awareness of group uniqueness. The first group includes the political and military leaders, also referred to as “political entrepreneurs”⁶³ and “political brokers,”⁶⁴ whose abilities, commitment, and coherence organize and guide the struggle, and the activists or cadres, who provide ongoing links between the ethnic community and the leadership structure.⁶⁵ The second

⁶¹Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 34.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 35.

⁶³Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 55.

⁶⁴Young, 76.

⁶⁵Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 55.

group of “ethnic entrepreneurs” includes the ethnic historians, language unifiers, and cultural entrepreneurs. They create and propagate “mytho-historical charters”⁶⁶ of group greatness and uniqueness and use their “talents for ideology building” to trace the boundary with the “realm of the other.”⁶⁷ Ethnic entrepreneurs tap a reservoir of group frustration and group pride while the ethnic leadership develops a strategy and organizes and deploys group resources available for the struggle.

The group’s political and military leadership organizes and guides the struggle. Their tactical and strategic assessments shape the conflict and to a large extent determine whether violence will be employed. This leadership determines whether violence serves the interests of the group and of the leadership itself, whether it is either necessary to defend the group, or whether it will allow the group to improve or advance its position. The political and military leadership must furthermore secure the resources necessary to adopt a strategy of violence, which requires not only securing the arms as well as the funding to purchase and maintain them, or alternatively the site and possibility of seizing them, but also requires securing these resources for the duration of the conflict. The political leadership may also find it necessary to secure external support, diplomatic as well as financial and military.

In addition, ethnic leaders must delegitimize and defeat, or harness and subsume, other would-be leaders offering competing, nonethnic or antiethnic, ideological and political perspectives.⁶⁸ “To foil or yoke competitors, the ethnic leaders depict all social grievances and deprivations as basically ethnic group grievances and deprivations and their class and individual aspects as secondary and illusory.”⁶⁹ To delegitimize or subsume competing ethnic leadership successfully by narrowing the range of ethnic identity and bringing competing aspects into congruence requires the assistance of the second group of

⁶⁶Tambiah, 336.

⁶⁷Young, 75.

⁶⁸Rothschild, 146.

⁶⁹Ibid.

ethnic leaders, the ethnic historians, language unifiers, and cultural entrepreneurs. This group is necessary to give ideological direction to the culture and historical consciousness of the group such that “the cultural forms, values and practices of [the ethnic group] become political resources for elites...that...can be shifted to adjust to political circumstances.”⁷⁰

This second, broadly defined group of ethnic historians, language unifiers, and cultural entrepreneurs relies on the contrastive elements and common attributes which define a group to strengthen the boundary with the “other.” They structure these common attributes and contrastive elements into a “coherent cultural mythology validated by historical charter and ennobled by celebratory characterization of its special traits.”⁷¹ They furthermore restrict the range of identities available to members of the group, thereby strengthening group solidarity.⁷² They promote a “congruence of a multiplicity of the group’s symbols,” arguing that members of the group are different not in one respect only, but in many and that all the group’s cultural elements are reinforcing.⁷³ In essence, “boundaries are made sharper,...old symbols acquire new subjective significance, and...attempts are made to bring a multiplicity of symbols into congruence with each other.”⁷⁴

They “choose selectively from an often fictional history to celebrate ancient heroes that should be emulated, to identify enemies that may reappear in different guises, and to reveal golden ages in the past that the present generation should endeavor to recreate and redeem for future generations.”⁷⁵ “Sometimes...such ethnocultural emblems have to be virtually invented or reinvented to suit political exigencies.”⁷⁶ Formerly venerated traditions thus become weapons in a cultural war waged both against outsiders and against the

⁷⁰Brass, 15.

⁷¹Young, 75.

⁷²Rothschild, 140.

⁷³Brass, 16.

⁷⁴Ibid., 63.

⁷⁵Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 34.

⁷⁶Rothschild, 107.

guardians of traditions.⁷⁷ The treatment of the past is especially important: battles become examples of national virtue and great figures of the past become national leaders, founders of the nation, or prophets of national destiny.⁷⁸ History becomes a legitimator of action and a cement of group cohesion.⁷⁹

Language unifiers, or the “vernacular intelligentsia,” work to acquire official status for the group language, particularly where the language is that of a backward group, and is thus viewed to be inadequate for modern usage by other groups within the polity or region. The vernacular intelligentsia will seek to create “language institutes to coin new terms, propagate correct usage, and in general enrich the language and cultivate the intellectuals who work in it....”⁸⁰ They work to elevate the formerly “low” oral culture and language into a “high” literary culture. Through a process of “vernacular mobilization,” ethnic intellectuals rediscover indigenous customs, traditions, memories, symbols, and especially languages.⁸¹ Traditional leaders who have preserved the group’s specifically ethnic culture and historical mystique must be persuaded to modernize this culture and historiology, to synchronize them with the ideological thrust of the ethnic leadership’s political goals and strategic aims, and thereby widen and deepen the solidarity resources of the ethnic movement.⁸²

Cultural entrepreneurs, language unifiers, and ethnic historians are thus as important to understanding the decision to employ violence against ethnic strangers as a group’s political and military leadership. While such leaders may not have access to the resources necessary for the direct organization and implementation of group strategy, their skills and following among members of the ethnic group are crucial to group mobilization and the process of consensus-building: they vocalize the historically validated and morally

⁷⁷Smith, 57.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12

⁸⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 221.

⁸¹Smith, 56.

⁸²Rothschild, 145.

justified group mission that may prompt greater support for militant factions seeking to realize group goals through violent tactics. They have the skills to draw upon latent grievances and to mold opinion regarding the dire nature of the threat a group may believe it faces.

As belief in this mission gains hold among members of the community, militant leaders find a larger, more cohesive group of followers upon whom they can draw for the political and military strategies they have designed. At the same time, the activities of ethnic and cultural entrepreneurs may also push the political and military leadership in a more militant direction. As the belief in the group's special mission takes hold, members of the group may pressure moderate group leaders to assume a more militant and violent stance to realize group goals as they have been defined by the cultural entrepreneurs and ethnic historians.

In the short run, the aim of group leaders is to secure the resources vital to the struggle: the funds, arms, sanctuary, and access that are necessary for the struggle against ethnic strangers and to increase their power. In the long run, leaders seek to seize group goals without unduly endangering their own survival, and in some cases, that of their group as well. Instrumental issues alone, however, cannot describe the behavior of ethnic leaders. Not all ethnic politicians are unscrupulous power-maximizers.⁸³ "While many nationalists are no doubt cynically consumed with self-interest and, arguably, most perceive certain personal benefits in the ultimate triumph, it is also true that the rhetoric of [ethnonationalist] movements depict them as causes which demand from their adherents at least a degree of altruism."⁸⁴ "Naked self-interest cannot thrive on its own without normative symbols of unity,"⁸⁵ which are vocalized and given coherent expression by the ethnic and cultural entrepreneurs. Group behavior is imbued with a powerful affective component, which draws upon instances of historic injustice, a common identity, religion,

⁸³ Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 242.

⁸⁴ Douglass, 197.

⁸⁵ Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 9.

a common culture, and humanitarian considerations.⁸⁶ As Esman notes, while every social movement attracts individuals and groups who seek personal gain,

to argue that mass constituencies can be mystified and hoodwinked to contribute funds, loyalty and support to a movement from which they derive no psychological or material benefits and whose rewards and opportunities are monopolized by a select handful of self-serving manipulators is to miss entirely the effects of socialization into an ethnic community and the force of collective dignity and efficacy that bind individuals to their ethnic roots.⁸⁷

According to the instrumentalist position, ethnicity is “either an ideology that elites construct and deconstruct for opportunistic reasons or a set of myths calculated to mobilize mass support for [their] economic or political goals.”⁸⁸ While the ethnic entrepreneurs, ethnic historians and language unifiers identify common attributes to solidify and strengthen group identity, they are constrained by the beliefs and values which exist within the group and which limit the kinds of appeals that can be made.⁸⁹ “Seldom is ethnicity invented or constructed from whole cloth: a cultural and experiential core must validate identity and make solidarity credible to potential constituents.”⁹⁰ Ethnic entrepreneurs do not simply create identities, nor can such identities be generated spontaneously. They must draw upon the group’s beliefs and values as well the group’s history, although this history may be refashioned, and at times, reinvented. Ultimately, group identity, as it is articulated by elites, must have resonance within the broader ethnic group for successful mobilization and the strengthening of group solidarity that are necessary prerequisites to the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence.

The authenticity of group leaders’ claims to represent the interests of the group as a whole has important implications for the intense, often violent internal politics that are endemic to the process whereby ethnic leaders face off against common enemies and thus, for understanding the decision to adopt a strategy of violence against these enemies.

⁸⁶Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 9.

⁸⁷Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 242.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁹Brass, 16.

⁹⁰Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 14.

Internal politics involve the right to control the common resources of the ethnic organization and to speak authoritatively for the group in its relations with outsiders, including the state.⁹¹ Contending organizations will claim to represent the same group. Whether they are considered authentic may have as much to do with their actual representation of the community as with the role of the state, which may work to discredit or minimize group leaders' appeal, and with the fragmentation of the group leadership, as in the case of the Kurds. Much of the energy of ethnic leaders must deal with managing these internal tensions in order to maintain control of the movement and to strengthen group solidarity against the "other."

Conflicts may emerge over the short term issue of tactics—whether group claims should be sought within the system or whether they should be secured through confrontation and violent struggle. They may also emerge over the long-term goals, tactics, and objectives of the struggle, the issue of religion, personal rivalries, ideological differences, difficulties in securing and maintaining third party support and involvement, the inability to limit the damaging effects of third party involvement,⁹² and a serious failure in either the group's political or military strategy. Bifurcation and fragmentation occur despite an unabated external threat.⁹³

Whether group leaders' claims to represent the collective interest of the ethnic group are in fact authentic, is not, in and of itself, critical to understanding the decision to employ a strategy of violent means. Rather, it is often leaders who lack a truly popular following that will likely be responsible for the decisions that lead to violence. If these leaders are skilled, control resources, particularly access to financial resources and arms, and have a dedicated following among militants willing to employ the leaders' strategies, then despite the lack of popular following, these leaders' decisions will determine whether relations with ethnic strangers will turn violent.

⁹¹Esman, "Political and Psychological Factors," 55.

⁹²Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 38.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 34.

Indeed, the decisions of particular ethnic factions and their leaders to adopt a strategy of violent confrontation is rarely influenced by the wishes of the community at large. "What has happened and is happening in many situations of interethnic violence is not that volatile and emotional ethnic masses slip out of the restraining leash of rational elites but that outbidding and outflanking counter elites seek to tap this mass emotional potential by inciting ethno-political radicalization."⁹⁴ When such factions do seize the initiative and pursue a strategy of violence motivated by their own personal quest for power or by the threat to group survival or group predominance, their decisions inevitably draw the rest of the community into the confrontation. More moderate elements with a larger popular base of support may be outbid by better organized and better resourced militant groups or may be forced to tap the same mass emotional potential militant leaders draw upon in order to protect their flanks.⁹⁵ If more militant leaders do have access to the resources necessary for a violent strategy, they may be able to draw a larger proportion of the population to their cause or to fragment further the group, thereby lessening the ability of more moderate elements to control the outcome of militant leaders' decisions or strategies. Moderate leaders may also be constrained in their efforts to promote accommodation by militant leaders who remain hostile to the opponent or who view the continuation of ethnic conflict as necessary to the advancement of the interests of their group.⁹⁶ Furthermore, such leaders may "benefit, politically or materially, from continuation of the conflict and be loath to pursue policies of amelioration."⁹⁷

According to Gurr, once open conflict is apparent, "consensus on common interests tends to increase."⁹⁸ However, he notes that there is no tendency for movements to become either more radicalized or more moderate during the course of the conflict since both kinds of shifts have been observed. If a shift in favor of more moderate options takes place, then

⁹⁴Rothschild, 195.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 564.

⁹⁷Ibid., 564.

⁹⁸Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 69.

moderate factions will have successfully out-bid and out-resourced militant factions and will have successfully vocalized their justifications for non-violent strategies. If a shift does occur in favor of more militant options, again it is the ethnic group's leadership, or a faction of that leadership, that has successfully framed group opinion and organized group resources. Leadership is crucial in the shift toward moderation or militancy. Both kinds of ethnic leaders thus play an important role in decisions to adopt violent strategies and in weakening moderate strategies for conflict resolution.

Ethnic leadership is also crucial for understanding why groups embark upon a seemingly irrational course of violence when their chances for success are slim if not nearly non-existent. Often ethnic entrepreneurs and leaders of militant factions will justify group goals according to the right to self-determination when the stated goal is secession or separation or upon grievous discrimination a group experiences by virtue of its being ruled by ethnic strangers when the goal is less than secession. In other cases, instances of discrimination or human rights abuses will be inflated to solidify group identity and strengthen the cause of leaders against ethnic strangers who control the state apparatus or who block leaders from seizing complete control. While in some cases such events or arguments are in fact justified, it is just as likely that these arguments mask the underlying reasons that prompt the ethnic leadership to adopt a particular strategy. In such cases, violence is not necessarily the outcome of popular support, nor of factions vying for the right to represent the group, but the result of the ethnic leadership's search for power, privilege and economic gain—often at the expense of the group itself.

Particularly among backward groups and backward regions, the most frequent initiators of ethnic violence, the beneficiaries of autonomy or secession are often the leaders themselves who will become the new elites in the proposed separatist state. Having removed ethnic strangers through violence, the ethnic leadership no longer faces competition from better educated ethnic strangers in the truncated secessionist state,⁹⁹ while

⁹⁹Horowitz, "Soviet Ethnic Problems," 17.

the population of the backward region suffers from the loss of state subsidies on which they have depended in the past. Indeed, the decision to seek group goals through violence will actually worsen conditions within the separatist region for the majority of the population. Ethnic leaders, however, will benefit from secession as they gain control of the new state, having eliminated ethnic strangers and moderates within their own ethnic group.

The underlying motivations that prompt ethnic leaders to adopt a seemingly irrational strategy of violence is often most clearly illuminated in the immediate days or weeks preceding the outbreak of conflict, when negotiations between the two ethnic groups or between the mobilized ethnic group and the state produces an agreement that may closely meet stated group goals. In other cases, lack of good faith negotiations continually lead to the collapse of ceasefires and the escalation of violence. The war in Nagorno-Karabakh has been shaped by the nearly continuous negotiation and subsequent collapse of ceasefire agreements. Upon the failure of a ceasefire, the leadership of the group deemed responsible for the failure will justify the renewed outbreak of hostilities on the grounds that a faction within the movement, over which the leaders who sign the agreement claim to have no control, is responsible. In fact, the collapse of the ceasefire is often orchestrated by the very leaders who negotiated the agreement and pledged to halt hostilities. Similar examples of failed negotiations and promises to adhere to outside mediation and conflict settlement initiatives abound in the case of Yugoslavia. While the populace at large may be willing to support an end to hostilities, leaders may perceive that further gain is possible if fighting continues and may even use ceasefires to their advantage, only to begin hostilities once the opponent has adhered to the ceasefire agreement.

The motivations, resources, and individual skills of ethnic entrepreneurs and ethnic leaders are thus clear factors in understanding the decision to adopt strategies of violent interethnic warfare. Whether group mobilization is founded upon real instances of discrimination or the designs of ethnic leaders for personal power, leadership is a crucial factor in the choice of strategy for the realization of group goals as they have been

articulated by cultural and ethnic entrepreneurs. Whether they are self-appointed leaders or authentic representatives of the ethnic group, their decisions are crucial to the course of the conflict and the initial decision to use violence. The more successful these leaders are in solidifying group identity, building a loyal network of supporters, and undermining or out-bidding moderate elements within the ethnic group, the greater their impact on the course of the conflict and the less successful other factions will be in influencing its outcome. Violence is clearly linked to the crucial role of ethnic leaders and cultural entrepreneurs and forms an important fourth proposition to explaining the choice of violent means.

Chapter Three

THE SOURCES OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE AT THE STATE LEVEL

Introduction

The outbreak of ethnic violence cannot be understood by looking solely at the group level. Large structural factors outside the group also shape its opportunities. To find additional explanations for the sources of ethnic violence, we must look at the state level, at the character of the state and its resources as well as at sudden changes in a group's political environment due to shifts in state power and policy.¹ The state serves as the primary arena of ethnic conflict and often the main goal of conflict. It is the prize to be occupied and exploited by the contending ethnic groups.² Because ethnic conflict is based on a struggle between different groups for political power and status, it is fundamentally linked to the existence of states.³

Chapter three introduces additional propositions and subpropositions to explain the sources of ethnic violence at the state level. The first differentiates between weak and powerful states. The inability of a weak state to respond to ethnic mobilization adequately either through accommodation, or alternatively, through repression, invites, if not encourages, ethnic violence. A second proposition focuses on the state apparatus and the exclusion and inclusion of ethnic groups. It suggests that the presence of 'policies of denial' on the part of at least one group toward another will determine whether a conflict has the potential for violence and concludes that exclusion prompts groups to challenge the existing system, seize the state for themselves, or, where the group is regionally concentrated, secede.

¹Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 130.

²Rothschild, 118.

³Renée de Nevers, "Democratization and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35 (Summer 1993): 32.

The Weak State

State responses to ethnic group mobilization are crucial in shaping the course and outcome of ethnic conflict. Strong states have the capacity to suppress rebellions or to make significant concessions to mobilized groups, whereas weak states are unable to do either. Indeed, "the eruption of ethnic conflict is not inevitable. By accident or by design, regimes may take measures that mitigate severe ethnic conflict."⁴ Failure to take such action, or the inability to do so, invites, if not encourages, the outbreak of ethnic violence

The state is the primary arena of ethnic conflict. It shapes and structures the course of ethnic mobilization and the dynamics of conflict. "The juridical attribute of sovereignty, the comprehensive scope of action, the magnitude of resource flow distribution, and the sheer power exercised by the modern state make its territorial realm decisive in the definition of communal interactions."⁵ As the primary arena where groups interact and conflict, the state determines the rules of the "political game," both in legal prescription and informal practice.⁶ Powerful states have the resources and capabilities to structure group relations according to set rules and to enforce them within their territorial realm, while weak or tentative states consistently fail to maintain control over the arena of group interaction and conflict. Where the weak state forms the arena of conflict, rules of interaction, if they exist, are rarely enforced, and the state becomes hostage to the interests and strategies of the groups who have carved up the territorial realm of the state or who seek to claim the state for themselves.

States vary in their strategies of conflict management and may pursue any number of policies aimed at accommodating or repressing communal contenders. These include, but are not limited to: extermination (actual or symbolic); population expulsion; coercion or domination; institutionalized discrimination such as segregation; assimilation; democratic majority rule and individual human rights; minority protection; integration (voluntary,

⁴Horowitz, "Soviet Ethnic Problems," 17.

⁵Young, 77.

⁶Ibid., 79.

“two-way” integration that is distinct from assimilation); a system of disproportional power for the minority group; autonomy; a federal system of government; and in rare cases, territorial separation.⁷ Strong states have the resources and capabilities to choose among these various strategies while weak states with their severely constrained resource and power bases have few choices.

Whether a state is powerful or weak, its response to ethnic mobilization not only shapes the dynamics of conflict, but also determines to a large extent whether groups will adopt strategies of violent ethnic conflict over non-violent strategies of ethnic politics. A state’s institutions and capabilities determine the political context of communal action and the course of ethnic mobilization.⁸ They impose constraints or provide opportunities for mobilization. A powerful state is capable of shaping the context in which group mobilization occurs, and thereby limiting the range of strategies available to the mobilizing group. A weak state is capable of neither controlling mobilization nor restricting the strategies available to ethnic groups within its confines.

Powerful states can thus be defined as those states with ample resources and power which allow for the successful adoption and implementation of any number of policies in response to the mobilization of an ethnic group within their boundaries (or as a preemptive measure if a segment of transnational kindred of their own population mobilizes against a neighboring state). Strength may derive from well-established and legitimate governing structures and mechanisms for successful accommodation of ethnic protest or from a rich resource base that provides the state with the ability to provide financial concessions to ethnic groups or to afford economic policies that respond to ethnic group demands. In such cases, the resources and wealth of the state can serve to mitigate protest and prevent rebellion. A subproposition relating to state strength is thus as follows:

⁷Alexis Heraclides, “Conflict Resolution, Ethnonationalism, and the Middle East Impasse,” *Journal of PeaceResearch* 26 (May 1989): 198.

⁸Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 135; Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 55.

If a state responds to ethnic mobilization with genuine concessions or measures aimed at redressing group grievances and the group is willing to settle for less than secession, then the group will be less likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. (P5.1)

Institutionalized democracies tend to be the most successful among powerful states at using their resources and capabilities to restrict to nonviolent options the range of legitimate strategies available to mobilized ethnic groups. These states tend to have ample resources to respond favorably to grievances expressed within a democratic framework. As a result, the opportunity structure for communal groups provides incentives for the group to opt for protest and disincentives for the choice of rebellion. An additional subproposition relating to powerful states is thus as follows:

Institutionalized democracy facilitates non-violent communal protest and inhibits rebellion.⁹ (P5.2)

Democratizing autocracies, however, are not as successful at mitigating violence. While communal groups in these states do have the opportunity to mobilize in an effort to redress grievances, these states rarely have the resources necessary to address group demands or the institutional means through which to reach accommodation. A fourth subproposition is thus as follows:

Democratization facilitates both non-violent protest and rebellion.¹⁰ (P5.3)

State strength can also be defined in terms of the coercive power of the state, the degree to which it can use authoritarian measures to repress and destroy ethnic resistance aimed at undermining its authority and power, or the degree to which it can successfully implement assimilation policies. Although such strategies are “ineffective in the long run and in many instances can turn mere autonomists into fully-fledged secessionists overnight,”¹¹ if state control and repression are strong enough, ethnic groups will determine that the costs of rebelling far outweigh the potential benefits. In such cases it is

⁹ Proposition 5.2 is borrowed from Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 138. For a more detailed discussion of democracy and ethnic conflict see pp. 78-83 below.

¹⁰ Proposition 5.3 is borrowed from Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 138.

¹¹ Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 198.

unlikely that state repression will succeed in removing the source of discontent; indeed, such actions will strengthen group grievances. These grievances will continue to simmer until the group reassesses the cost-benefit ratio favorably. Repression will thus only temporarily suppress grievances, unless the state goes beyond repression and adopts measures aimed at destroying the group itself, as Saddam Hussein has attempted in Iraqi Kurdistan. A third subproposition relating to state strength is thus as follows:

If a state responds to ethnic mobilization with repression, then ethnic groups will temporarily refrain from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence. (P5.4)

Some powerful states may choose to mitigate violence, while others may opt to rely on repression and force to prevent the outbreak of ethnic violence by mobilized groups against the state. Whether the state attempts to resolve ethnic grievances through accommodation or whether it determines that repression is a more favorable strategy, the state's strength, its ability to respond to group mobilization, will tend to prevent, or delay, the outbreak of ethnic violence. Communal political action in the most powerful states is thus likely to be limited in scope and to take the form of protest.¹²

Powerful states do tend to create grievances among competing groups by their actions to increase state power. An increase in the number of grievances against the state, however, does not necessarily translate into increased violence since a powerful state is capable of increasing the costs to groups of acting upon those grievances while, at the same time, increasing the payoffs to aggrieved groups for cooperating and assimilating. The options a strong state has in face of ethnic mobilization will thus lead groups either to opt for protest over rebellion or to delay plans to rebel until the costs of doing so are less daunting.

While a strong state can prevent the outbreak of ethnic violence, weak states invariably cannot. Weak states include many of the "tentative national states"¹³ of the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and most states of the Third World as well as

¹²Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 136.

¹³Marshall, 175.

faltering and failed states such as Haiti, Lebanon, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan. Weak states face a crisis of governability: “the declining ability...to govern, to carry out the many and various responsibilities of managing a modern state in an increasingly complex environment.”¹⁴ Such states are torn apart by political disharmony and disorganization and are unable to ensure public order, prevent domestic violence, ensure the minimal security of their citizens, stimulate their stagnating economies, or maintain their deteriorating infrastructure. The chief casualty of the state’s disintegration is the loss of political legitimacy and, along with it, a decline in political and social coherence.

Weak states face more “stark, zero sum choices”¹⁵ when segments of their population mobilize and contemplate rebellion. They have neither the resources nor the capabilities to reach accommodation with aggrieved ethnic groups. Rarely are they able to maintain a monopoly of the use of force within their borders. Ethnic groups organize private militias, criminal organizations flourish, the state’s traditional monopoly of armed force is seized by warring factions, and an environment emerges in which distinctions between war and crime are “lost in a rising tide of violence and anarchy.”¹⁶ Weak states lack the means to employ repressive measures to stymie group mobilization or to implement military measures to physically prevent mobilization, as many powerful states are capable of doing.

Faced with group mobilization against the state, the dominant ethnic group in a weak state may seek to expand its governing coalition by including other groups of ethnic strangers against the communal rebels, creating an often unstable and temporary coalition against a common enemy. A weak state may also attempt to repress group mobilization. Where the weak state does attempt to employ repressive measures and fails, groups will rapidly conclude that they have little stake in the existing state and will seek to secede from it or to

¹⁴Wm. J. Olson, “The New World Disorder: Governability and Development,” in *Gray Area Phenomena: Confronting the New World Disorder*, Max Manwaring ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 10.

¹⁵Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 136.

¹⁶Stofft and Guertner, 31.

claim the state for themselves. Repressive measures that fail or those that succeed only partially or temporarily thus accelerate the very process of mobilization and eventual adoption of violence that they sought to prevent.

The dominant ethnic may alternatively choose to devote scarce resources to all-out warfare.¹⁷ Since ethnic conflict tends to be protracted, the state may face a long-term costly expenditure to ensure its continued survival. If the costs escalate and become unbearable, other groups within the state may mobilize to seize the state or may join the rebelling group in an effort to shift the balance of forces in their favor and end the violence by defeating the dominant group. A weak state's choices are determined by the lack of resources or institutions necessary to reach the kinds of accommodation or extensive repression that strong states may implement in similar circumstances. Consequently, mobilized ethnic groups who confront a weak state's attempts at repression, efforts at coalition forming with other ethnic strangers, or all-out use of force will rapidly conclude they have little stake in the existing system and will mobilize to seize the state for themselves. The fifth proposition for understanding the sources of ethnic violence thus focuses on weak states:

If a state is weak and unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively, to repress group mobilization, then ethnic groups will resort to violence.
(P5)

In both strong and weak states, the failure of accommodation or the implementation of repressive measures will lead groups to conclude rapidly that they have a little stake in the existing state.¹⁸ Groups in strong states will be forced to delay their plans to rebel until the costs are less daunting. In weak states, however, violence will beckon as the only strategy capable of securing group goals.

Whether the strong state chooses to adopt a strategy of concession or repression, its decision is crucial to understanding the outbreak of violence: the conflict will be settled or delayed. A weak state's inability to offer such concessions, or to adopt repressive measures

¹⁷Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 136.

¹⁸Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 236.

without outside support, tends further to escalate the conflict and may even encourage the outbreak of violent interethnic warfare. States define the arena of conflict (except where states are so weakened as to be near or have collapsed) and their decisions structure both the outbreak and course of conflict, either preventing or failing to prevent violence through repression or concession.

Exclusion and Denial

Communal politics are about exclusion and inclusion, securing privileges that accompany inclusion and overcoming or mitigating the penalties that accompany exclusion, both of which require access to power. Inclusion brings privileges. The distribution of material and non-material goods, including special provisions for admission to educational institutions, civil service, or the armed services and access to employment opportunities, government contracts, business licenses, credit, and land and capital assets, the prestige of the various ethnic groups, their relative power and autonomy within the polity, and the identity of the state as belonging more to one group than another are indicators of political priority and benefits of inclusion which groups seek to protect or secure. These benefits and special provisions not only provide a group with desired material resources, but also serve as indicators of group prestige and group worth. What is at stake is “the whole issue of access to power and status for the contending ethnic groups.”¹⁹

Collective group worth is achieved in large measure by social recognition. Collective social recognition is in turn conferred by political affirmation. Inclusion secures the necessary political affirmation, which in turn confers another important symbol of group worth: “ethnic identification with the polity.”²⁰ Groups seek “recognition as a corporate identity by the state,”²¹ if not recognition of their “ownership” of the state.

¹⁹Rothschild, 26.

²⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 185.

²¹Weiner, 319.

Power is sought for confirmation of ethnic status as much as it is sought to gain access to the benefits of inclusion.

The contest for worth and place is the common denominator of ethnic conflict among unranked groups,²² the groups most concerned with inclusion and exclusion. In ranked systems, group boundaries coincide with class lines. Ranked groups are thus most concerned with the politics of subordination. Unranked groups, however, form incipient whole societies and stand in parallel relation to each other within the polity. For unranked groups, "it is not so much the politics of subordination that concerns them, though they are ever alert to threats of ethnic subordination, but rather the politics of inclusion and exclusion."²³ The structure of an unranked ethnic system such as is found in Yugoslavia and Iraq is thus conducive to periodic violence aimed at the exclusion of parallel ethnic groups and the transformation of the system into a ranked one, with one group dominant, and the other subordinate and excluded.²⁴ The ethnic systemic structure determines the nature of group demands: in ranked systems conflict will erupt over subordination whereas in unranked systems conflict will center on policies of denial.

The "presence of 'policies of denial' on the part of at least one group toward another will determine whether an ethnic conflict has the potential for violence"²⁵ and whether that conflict will reach the highest level of militancy.²⁶ Denial of the benefits and special provisions of inclusion will lead excluded groups to challenge the existing system, seize the state for themselves, or, where the group is regionally concentrated, secede, in attempt to secure these rights and benefits. "If an ethnic group's bid for an adequate share of political power and control within an extant multiethnic state proves unproductive, is repudiated as nonnegotiable, or the like, it may then well make a secessionist bid for a state

²²Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 186.

²³*Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Carment, 139.

²⁶Rothschild, 29.

of its own.”²⁷ A sixth proposition for explaining the sources of ethnic violence is thus as follows:

If an ethnic group is excluded or is threatened with exclusion from the polity, then the ethnic group may adopt a strategy of interethnic violence to challenge the existing state system or seize the state for itself. (P6)

Exclusion, or the threat thereof, and the denial of inclusion can thus lead groups to adopt violent strategies, particularly in “severely divided societies”²⁸ where ethnic affiliations are “powerful, permeative, passionate, and pervasive,”²⁹ politics are zero-sum, and ethnic divisions appear permanent.

“Severely divided societies” such as post-Tito Yugoslavia are societies that are “deeply riven along a preponderant ethnic cleavage.”³⁰ In these societies, ethnic rather than class cleavages appear permanent and all-encompassing: they determine who will be granted and denied access. The political community is thus bounded by issues pertaining to citizenship: who within the polity is a citizen, among those citizens, who has what privileges, and whose norms and practices are symbolically reflected in the state itself?³¹ In deeply divided societies, ethnic identity provides clear lines that determine who is included and excluded.

The policies of denial associated with severely divided societies are not confined to any region of the world or to any political system. Although policies of inclusion and exclusion and their associated problems are handled differently, they exist in both democracies and autocracies, and particularly in democratizing former autocracies. The outbreak of violence cannot be explained solely by the type of polity. Rather, the crucial factors are whether a society is severely divided, rather than open and fluid, and whether

²⁷Rothschild, 232.

²⁸Horowitz, “Democracy in Divided Societies” in *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy*, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 35.

²⁹Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 12.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 291.

³¹Horowitz, “Democracy in Divided Societies,” 42.

ethnic groups have instituted policies of denial excluding other ethnic groups within the polity.

Severely divided societies can be conducive to authoritarian rule. Indeed, autocracy is a “political condition distinctly associated with rebellion.”³² Elites will use traditional policies of divide and rule to emphasize ethnic differences, thereby ensuring the continued exclusion of ethnic strangers and the inclusion of the ruling group. The more sharply exclusive the regime, the more vigilant elites will have to be to maintain their position and thwart potential challengers. Such regimes will not hesitate to disrupt elections, if they are even held, and to take draconian measures to ensure the continued exclusion of ethnic strangers. If political parties are illegal, excluded groups will resort to other forms of communal mobilization, including cultural brokerage systems, to press their demands upon the state. If the included group is vigilant, such attempts will fail to challenge seriously the existing preeminence of included groups. However, where vigilance has been weakened, mobilization will be rapid. Since non-violent protest is constrained, if not restricted, excluded groups will have little alternative but to rebel. Excluded groups will quickly resort to violence to oust the included group and seize the material and non-material goods which they have been denied.

It was proposed above that institutionalized democracy facilitates non-violent communal protest and inhibits rebellion in long established democracies (P5.2). Communal minorities in advanced and well-established democracies face few political barriers and are thus more likely to use tactics of protest than rebellion. Such groups can opt for “voice” over “exit” since the political structure is well-established to respond to grievances expressed within the democratic framework. In severely divided polities or newly democratizing states, however, structures for interethnic bargaining within the established system are riven by the dominant ethnic cleavage or are still in the initial phases of becoming established, leaving groups with little choice when protest fails but to express

³²Barbara Harff, “Minorities, Rebellion, and Repression in North Africa and the Middle East,” in Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 219.

their demands through rebellion. When excluded groups do adopt undemocratic and unlawful methods of protest, there is “likely to be a spate of statutes and regulations authorizing arbitrary arrest and search, detention without trial, and restrictions on freedom of expression.”³³ Undemocratic actions on the part of the excluded group, when they fail to succeed, will likely provoke countermeasures, further reducing rather than enhancing democratic prospects.³⁴ Although democratic regimes tend to accommodate ethnic cleavages better than authoritarian ones, ethnic cleavages in severely divided societies do pose the greatest challenge to the continued functioning of democratic institutions.

There are two problems of democracy in severely divided societies: majority rule and minority rule. Neither is a solution. Both are a problem because they permit domination, apparently in perpetuity.³⁵ Excluded groups are denied access to the system and voice in the distribution of material and non-material goods. Although the system may be democratic, the dominant cleavage is ethnic and “floating voters”³⁶ are absent, leading excluded groups to fear that their position is permanent. In such cases, despite the existence of structures through which groups can express their grievances, the apparent perpetual state of exclusion of such groups does little to encourage them to continue to press their claims in a democratic, non-violent manner.

These problems are most evident in democratizing states, where institutions and practices are not yet established and where elites may find competition from former excluded groups an unwelcome and potentially threatening development. Their commitment to democratization may waver, and elites may chose to adopt a combination of intimidation, violence, and ethnic divisions among the opposition to ensure the continuation of their predominance. Additionally, elites may institute preferences for certain groups within the

³³Horowitz, “Democracy in Divided Societies,” 42.

³⁴Ibid., 39.

³⁵Ibid., 46.

³⁶Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, “Introduction,” in *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy*, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), xviii.

newly created polity, such as official language statutes that grant certain languages legitimacy and exclude others (despite the fact that a large proportion of the population does not speak the new state language). Often newly excluded groups are former enemies of the new group in power, underlining the fact that “as the future is being planned, the past intrudes with increasing severity.”³⁷ Indeed, as Horowitz notes, “there is no such thing as a fresh start.”³⁸

Past patterns of ethnic exclusion and authoritarian measures will continue to shape and influence the newly democratizing regime, threatening the very process of democratization and creating conditions for the eruption of interethnic violence. Excluded groups who constitute the opposition in such severely divided democracies may be motivated to choose violence over protest when their position is no longer regarded as legitimate. An “ethnically differentiated opposition can easily be depicted as consisting of particularly dangerous enemies: historical enemies, enemies who do not accept the current identity of the state, enemies who are plotting to break up the state or steal it for their own group—as indeed may be, given the crucial importance of state power and the costs of exclusion from it.”³⁹ When such groups are no longer regarded as the legitimate opposition, but as enemies of their political competitors in power, protest fails to provide an attractive alternative to violence. A deeply rooted sense of mutual trust among political competitors is vital to securing tolerance of the opposition.⁴⁰ When this trust is absent, democratic institutions fail to function properly, and excluded groups rapidly conclude that they have little stake in the existing system.

The primacy of the ethnic cleavage in severely divided societies also has important implications for the type of party system that forms. The most common feature of severely divided democracies (and thus of democratizing autocracies) is the ethnically based party

³⁷Horowitz, “Democracy in Divided Societies,” 40.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰Plattner and Diamond, “Introduction,” xix.

system. The pervasiveness of ethnic identity in severely divided societies creates “a strong impetus toward party organization along ethnic lines.”⁴¹ Parties will reflect the seemingly unalterable ethnic divisions within the community. Party boundaries and group boundaries will thus coincide.⁴²

Ethnically based parties are “parallel, exclusive political organizations” that appeal to the electorate in ethnic terms, make ethnic demands on the government, and bolster the influence of ethnically chauvinist elements within each group, thereby extending and deepening ethnic divisions within the polity.⁴³ They are both ascriptive and exclusive and thus challenge the very concept of a party since ethnic parties militate against the exercise of choice by voters.⁴⁴ Ethnic parties embrace ethnic demands as a matter of course and are thus identified with the cause of the ethnic group they present, regardless of the far-reaching consequences of their positions for the polity as a whole.⁴⁵

Elections in ethnic party systems register ethnic group affiliation, not choice. Horowitz employs an example of two groups in an ethnically divided state to emphasize the critical role ascription plays in ethnic politics.⁴⁶ In this example, the population of a state is divided along ethnic lines so that group A makes up 60% of the population and Group B only 40%. Political parties subsequently form along ethnic lines. In an election, Party A will win and form the government. The implications for Group B are thus ominous since Party A will always form the government. Party B has not lost just one election. The result of the election will likely hold for the next election and every one thereafter and “Group B will forever be excluded from power.”⁴⁷ Elections in ethnically based systems thus rapidly take on the character of a census. One group or party wins by its sheer demographic weight, and others see themselves as losing all, excluded not only from government, but

⁴¹Horowitz, “Democracy in Divided Societies,” 49.

⁴²Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 298.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 291-292.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 296.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 84.

also from the larger political community.⁴⁸ Since ethnic lines appear unalterable, exclusion and inclusion are deemed permanent.⁴⁹

When democratic elections produce ethnic exclusion, undemocratic reactions can be expected. The census quality of elections in ethnically based systems raises electoral turnouts until voter participation approaches 100% and a polarizing election occurs. The election subsequently splits the country.⁵⁰ Smaller parties or other ethnic parties are pressed to take sides. The reduction to only two parties reflects the emergence of an especially strong antipathy between the two groups and removes all flexibility in party maneuvering. "From then on, the sights of each ethnic party are fixed, not on a quest for coalition partners but on the struggle to defeat, and even destroy, the other ethnic party."⁵¹ Bifurcation thus "provides good reason for the excluded minority party [Party B] to depart from the electoral road to power—since that road in fact does not lead to power."⁵²

The excluded minority group, when faced with the choices of exit, voice, or loyalty,⁵³ will rapidly decide that it has little alternative but "exit." With "loyalty" and "voice" providing little in a society where ethnic cleavages are deemed permanent, "exit" becomes the only option, prompting excluded groups to adopt strategies of violence to secure the rights, privileges, and access which they have been denied. The excluded group will thus resort to violence, and where the group is regionally concentrated, to secessionist violence.⁵⁴ Two subpropositions are as follows:

If a group faces a seemingly perpetual exclusion from a severely divided polity after having unsuccessfully attempted to address its claims through non-violent means, then the ethnic group will adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to seize the state for itself. (P6.1)

If an ethnic group is regionally concentrated and has been excluded or is threatened with exclusion from a severely divided polity, then the group

⁴⁸Diamond and Plattner, "Introduction," xviii.

⁴⁹Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," 35.

⁵⁰Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 326-331.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 361-262.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 360.

⁵³Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 87.

⁵⁴Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," 45.

may adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to secede from the extant state.
(P6.2)

Inclusion and exclusion and the policies of denial that accompany them provide a clear impetus for discriminated groups to adopt violence over non-violent forms of protest, even in polities where democratic institutions are present. Because severely divided societies are characterized by ethnic cleavages, communal politics are shaped by the ethnic distinction, which imbues all aspects of intergroup relations. Where such cleavages are viewed as permanent and unalterable through non-violent measures, violence is often the only viable option for excluded groups to address their claims. Whether such groups have attempted to address their claims through non-violent protest and have failed, or whether their access to the system has been denied altogether, violence emerges as the only means to address their seemingly perpetual exclusion from the polity, be it democratic, authoritarian, or newly democratizing.

Chapter Four

THE SOURCES OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE AT THE INTERSTATE LEVEL

Introduction

Whether a communal movement will emerge at all is determined at the group and state levels. Whether a movement will achieve its aims, however, is determined largely at the interstate level by international conditions that impact group organization and capabilities, condition their access to resources, both financial and military, and sanctuary, and determine the extent and degree of international support they can secure in their efforts against the state or the ethnic strangers who control the state in which they live.¹ In fact, “although communal strife is essentially internal conflict...it is under constant pressure to internationalize.”² Ethnic conflict has thus become a major aspect and issue of international relations³ for few ethnic groups are confined within the borders of any single state. Most states are multiethnic and most ethnic groups transcend state boundaries, thereby presenting a potential challenge not only to the state itself, but to entire regions.

The final series of explanations for the sources of ethnic violence can thus be found at the interstate level. In this final chapter of Section I, four additional propositions for explaining ethnic violence at the international level are introduced. The first proposition looks at the phenomena of diffusion and contagion, or demonstration effects, which may prompt groups to adopt strategies of ethnic violence based on what they have learned from the example of similar groups or ethnic kindred elsewhere. Direct international assistance is

¹Donald L. Horowitz, “Patterns of Ethnic Separatism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (April 1981): 167 and Gurr, “Protracted Communal Conflicts,” 4. See also Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, chapter six.

²I. William Zartman, “Internationalization of Communal Strife: Temptations and Opportunities of Triangulation” in *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, Manus I. Midlarsky, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 27.

³Rothschild, 173.

the focus of the second proposition and access to financial resources and arms the focus of the third, both of which assess the crucial role such support plays in a group's decision to resort to violent means in the near term and its ability to sustain a strategy of violence in the long term. Finally, the fourth proposition looks at the sudden emergence of a "triggering event" in the international system that changes either the international or internal coalition of forces and propels groups to mobilize rapidly and employ violence to achieve their goals.

The Contagion and Diffusion of Ethnic Conflict

The contagion of ethnic conflict refers to a process whereby ethnic groups derive inspiration, incentive, and guidance from the aspirations, organization, and strategies of other mobilized ethnic groups who are either transnational kindred or who share similar circumstances of discrimination at the hands of ethnic strangers. Since most ethnic groups transcend state boundaries, the aspirations, activism, and strategies adopted by any one such segment of transnational kindred is likely to have a demonstration effect upon other segments and may facilitate their proactive mobilization in response. "Under the right circumstances..., a single revolutionary success can change the perceptual universe of unhappy and ambitious groups throughout the region and inspire them to action if only by providing a demonstration that something can be done."⁴

The literature uses various terms to describe this process of social learning whereby groups learn from the example of other groups. The two most frequently used terms are 'contagion' and 'demonstration effect,' representing the instrumentalist and primordialist viewpoints respectively. 'Imitation' and 'diffusion' are two additional terms used to describe the indirect nature of the process of inspiration and information that may motivate groups to adopt similar strategies of interethnic conflict.⁵ For Horowitz, contagion and demonstration effects are distinct: contagion itself can create ethnic sentiments but

⁴William J. Folz, "External Causes" in *Revolution and Political Change in the Third World*, Barry M. Shultz and Robert O. Slater, eds. (Boulder, CO: Lynn Reinner, 1990), 59.

⁵Ibid.

demonstration effects require that these sentiments already exist in order for the receiving group to be motivated by the demonstration movement. "The example of one movement cannot create separatist sentiment where it does not exist; this is not a question of contagion."⁶ Other authors use the terms interchangeably, distinguishing between them only because of the different metaphors they suggest.⁷ This is the approach that will be adopted here.

Contagion is a medical term, while diffusion is a spatial term. Contagion implies that "learning and example are important in spreading war," but it also suggests that what 'infects' one political actor to go to war may affect others."⁸ 'Diffusion' is a physical metaphor suggesting that the spread of ethnic conflict is like the spilling (and spreading) of a liquid.⁹ The focus here is thus on geography and direct contact. 'Contagion' is an unfortunate term, suggesting that ethnic mobilization is an "evil disease" that is best avoided or "quarantined." It has thus been avoided by primordialist authors who argue that many groups are not "infected" but are legitimately seeking the resolution of their grievances, some degree of separate existence, or recognition of their role and place in the extant state. The intention here is not to suggest that ethnic conflict is a rampant disease but that it that can spread through contact with a belligerent fighting elsewhere. This contact is different from the contact involved in diffusion because it is through choice. It occurs through networks of transnational kindred or trading relationships. Thus, it is not accurate to liken contagion to the spread of a rampant disease: there is an element of choice involved. The spread of ideas is intentional.¹⁰ The set of interests and relationships that make one group go to war might under certain conditions make another group opt for violence.¹¹

⁶Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 279.

⁷See John A. Vasquez, "Factors Related to the Contagion and Diffusion of International Violence," in *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, Manus I. Midlarsky, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 149-172.

⁸*Ibid.*, 162.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Folz, 57.

¹¹Vasquez, 163.

The crucial factor that distinguishes contagion from other forms of influence is that contagion is indirect.¹² It does not involve other forms of direct assistance, such as financial support, military advisors, arms, or the offer of sanctuary, important factors that do influence the course of ethnic conflict, but are of a direct nature and thus distinct from the contagion process. Informal connections that have developed among communal groups may provide members with information about better techniques, good leadership, and organizational skills.¹³ As long as these networks remain outside the actual process of conflict, the sharing of information may influence the outbreak of conflict elsewhere. Once such networks provide direct assistance, whether diplomatic, political, financial, or military, then the outbreak of conflict can no longer be said to result from contagion, but from direct support, which is a separate proposition discussed below.

Contagion is a process of social learning¹⁴ that is linked to the flow of information about a political conflict between one or more collectivities to similar groups or segments of transnational kindred. The information received can be of two kinds. Groups may simply derive it from observing other societies organize and mobilize against ethnic strangers. The struggle in other countries may provide such groups with a clearer sense of their own political identity, and the mobilization of other groups may heighten a group's own sense of collective identity. Conflict elsewhere can also serve to educate groups in the means, tactics, and strategies of successful or unsuccessful interethnic conflicts. Lessons drawn may be based on other groups' experiences and then adapted to fit the particular needs or aspirations of a group. One example is Croatian President Franjo Tudjman's visit to Sweden and Norway to study their peaceful separation as a model for Croatia's potential separation from Yugoslavia. Transnational kindred or similar groups may learn from another group's errors, study their choice of strategy, both military and diplomatic, or seek

¹²Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 133.

¹³*Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁴Stuart Hill and Donald Rothchild, "The Contagion of Political Conflict in Africa and the World," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 30 (December 1983): 719.

to approach the same sources of outside support for pursuit of their own goals. One of the most crucial factors, however, is the inspiration groups acquire from the successful mobilization of groups in similar circumstances or ethnic kindred elsewhere. These successes can provide “images and moral incentives that motivate activists”¹⁵ to adopt similar strategies of violent interethnic warfare. A seventh proposition regarding the outbreak of ethnic violence is thus as follows:

If mobilized ethnic groups elsewhere who are either transnational kindred or who share similar circumstances of discrimination at the hands of strangers adopt a strategy of ethnic violence, then their example may have a demonstration effect upon an ethnic group. (P7)

Groups may derive inspiration from the example of other ethnic groups who may share similar circumstances such as actual or perceived discrimination and threats to group survival. Such groups need not be ethnic kindred for contagion to affect the outbreak of conflict, nor do they need to be neighbors or even in the same region. In many cases, groups that share a similar situation but do not constitute segments of a transnational kindred may derive inspiration as well as tactical and strategic information from other groups’ predicaments and the resulting strategies they adopt. However, where groups are members of a network of ethnic kindred or in close geographical proximity, the demonstration effect of their conflict upon the original group tends to be stronger. Groups are more likely to respond to conflict that is closer rather than farther away, in a country that is more rather than less similar, and in a region more likely to be covered by the media.¹⁶ The farther away the rebellion takes place and the greater the difference in circumstances under which conflict erupted, the less likely that the group will be aware of its occurrence or influenced by its existence. Thus, a subproposition relating to the contagion and diffusion of ethnic conflict is as follows:

A demonstration effect is stronger within networks of ethnic kindred and between groups who are nearer rather than farther. (P7.1)

¹⁵Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 134.

¹⁶Hill and Rothchild, 723.

A demonstration effect is also stronger among groups who have a history of protest, such as the Kurds who are spread across five states in the Middle East. Groups with little or no history of civil strife should be relatively immune to the example of conflict elsewhere. Groups that have actively rebelled in the past, however, are more likely candidates for the contagion effect. An additional subproposition is thus as follows:

An ethnic group's responsiveness to the demonstration effect of ethnic violence elsewhere increases with the ethnic group's level of previous protest. (P7.2)

The contagious effect of ethnic conflict elsewhere is also influenced by the state in which the affected group lives. Where there is a history of past conflict or where states can be described as deeply divided¹⁷ one would expect that conflict elsewhere would be more contagious. States marked by "extreme heterogeneity," where groups are so small and factionalized relative to the whole that civil strife will be less instructive for their purposes, are less likely to be impacted by the contagion of ethnic conflict.¹⁸ Two additional subpropositions are can thus be introduced:

A demonstration effect is stronger in states or regions with either a history of past conflict or with a deeply divided society. (P7.3)

A demonstration effect is weaker in states marked by extreme heterogeneity. (P7.4)

Contagion does not influence the outbreak of violent interethnic warfare in all cases, but it does form an important element in understanding why mobilized ethnic groups adopt violent strategies of interethnic warfare. Ethnic conflict elsewhere can only be contagious when two minimal conditions are met.¹⁹ First, groups that may derive inspiration and motivation from such conflict must already have a latent sense of group identity. Such groups need not be mobilized, but they should share an awareness of their special identity in contrast to the "other." Second, conflict elsewhere is unlikely to prove contagious unless members of the group are disaffected and have already considered the possibility of acting

¹⁷ See pp. 77-83 above for a detailed discussion of deeply divided societies.

¹⁸ Hill and Rothchild, 721.

¹⁹ Ibid., 719-720.

upon those grievances.²⁰ A common or latent sense of identity alone is not sufficient for ethnic conflict elsewhere to prove contagious; groups must also commonly perceive that their position in contrast to ethnic strangers is threatened, that their survival as a group is threatened, or that their predominant position in a polity is being undermined by ethnic strangers. Once these minimal conditions are met, contagion may be a factor in influencing the adoption of a strategy of violent interethnic warfare.

There are additional factors that may serve to limit the contagion effect even when these minimal conditions are met. One important constraining issue is the degree to which information is controlled. The media plays an important role in “either facilitating or inhibiting the contagion of political discord.”²¹ If the media is free to cover outside protests, the impact of such events would be magnified. Information would thus be transmitted rapidly and groups may mobilize quickly in response. However, if the media is controlled by ethnic strangers who deem that it is not in their interest to allow information about a rebellion to be commonly known, then contagion may have little impact upon the outbreak of violence.

Media censorship can clearly limit the contagion effect since the very information that forms the basis for the process of social learning is restricted, and few, if any, members of the group who may derive inspiration from the conflict will be aware of its occurrence. Even if the group’s leadership is aware of the rebellion elsewhere, it may be unable to transmit this information to members of the group if its access to the media is controlled or restricted.

One can thus conclude that waves of violence that erupt in a region are neither random nor coincidental. Contagion has clearly had an impact on the mobilization of Kurdish groups throughout the Middle East, and contagion influenced the mobilization of ethnic groups in the former Soviet Union following the outbreak of conflict over Nagorno-

²⁰Hill and Rothchild, 719-720.

²¹Ibid., 721.

Karabakh. In each of these cases, the contagion of conflict elsewhere motivated mobilized ethnic groups, who had nurtured grievances against the state or controlling ethnic groups for decades if not centuries, to embark upon strategies of violent interethnic warfare. While other factors were also crucial in each of these conflicts and are discussed separately, the process of contagion is an important element in understanding the outbreak of ethnic violence.

International Support

International support facilitates the proactive mobilization of ethnic groups and the outbreak of violent interethnic warfare. Indeed, one could argue that “inherent in ethnic conflict is the propensity to attract and involve external actors and foreign interventions.”²² Unlike contagion and the impact of transnational kindred, international support is direct. It can range from diplomatic support to direct invasion by an external power. In all cases, however, international support involves clear, direct, and explicit intervention by an outside power. Not only is the involvement explicit, but the invitation to intervene is also direct. Groups actively recruit international support in their conduct of interethnic war.

International support can be divided into two categories: tangible support and political-diplomatic support.²³ Tangible support includes material or utilitarian aid, aid by way of access, and assistance by way of services rendered within or outside the area of conflict. It can extend from simple “transactional involvement” to full-scale military intervention. Tangible support provides groups with crucial assistance that facilitates if not encourages violence. As both combatants secure increasing involvement and direct assistance, violence will escalate further. Tangible international support clearly raises the stakes of conflict.

²²Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 62.

²³For further discussion of the two types of international support see Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 48-49.

Political-diplomatic support includes verbal public statements, diplomatic pressure on one's opponent and its allies and supporters, voting in international organizations, and official contacts with the opponent through mediation efforts which serve to strengthen the legitimacy of ethnic group claims. Political-diplomatic support may include expressions of humanitarian concern to recognition of secessionists or ethnic groups as a state or liberation movement, respectively. While such support does not involve tangible aid such as arms or money, it too clearly raises the stakes of conflict and facilitates the outbreak of violence. While both tangible support and political-diplomatic assistance are crucial for the success, or relative success of ethnic conflict but also for its failure, they remain "highly coveted goals."²⁴ An eighth proposition for understanding the sources of ethnic violence is thus as follows:

If a third party becomes involved in conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers, then the stakes of conflict will be raised, the conflict will be transformed from an internal to an international conflict, and the ethnic group will be more likely to adopt a strategy of violence.²⁵ (P8)

Ethnic groups will seek to internationalize the conflict, despite the fact that internationalization usually favors the center (the government or state power that controls the region in which ethnic groups rebel).²⁶ Internationalization is pursued by ethnic groups for a number of reasons: to gain external adherents or third party support, consolidate sympathizers, secure aid and the inflow of fundamental goods such as arms, sanctuary, funds and access, seek mediators, neutralize or limit the extent of third party support for the central government or ethnic against whom the group is fighting, and secure "side effects," namely gaining valuable time, appearing conciliatory, improving intelligence, publicizing their cases, and most importantly, discrediting their adversary.²⁷ Their choices are affected by the group's access to governmental power, the relative strength of their domestic

²⁴Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 49.

²⁵Zartman introduces a similar proposition: "internationalization of a conflict through the use of a host neighbor for support and sanctuary makes the conflict more intractable." See Zartman, 37.

²⁶Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 211.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 37-47.

enemies, and the intensity of the conflict.²⁸ If one group controls domestic resources, the other is likely to need outside resources to balance this advantage.²⁹

Gaining external support serves two important purposes: it provides a mechanism by which groups can achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict and, at the same time, allows groups to continue fighting. The two are not exclusive, but can be pursued simultaneously. As conflict continues, the stakes are raised, providing groups with an important lever to force their opponent to the bargaining table.

Internationalization and international support involve significant costs. Groups may be overly dependent on outside support only to find themselves abandoned with few qualms by their former patrons. Unless they find alternative source(s) of support, their efforts may fail. In addition, as will be demonstrated in each of the case studies below, once secured foreign support is undependable. Third parties are generally motivated to intervene for reasons that often have little to do with the underlying issues that prompted the outbreak of violence in the first place, and although third parties may assure groups of their support for ethnic group aims, often those aims are supported only as long as third parties derive more benefit than cost from their involvement. Once the cost-benefit ratio exceeds a certain level, often a much lower level of acceptability for outside interveners than for groups involved in conflict, groups will find themselves abandoned. Third parties may also switch their support from the rebelling ethnic group to the state or the ethnic group controlling the state to suppress the conflict when it is in danger of affecting the external state's own interests in the region,³⁰ something Russia has repeatedly done in the states of the near abroad. The ethnic group will then not only find itself abandoned, but also subjected to suppression by its former patron. The ultimate hazard is the group's betrayal in the interest of their patron's *raison d'état*.³¹

²⁸ Astri Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble, "Introduction" in *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, Astri Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1977), 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁰ Zartman, 31.

³¹ Rothschild, 181.

Groups also risk losing control over their own destiny by undue dependence on foreign powers, who may use them as pawns in pursuing their own, often divergent, interests³² for “no government ever acts exclusively from affective ethnofraternal considerations.”³³ Third party support raises group expectations which may be dashed suddenly by the withdrawal of support. A group’s image may also be tarnished by ties to an external, “disreputable” source, whose ideology may be incompatible with that of the group.³⁴ Furthermore, “external support brings in a new, third side which carries new interests and dynamics to the conflict, delays settlement, and makes a situation propitious to evenhanded agreements difficult to obtain.”³⁵ Thus, although external support is a central goal in ethnic conflict, its costs may be unduly high, eventually undermining efforts to secure group goals. While third party support is crucial to the outbreak of ethnic conflict, it may also be central to its failure, as the Kurds discovered in 1975 at Algiers. “External support sustains these movements, but it rarely enables them to be successful.”³⁶

Support can come from any assortment of international actors. Superpowers, regional powers, well-known arms suppliers, organizations and states with vested interests in the region, relief organizations, prestigious international non-governmental agencies, and central organizations such as the United Nations, may all be targeted for support by both ethnic groups and their opponents. Many of the sources for the contagion of ethnic conflict can also become important sources of external support, including segments of transnational kindred, who may offer sanctuary and access; groups with the same or similar ideology, language, culture, religion, race or history; enemies of their opponents, particularly regional powers or great powers; and revolutionary or radical regimes with a demonstrated commitment to unorthodox measures.³⁷ External support, however, “seems longest-lived

³²Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 277.

³³Rothschild, 186.

³⁴Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 38.

³⁵Zartman, 40.

³⁶Weiner, 326.

³⁷Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 39.

when it comes, not from strong, established states with clear-cut interests, but from irregular forces across porous, remote borders.”³⁸ Internationalization thus involves competition between the two parties to seize upon sources of support and deny their opponents access. While states may have the advantage in this competition by virtue of their internationally recognized legal status and membership in crucial organizations and alliances, ethnic groups have actively recruited international support and have not been disappointed in their quest for successful internationalization of the conflict.

International support is thus a crucial factor in understanding the outbreak of violent interethnic conflict. Both tangible and political-diplomatic support raise the stakes of conflict and provide crucial support, both internal to the conflict, and internationally, representing group interests and goals at the international level and placing pressure on the state against which the group is rebelling to accommodate group demands. Although international support also carries significant costs, internationalization of the conflict remains an important group goal and clearly facilitates the outbreak of conflict.

Arms and Financial Resources

Although a group may have a strong sense of identity, a capable leadership, and grievances against ethnic strangers, adopting a strategy of violence is not possible on a large scale without access to arms. Indeed, whether a group has access to arms and ammunition, as well as training, maintenance, and parts is a crucial factor in understanding why groups will adopt a strategy of violence over other forms of non-violent protest or ethnic bargaining.

Access to arms is a crucial threshold for violence. To cross that threshold requires financial capital or support from an outside group or state who will provide either the necessary funds or the arms themselves. Such support may be obtained from states or groups who are either transnational kindred, have an interest in the conflict or region, share

³⁸Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 276.

the interests of the group seeking to pursue a strategy of violence, or have no real link to the combatants but may be motivated by broader, regional issues which have little to do with the immediate or long-term aims of the group they support. Thus, a major factor in securing arms through the assistance of a political group or state is whether or not the source of support is reliable, particularly in cases where the outside actor may be motivated purely by an interest in destabilizing the region and have little interest in seeing the realization of group goals. Consequently, for a group to rely on third party support for its weapons and/or finances, it must determine not only if that support is reliable, but also if that support will be sustained for the duration of the conflict or at least long enough for the group to establish links with an alternative source of support. If the group leadership is unable to establish such links, the decision to employ a strategy of violence will be further complicated and may prove impossible. A ninth proposition for understanding the sources of ethnic violence is as follows:

If the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or local militaries, then there is a strong tendency for an ethnic group with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.
(P9)

During the height of the Cold War, such support was readily available. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the socialist bloc, and its regional surrogates, immediate sources of financing, arms, training, and safe havens have also disappeared. Superpower rivalry in those regions of the world where states are faltering or failing, where regions are characterized by the condition of ungovernability, and where societies are deeply divided and ethnic tensions are high no longer provides groups with the means to secure access to these vital resources for waging violent interethnic warfare.

This collapse and, in the case of Yugoslavia, the imposition of an arms embargo, have forced groups to look elsewhere for an alternative source of support. This search has led to the forging of an important relationship between ethnic groups and organized crime, one which is mutually beneficial, convenient, sustainable, and possibly more reliable.

Indeed, “organized criminal activity in the form of arms and drugs trafficking, the smuggling of strategic materials and other profitable contraband, extortion and robbery, hostage-taking for ransom, and other crimes are increasingly part of insurgency, civil war, and ethnic conflict in quite different areas of the world.”³⁹ Organized crime has provided ethnonationalist groups with an alternative means of support and a “seductive source of personal and criminal profit.”⁴⁰

There are three main links between such groups and organized crime.⁴¹ First, organized criminal groups and ethnonationalist groups may establish links based on a common or related ethnic identity. Second, criminal groups are able to shield their operations from local governments, as in the case of the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, through the dislocation of peoples, the undermining of government control in regions of ethnic fighting, and the corruption of local officials who are either forced or persuaded to ignore the activities of criminal organizations. Finally, ethnonationalist groups forge ties with organized crime to increase their operational effectiveness, as in the case of ethnic Albanians, Bosnian Muslims, and Croatian groups in the former Yugoslavia and the PKK operating in southeastern Turkey, Armenia, and northern Iraq.

For criminal organizations, the link with ethnonationalist groups engaged in violence against ethnic strangers or the state provides a protective environment for such organizations to engage in criminal activities, safeguards access to vital information about the organization and its activities, adds to the success of criminal operations and minimizes loss, provides safe havens and loyal operatives outside the zone of conflict through the ethnonationalist group’s diaspora communities, and most importantly, because of their shared ethnic identity, provides loyal operatives that further ensure the success of a criminal

³⁹Graham H. Turbiville, “The Organized Crime Dimension of Regional Conflict and Operations Other Than War” in *Ethnic Conflict and Regional Instability: Implications for U.S. Policy and Army Roles and Missions*, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. and Richard H. Shultz, Jr., eds. (Washington, D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1994), 128.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 126.

⁴¹Richard H. Shultz, Jr. and Wm. J. Olson, *Ethnic and Religious Conflict: Emerging Threat to U.S. Security* (Washington, D.C.: National Strategy Information Center, 1994), 26-27.

organization's operations.⁴² In return, ethnonationalist groups gain access to arms, information, training, and the means to finance their operations as well as a source of reliable and sustainable support because of this shared ethnic identity.⁴³

There are numerous examples of the links between ethnonationalist groups and organized crime. The Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union, which is the scene of numerous interethnic conflicts, including the recent Russian intervention in Chechnia, the North Ossetian-Ingush conflict, the conflicts in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and in Georgia, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the tensions in Nakhichevan, and the ethnic strife in Daghestan, is rife with organized groups, various ethnic factions affiliated with such groups and arrayed against others, and local military factions, national guards and "armies" under limited government control or operating freely in the region, all of which have added to the immense violence that has characterized this region since the Soviet collapse.

The Chechen mafia, one of the best organized and most cohesive of the mafias operating in the former Soviet Union, has established links throughout the former Soviet Union and in Europe and has engaged in narcotics trafficking, car thefts, oil and gas diversions and arms trafficking.⁴⁴ Through these activities, which served as an important rationale for Russia's intervention in the Fall of 1994, Chechens have played an important role in the conflicts in the Caucasus, particularly in Abkhazia, where mercenaries and members of the Confederation of the Caucasian Mountain Peoples, armed and organized by the Chechen leadership, fought on the side of the Abkhaz against the Georgians.

In the former Yugoslavia, the various warring ethnic groups and their diaspora communities outside the zone of conflict have secured access to arms and the profits from criminal activities through closer linkages with organized crime, particularly since the former Yugoslavia has been subject to an arms embargo. Although Yugoslavia, as part of the Balkan route, had a long-standing role in the international heroin trade, the outbreak of

⁴²Shultz and Olson, 27.

⁴³Ibid., 28.

⁴⁴Ibid., 30.

violence disrupted existing smuggling routes, led to the collapse of institutional affiliations and border control procedures, and “changed routes and priorities for smugglers and state institutions alike.”⁴⁵ Although routes changed, drug trafficking continued and groups forged links with criminal organizations not only to continue drug trafficking activities, which provided the necessary financial resources for waging war, but also to secure the necessary arms and ammunition.

Through links with organized crime and the activities of diaspora communities, gray and black arms markets could be accessed with the profits resulting from the group’s drug-trafficking and other criminal activities. Groups and state institutions were able to secure the necessary means for violence despite the arms embargo.⁴⁶ As a result, the “development of a brisk trade in drugs and arms jointly took place hand-in-hand with the conflict, sometimes using the same routes, carriers, and transport means”⁴⁷ and criminal groups become “better armed and more difficult to penetrate” while the police became “more corrupt and less effective.”⁴⁸

The link with organized crime not only provides access to the means necessary to wage war, but also changes the nature and course of conflict. Drug-trafficking provides such groups with access to immense wealth which in turn will shift the aims of groups involved. According to a Serbian commentator, Serbian leaders “are not only in a position to take advantage of the war, but they are also in a position to maintain it so long as it brings in income.”⁴⁹ Similar charges have been leveled against Bosnian Muslims engaged in criminal activities in Sarajevo for acting to prolong the siege in order to secure criminal profits.⁵⁰

⁴⁵Turbiville, 134.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 135.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Cerovic, “The Serbian Awakening,” quoted in Turbiville, 135.

⁵⁰Turbiville, 137.

Criminal activity by ethnonationalist groups also extends to ethnic kindred living abroad and even to states themselves. Croatian diaspora communities in Latin America and Western Europe have been charged with purchasing arms for the Croatian state and undertaking drug-trafficking activities for profit.⁵¹ Furthermore, the Croatian state has sold drugs that it seized in counternarcotics operations to purchase arms on the black market for the war.⁵² Such activities are justified because “under conditions where an expensive war is being waged at any price, expenses cannot be covered by the real implementation of national economies, so that states in the territory of the former Yugoslavia are accepting crime as a source of funding and emerging as partners of the underworld.”⁵³

Alongside the growth in linkages between organized crime and ethnic groups engaged in violent interethnic warfare, traditional sources operating under conditions of ungovernability have played an important role in group decisions to adopt violent strategies. In the former Soviet Union, remnants of the Soviet military in the new states of the near abroad played an important role in the outbreak of violent conflict. Demoralized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, these forces, which were also poorly paid and badly housed, took part in conflicts in Russia’s “near abroad,” raising the stakes and violence of these conflicts.

Soviet military equipment in each of the former republics was either stolen, bought with the profits from criminal activities from local Russian military commanders, or used by Russian forces themselves in the various conflicts in the near abroad. Russian commanders in Armenia and Azerbaijan were involved in the “sale” of weaponry and were accused of fighting alongside Armenian and Azeri forces.⁵⁴ Similarly, Russia placed an entire former Soviet division under the control of the ex-Communist regime in Tajikistan, provided crucial financial support, and subsequently provided Russian military personnel

⁵¹Turbiville, 136.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Comment by a specialist in Belgrade, quoted in Turbiville, 136.

⁵⁴“Karabakh Escalation Leads to Fear of CIS Involvement; Jitters About Turkish Exercise,” *The Estimate*, 4 (February 28-March 12, 1992): 1.

to train the new Tajik armed forces.⁵⁵ In any case, this weaponry and the expertise of rogue Russian commanders in each of these regions provided crucial military support to ethnic groups seeking to pursue a strategy of violent conflict against ethnic strangers or the state. In many such cases, local commanders, whether on order from Moscow or in reaction to the loss of what was deemed an integral part of the Russian empire, were eager to foil efforts by elites to consolidate their control over the newly formed republics. Additionally, they were eager to supplement their meager incomes with profits from various criminal activities which groups used to acquire weaponry and pay for Russian military guidance. In other cases, as in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Russian forces became directly involved with organized crime, providing military transit for drug-trafficking activities.⁵⁶

The linkages between ethnic groups, organized crime, and the armed forces of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have proved crucial to the outbreak of violent interethnic warfare. These relationships are mutually beneficial, providing each partner with important assets, including immense profits, arms, sanctuary, training, and loyal operatives. Indeed the ethnic links between organized crime and ethnonationalist groups are a crucial factor. Strong, cohesive ethnic groups and clan-linkages provide criminal organizations with highly cohesive, loyal functionaries for the conduct of criminal activities in regions that are torn by ethnic strife. These linkages form a crucial source of support for ethnic groups without other access to arms and ammunition. Because ethnic ties are so strong, linkages with organized crime based on these ties provides a more stable, reliable, and sustainable source for such groups than linkages with outside states and actors would, particularly if those third parties are motivated by broader, regional interests and have no ethnic stake in the conflict.

⁵⁵James Sherr, "Escalation of the Tajikistan Conflict," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (November 1993): 514.

⁵⁶Turbiville, 131.

The growth of these relationships between organized crime and ethnonationalist groups presents a troubling change in the way ethnic conflicts will be fought. Because such linkages provide groups with benefits beyond the immediate access to arms, they serve as incentives to extend conflict both in time and space and raise the level of violence, particularly when the immense profits gleaned from criminal activities provide groups with increasingly sophisticated weaponry. A subproposition can thus be added to our understanding of the sources of ethnic violence:

Linkages between ethnic groups and organized crime extend the conflict in time and space and raise the level of violence. (P9.1)

Alongside the growing links between such groups and organized crime is the role former militaries play in regions where the state has collapsed. With the profits from drug trafficking and other lucrative criminal activities, groups can purchase large amounts of advanced weaponry from local commanders and even draw them into the conflict, again raising the stakes of conflict and increasing the level of violence.

Access to weaponry and the means to purchase them are clearly crucial factors in the outbreak of violent conflict, and linkages with criminal organizations and the vast profits such linkages engender does little to encourage groups to chose alternative, non-violent strategies for achieving group aims. Rather, conditions of ungovernability, the collapse of state institutions and state control over military forces and weaponry, and the growth of criminal organizations and their linkages with ethnic groups create an environment that is not only conducive to the outbreak of ethnic conflict, but in fact encourages it. In such conditions, groups will mobilize rapidly and employ their access to arms to embark on a strategy of violence in order to secure group claims against ethnic strangers.

A Triggering Event

The final proposition to explain the decision to employ a strategy of interethnic violence is the sudden emergence of a “triggering event” that ignites communal tensions

and grievances, creates a sense of urgency that propels group leaders to vocalize claims and mobilize groups, motivates ethnic entrepreneurs to link group survival to immediate action, changes the international or internal coalition of forces, and provides the opportunity for outside support. A triggering event can be internal or external to the group, shaping a group's opportunities for action. A final proposition for understanding the sources of ethnic violence is thus as follows:

If a sudden "triggering event" occurs either internal or external to the group, then there will be a strong tendency for an ethnic group to resort to violence.
(P10)

This final proposition and the preceding propositions are thus interrelated. If a communal group is already mobilized; shares a belief in its unique identity as it is vocalized by ethnic entrepreneurs, militant nationalists or ethnic chauvinists; has grievances against ethnic strangers or the state; fears for its continued survival; seeks to reclaim a special territory or fulfill an historic mission; is led by a competent or well-resourced factionalized leadership; has access to international support and resources; has been denied access to the existing regime or lives in a state that is faltering or failed; has failed in its efforts to press its claims peacefully against the state; has suffered from repression and human rights abuses; or is motivated by the contagion of conflict elsewhere, a triggering event will create a sense of urgency that the group must seize the moment provided by the internal or external shift of forces to secure its demands and resolve its grievances. However, a triggering event can also ignite these very same conditions, propelling groups to adopt a strategy of interethnic violence.

The process whereby a triggering event leads to violence is contextual, complex, and specific to each case. In some instances, group grievances have simmered for years, waiting for a shift in forces that provides group leaders with the opportunity to press their claims on the state or against ethnic strangers. In other cases, the triggering event itself may threaten a group's position and provide the impetus for groups to secure that position, access to resources, "ownership" of the state, or established predominance and prestige

within the state. Factors which can trigger violence include a sudden shift in the character of a state and its access to resources, the activities of transnational kindred, changes in a group's political environment, a sudden loss or gain in state power, shifts in state policy, an increased potential to attract political allies, and the availability of international political and logistical support.⁵⁷

The cases in which an internal or external event has triggered interethnic violence are numerous, particularly since the collapse of the Cold War system which created new opportunities for groups to press their claims and mobilize to fill the void left by the collapse of superpower rivalry, regional alliances, and elite control of state structures. "Periods of political transition such as the dissolution of multinational states or rapid decolonization accelerate ethnic mobilization because resultant uncertainties about security or the distribution of power often generate perceptions both of threats and fresh opportunities."⁵⁸

The collapse of the Soviet Union provides the most impressive list of examples. The end of the Soviet empire and its control in Eastern Europe has left no state untouched by the emergence of new forces poised against old elites for control of the state. The loss of revenue from the center and the collapse of complex economic linkages between the Russian center and the periphery have profoundly challenged the bases for state power and elite control. The violent wars in Tajikistan, Chechnia, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Yugoslavia are all in part a result of fundamental structural changes that have triggered ethnic mobilization to seize the state, the exclusion of ethnic strangers, and violent interethnic warfare.

This current period of intense and dramatic upheaval is similar to an earlier period of tension following the First World War when the collapse of established states and empires led to the creation of new states. These profound structural changes provided

⁵⁷ See Gurr, 129-130.

⁵⁸ Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, 30.

groups with the opportunity to mobilize, seize control of the new state, and exclude “historic enemies” and ethnic competitors. In the Third World, the end of the superpower rivalry has had a profound impact on regimes who depended on superpower aid and the ability to play one superpower off against the other to ensure the necessary material goods for the state’s continued existence. This loss of revenue and the freedom of action it provided have severely weakened the legitimacy of elites, who face ethnic challengers that see opportunity in the elites’ weakened power bases.

Structural changes both internal and external to the state have triggered violent interethnic conflict as groups act on past grievances or seize the opportunity to improve their position vis-a-vis ethnic strangers. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the collapse of superpower rivalry in the Third World, the collapse of states and empires following the First World War are important examples of the kind of structural change and profound transformations in the states system that can trigger violence.

How a triggering event affects each individual group’s opportunities varies according to the specific circumstances of each case, and what may instigate violence in one region or state may fail to produce the same outcome in another. A triggering event does create opportunity, and the way the group reacts to this opportunity is related to the specific circumstances of each group within a particular state. The triggering event may ignite grievances that have long existed within the polity or may create opportunities for the betterment of a group’s position in the polity. In either case, whether the trigger awakens long-held grievances or provides opportunities for advancement, the urgency that often accompanies such massive structural changes will lead to rapid mobilization and violence.

A Framework for Comparative Analysis

The decision to adopt strategies of violent interethnic conflict over non-violent forms of ethnic politics flows from the factors set forth in each of the propositions introduced in Section I. While each of these propositions, in and of itself, establishes a link between ethnicity and violence, these factors, in practice, are often interrelated, working together to influence the adoption of strategies of violence. Reproduced in the tables below,

The Group Level

If autonomy or the control of a special homeland is viewed as the essence of a group's identity by members of that group, then ethnonationalism may inspire an ethnic group to resort to strategies of interethnic violence. (P1)

If ethnic chauvinism is propagated by members of an ethnic group, then there is a strong tendency for the ethnic group to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers. (P2)

If group members commonly believe that their very survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened, then there is a strong tendency for the group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. (P3)

- If an ethnic group experiences a decrease in its *absolute* size within the same state or region, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.1)
- If an ethnic group experiences a decrease in its *group size relative* to ethnic strangers within the same state or region, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.2)
- If a group experiences a loss of cultural autonomy or lacks any measure of cultural autonomy, then the group will conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.3)
- If an ethnic group's lands and resources are encroached upon by ethnic strangers or by the state controlled by ethnic strangers, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.4)

If an able ethnic leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy and if it successfully articulates a group ideology and mobilizes the ethnic group around its source of grievances, then the group will adopt a strategy of interethnic violence. (P4)

these propositions and subpropositions provide a comprehensive series of factors, relationships, and tendencies that attempt to explain and identify the sources of violence in ethnic conflict.

In the next three chapters, these propositions and subpropositions will be applied across three case studies. Chapter five will focus on the war in Yugoslavia, chapter six on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and chapter seven on the violence in Kurdistan. A final,

The State Level

If a state is weak and unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively, to repress group mobilization, then ethnic groups will resort to violence. (P5)

- If a state responds to ethnic mobilization with genuine concessions or measures aimed at redressing group grievances and the group is willing to settle for less than secession, then the group will be less likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. (P5.1)
- Institutionalized democracy facilitates non-violent communal protest and inhibits rebellion. (P5.2)
- Democratization facilitates both non-violent protest and rebellion. (P5.3)
- If a state responds to ethnic mobilization with repression, then ethnic groups will temporarily refrain from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence. (P5.4)

If an ethnic group is excluded or is threatened with exclusion from the polity, then the ethnic group may adopt a strategy of interethnic violence to challenge the existing state system or seize the state for itself. (P6)

- If a group faces a seemingly perpetual exclusion from a severely divided polity after having unsuccessfully attempted to address its claims through non-violent means, then the ethnic group will adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to seize the state for itself. (P6.1)
- If an ethnic group is regionally concentrated and has been excluded or is threatened with exclusion from a severely divided polity, then the group may adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to secede from the extant state. (P6.2)

The Interstate Level

If mobilized ethnic groups elsewhere who are either transnational kindred or who share similar circumstances of discrimination at the hands of strangers adopt a strategy of ethnic violence, then their example may have a demonstration effect upon an ethnic group. (P7)

- A demonstration effect is stronger within networks of ethnic kindred and between groups who are nearer rather than farther. (P7.1)
- An ethnic group's responsiveness to the demonstration effect of ethnic violence elsewhere increases with the ethnic group's level of previous protest. (P7.2)
- A demonstration effect is stronger in states or regions with either a history of past conflict or with a deeply divided society. (P7.3)
- A demonstration effect is weaker in states marked by extreme heterogeneity. (P7.4)

If a third party becomes involved in conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers, then the stakes of conflict will be raised, the conflict will be transformed from an internal to an international conflict, and the ethnic group will be more likely to adopt a strategy of violence. (P8)

If the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or local militaries, then there is a strong tendency for an ethnic group with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. (P9)

- Linkages between ethnic groups and organized crime extend the conflict in time and space and raise the level of violence. (P9.1)

If a sudden "triggering event" occurs either internal or external to the group, then there will be a strong tendency for an ethnic group to resort to violence. (P10)

concluding chapter will present and analyze the findings from the three case studies in a comparative format, drawing some conclusions with potential relevance for understanding and predicting ethnic violence in conflicts beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Section II

THREE VIOLENT ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Chapter Five
YUGOSLAVIA

Introduction

The most common explanation for the war in Yugoslavia is that “ancient ethnic hatreds,” long suppressed under communist rule, suddenly exploded into new cycles of revenge when repression was lifted, sparking extreme interethnic violence, including some of the most atrocious instances of ethnic cleansing. The violence between Serbs and Croats in Croatia and among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in Bosnia was thus the latest phase of a centuries-old conflict among the Balkan nations.¹ A second, equally common explanation for the violence in Yugoslavia argues that Serbian aggression, prompted by the desire of the Serbian leadership to seize territories in Croatia and Bosnia in order to build a greater Serbian state, is solely responsible for the outbreak of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia. To bring all Serbs within one state required securing land with Serbian populations and cleansing it of non-Serbs. A third explanation for Yugoslavia’s collapse claimed that Yugoslavia was an artificial creation, one that was “irretrievably doomed.”² This explanation was offered by Slovenia and Croatia to justify their secession from Yugoslavia and to shape Western opinion in an effort to secure recognition.

None of these arguments offers a complete explanation of what caused the horrific violence and atrocities that have marked this war. Some of these arguments are simply incomplete, while others are plainly false. The current conflict between Serbs and Croats is certainly not ancient, “unless the term *ancient* encompasses the end of the 19th century.”³

¹Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 7-8.

²*Ibid.*, 149.

³Ivo Banac, “The Fearful Asymmetry of War: The Causes and Consequences of Yugoslavia’s Demise,” *Daedalus* 121 (Spring 1992): 143.

In fact, Serbs and Croats never fought before this century. According to Susan Woodward, attempts “to explain the Yugoslav crisis as a result of ethnic hatred is to turn the story upside down and begin at its end.”⁴ Placing the blame on Serbia alone ignores the fact that the Slovenian, Croatian, and Bosnian leaderships played a critical role in the events leading to Yugoslavia’s gradual collapse after Tito’s death and to its rapid descent into war in 1990 and 1991. It also ignores the crucial role played by international organizations, outside states, and non-state actors in the spread of ethnic violence. Furthermore, placing the blame solely on Serbia ignores the fact that Yugoslavia’s weak federal center not only failed to restrain the emergence of exclusivist nationalisms, but actually encouraged it. While the Serbian leadership bears a great deal of responsibility for the outbreak of violence, it does not bear sole responsibility for Yugoslavia’s demise. As for the “artificiality” of Yugoslavia, a simple reading of Yugoslav history proves this argument false. Indeed, no explanation for the outbreak of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia can be complete without an understanding of the historical experiences of the Balkan nations, “experiences which are so deeply embedded in the consciousness of the people.”⁵ To uncover the sources of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia will require an understanding of the causes, both immediate and historic, of Yugoslavia’s collapse

A Brief History of Yugoslavia

The concept of a united, multiethnic state comprised of the lands and peoples of the South Slavs first found expression in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes founded in December 1918. It was an idea that originated prior to World War I and found expression first in 1918 and again in 1945. Tito’s Yugoslavia was thus not an artificial creation, but the continuation of the idea of South Slav unity in a different form.

⁴Woodward, 18.

⁵Fred Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), xi.

Prior to World War I, the territories of the South Slavs (or “Yugo Slavs”) were divided among the Kingdom of Serbia,⁶ the Kingdom of Montenegro, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire which controlled Dalmatia, Slovene-inhabited provinces in Austria, the provinces of Croatia, Slovenia, and Vojvodina, and the former Ottoman province of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷ At the end of World War I, with the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the potential that the empire’s South Slav lands would be annexed by Italy, the Serb, Croat, and Slovene nationalist elites in the Austro-Hungarian Empire agreed to join the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro⁸ to form a new Slav state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929.

At the outset there was conflict over the nature of the new state. Although the Serb and Croat elites accepted the principle of a joint state, who would control it and how it was to be structured remained unresolved at the moment of unification. Sixty-five percent of the new state’s population came from Habsburg lands,⁹ and their Slovene, Croatian and Serbian elite viewed the new state as an equal partnership between the Habsburg territories and the Serbian Kingdom. However, the ruling Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian elite treated the Habsburg lands as conquered provinces, to which they believed they were entitled as a result of the enormous sacrifices Serbia had made during the war.¹⁰ All the institutions of the pre-war Serbian kingdom—the monarchy, army, central administrative apparatus, the privileged position of the Serbian Orthodox patriarchate—were preserved and extended into the former Habsburg lands.¹¹

⁶ Kosovo and Macedonia had been acquired by Serbia in the Balkan wars of 1912-1913. See Ivo Banac, “Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism: The Yugoslav Non-Revolutions of 1989-1990” in *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, Ivo Banac ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 168.

⁷ V.P. Gagnon, “Historical Roots of the Yugoslav Conflict” in *International Organizations and Ethnic Conflict*, Milton J. Esman and Shibley Telhami, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 180-181.

⁸ The Kingdom of Montenegro was united with the Kingdom of Serbia under conditions of military occupation in 1918. See Banac, “Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism,” 169.

⁹ Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 181, 183.

¹⁰ Serbia lost a quarter of its population and 40 percent of its army during World War I. See Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 181.

¹¹ Banac, “Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism,” 169.

Serbian domination rapidly produced disillusionment and dissatisfaction amongst both the elites and non-elites of the former empire which translated into direct support for the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS).¹² The HSS became the lone voice among representatives of the former empire's South Slavs to object to the rapid and unplanned unification of the various territories as well as to the imposition of the Serbian monarchy upon those territories. Serb-Croat rivalry thus became a fixed feature of the interwar period. It was a consequence not of the new state's multiethnicity, but a result of widely differing perceptions of the very concept of a Yugoslav state, a debate which reemerged in the early 1980s between confederalists and centralists over the restructuring of the second Yugoslavia after Tito's death.

In 1939, in an effort to resolve Serb-Croat tensions, the HSS and the government, now under the control of a regency council, negotiated an agreement that would have established a separate, autonomous Croatian *banovina* and would have divided Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia. A coup d'état in March 1941, followed a month later by the Axis invasion and the partition of Yugoslavia, brought an end to the first Yugoslavia. Although the historic Cvetkovic-Macek agreement was never implemented, the concept of dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina between the Serbs and Croats as a way to overcome the tensions between them remained an attractive option to both nations. As Yugoslavia began to collapse in 1990 and 1991, a modern Cvetkovic-Macek agreement between Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was negotiated in secret.¹³

Serbia came under German occupation, and Croatia-Slavonia, parts of Dalmatia and Vojvodina, and all of Bosnia-Herzegovina were combined to form the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) under the leadership of the Ustase, a marginal political group whose leaders

¹²Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 182.

¹³Although Milosevic denied that such meetings had ever taken place, Tudjman repeatedly boasted that Croatia would be "even bigger than it had been under the Macek-Cvetkovic agreement." See Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: TV Books, Inc., 1996), 132.

had been living in exile. The NDH was neither independent nor Croatian. It was run by Italian and German advisors and less than half of its population was Croat. The regime declared its chief objective to “purify” the new state of alien elements, a policy of systematic extermination whose legacy continues to reverberate in Yugoslavia to this day. Serbs were to be dealt with in three ways: “one third of the Serbs we shall kill, another we shall deport, and the last we shall force to embrace the Roman Catholic religion and thus meld them into Croats.”¹⁴

Ustase forces massacred Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. Serb villages were leveled, their inhabitants rounded up and killed. In the most notorious cases, entire villages were locked in the local Orthodox church which was then set afire. In other cases, live victims were buried in open pits¹⁵ or dumped into rivers.¹⁶ So many corpses were dumped into the Danube river in the summer of 1941 that the German authorities were forced to close the river to swimming.¹⁷ The brutal Ustase massacres prompted Serbian Chetnik reprisals. The Chetniks massacred Croat villagers and Muslim civilians in Bosnia, Montenegro and the Sanjak area of Serbia.¹⁸

The exact number of Serbs killed in the NDH is not known and remains a contentious issue. Serbian estimates suggest 750,000 while German estimates are much lower, at 350,000.¹⁹ Other sources suggest just over half a million.²⁰ The official Yugoslav estimate for the total number of war dead is 1,700,000,²¹ which remained the official estimate until 1989-1990 when the Yugoslav federal government ceased to function. In 1989, using more accurate sources, the total of war related deaths was set at

¹⁴The Croatian Minister of Education of the NDH, speaking at a banquet in June 1941. Quoted in Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing,” *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 116.

¹⁵Silber and Little, 93.

¹⁶Bell-Fialkoff, 116.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31.

¹⁹Singleton, 177.

²⁰Denitch, 32.

²¹This much higher figure includes war dead for all of Yugoslavia, not just Serb victims in the NDH, dreadful losses for a country whose population numbered just under 16 million in 1941.

just over one million. One Serb in ten died in that war, virtually every family lost someone, and many of the survivors are still living.²² For many in the Balkans these atrocities remain vivid to this day.²³ Indeed, the experiences of World War II are “central to the mythology and symbology of the 1991 civil war.”²⁴

The communist-led multiethnic Partisan movement under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito emerged as the main opposition to the Ustase and attracted a wide base of support among Croats and Muslims and even among Croatian and Bosnian Serbs as a result of the Ustase massacres.²⁵ The Partisans were organized along regional lines, with each unit led by a local commander. They were committed to rebuilding a joint Yugoslav state, but one very different from the first Yugoslavia. To accomplish this task, the Partisans were “faced with a nationalities question that was as much regional as it was national,”²⁶ a legacy of the past twenty-five years that now had an added ethnic element exacerbated by the Ustase massacres and the Chetnik reprisals. “So deep were the divisions in Yugoslavia in 1945 that the communists had little with which to hold the country together except the partisan myth, promises of a future cornucopia, and coercive force.”²⁷

The main challenge was thus to channel these ethnic sentiments into an all-Yugoslav context that would transcend the Serbian ethnic identity.²⁸ To attract support among the various nationalities, the regional character of the partisan movement was carried over into the structure of the new federal system, based on the creation of six republics, five of which were centered around their regional ethnic majorities (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro) and one multinational republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁹ The extreme concentration of wealth in the northern provinces was addressed through promises

²²Bell-Fialkoff, 117.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 254.

²⁵Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 183.

²⁶Ibid., 183-184.

²⁷Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 29.

²⁸Ibid., 8.

²⁹Ibid., 26.

of economic growth and modernization and subsequently through a federal program of economic redistribution in an effort to garner additional support among the various nationalities. Finally, Serbia's political weight in the new state had to be reduced. Macedonia, considered by Serbs to be southern Serbia, was given its own republican status, and Serbia was internally partitioned into Serbia proper and two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. In addition, the Serb population was divided amongst the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian republics such that one in every four Serbs lived outside Serbia proper.³⁰ It was because of these policies that Serbian nationalists would later claim that Tito's Yugoslavia was anti-Serb and, beginning in 1987, attempt to reclaim Serbia's "rightful" place in Yugoslavia.

During the decade following Yugoslavia's excommunication from the Soviet block in 1948, Yugoslavia enjoyed tremendous economic growth. By the end of the 1950s, however, Yugoslavia's economic performance began to decline. In the early 1960s, liberals in the communist leadership convinced Tito of the absolute necessity of decentralizing the economy and the political system in order to shift from extensive to intensive forms of economic growth.³¹ What followed was a radical restructuring of the Yugoslav political and economic system that would have far-reaching implications for Yugoslavia's future. It signaled "the start of a deep-seated conflict between two visions of the Yugoslav...system, which cut across national and regional boundaries." This conflict would continue for almost thirty years and become "the main cause of the destruction of the Yugoslav state."³²

At first the motivations for reform were purely economic. By 1965, however, "the reform" had become a full-fledged assault on economic inefficiency, unprofitable enterprises, inflationary development, and distorted prices.³³ It was accompanied by a massive devolution of power which succeeded in "strengthening...the role of the

³⁰Paul Lendvai, "Yugoslavia Without Yugoslavs: The Roots of the Crisis," *International Affairs* 67 (April 1991): 259.

³¹V.P. Gagnon, Jr., "Serbia's Road to War," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (Spring 1994): 119.

³²Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 185.

³³Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 82.

periphery...at the expense of the center.”³⁴ The six republics and two provinces were granted a substantial degree of autonomy while the federal center became, in effect, a committee of republic representatives who decided matters of federal jurisdiction by consensual agreement among the eight federal units.

The 1960 reforms directly threatened the institutional and ideological bases of the conservatives’ power in Yugoslavia. Devolution had successfully strengthened the position of the reformists at the republican level, thereby allowing them to bypass conservatives who dominated the central bureaucracy and who remained firmly opposed to reform. In order to undermine the reform and weaken the reformists, conservatives began to focus on threats to the system, successfully shifting the debate away from reform. Conservatives argued that the reform had created the threat of counterrevolution, the evidence of which was the revival of Croatian nationalism.³⁵

The economic recession that struck Yugoslavia in 1961-1962 had created a crisis in Croatia. Expectations of economic reform had been unfulfilled, and in some cases, Croatia’s economic position had actually deteriorated. Increasingly, Croats came to believe not only that they were being exploited but also that they were being exploited *as Croats*. This perception fostered a “national renaissance” and prompted certain nationalist elements to make outrageous claims on the federal system. However, none of these demands were ever made by the Croatian leadership whom Tito subsequently purged.³⁶

At first, Croatian nationalists focused upon the threat of impending Serbianization. By 1971, however, Croatian nationalists had turned their attention to Bosnia, demanding that Western Bosnia-Herzegovina be attached to Croatia. “By clamoring for territorial expansion at Bosnia’s expense, the Croatian nationalists had in effect ‘declared war’ on Bosnia and on the federation itself.”³⁷

³⁴Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 85.

³⁵Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 143-144.

³⁶Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 99-102.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 125.

Not content with laying claims on Bosnia alone, Croatian nationalists began to challenge the federal system itself, demanding a renegotiation of the foreign currency retention system, the creation of a separate Croatian army, and further decentralization of the banking system. Finally, they went so far as to demand that republican statehood be more precisely defined and that the Croatian national parliament be recognized as the highest organ of power in Croatia, relegating the Croatian Communist Party to second place at best.³⁸ “Ultimately, by their excessive demands and intransigence, the Croatian leadership intimidated other republican leaderships and persuaded them that Croatia had become a greater threat to the system than Serbia.”³⁹

Conservatives in the security forces and the army convinced Tito to purge the reformists and remove the Croatian party from power. A year later the Serbian reformist leadership suffered a similar fate, as did reformists in other Yugoslav republics.⁴⁰ The purges of 1971 and 1972 effectively reversed the economic reforms and reempowered local level party organizations.⁴¹ But the devolution of power remained in place and was enshrined in the last Titoist Constitution of 1974. Yugoslavia’s formal juridical structure was loosened almost to the level of a confederation⁴² and the republics retained their political, cultural, and administrative autonomy.⁴³

The abrupt end of economic reform and the subsequent crisis that followed, combined with Tito’s death in 1981 and the explosion of tensions in Kosovo in May 1981 shook the foundations of Yugoslavia and triggered a crisis of legitimacy that became increasingly severe over the next decade.⁴⁴ The debate over reform reopened immediately upon Tito’s death. At the forefront of this debate were the reformists in the Serbian party,

³⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 127.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 126.

⁴⁰Gagnon, “Serbia’s Road to War,” 120.

⁴¹Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 187-188.

⁴²Mihajlo Mihajlov, “Can Yugoslavia Survive?” *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Spring 1991): 82.

⁴³Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 144n31.

⁴⁴Dusan Bilandzic, *Jugoslavija poslije Tita (1980-1985)* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 9. Cited in Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 214.

which in the early 1980s was the most liberal in the country.⁴⁵ Their proposals included the elimination of party influence at the local levels of the economy; greater reliance on private enterprise and individual initiative; multiple candidates in state and party elections; free, secret-ballot elections within the party; and adoption of “all the positive achievements of bourgeois civilization,” namely, liberal democracy.⁴⁶ These proposals were much more radical than those of the 1960s, and their audience was much more receptive. As a result, conservatives faced an even greater threat. They responded by shifting the debate away from reform, this time alleging threats to the ethnic nation. Kosovo’s street protests provided conservatives with the opportunity to implement this strategy.

In 1981, ethnic Albanians in Kosovo took to the streets, demanding independence from Serbia and republican status.⁴⁷ Following massive riots in Kosovo in 1968, Tito had instituted a policy that favored ethnic Albanians in the province and granted Kosovo more autonomy and economic aid.⁴⁸ Despite these changes, however, unemployment continued and Albanian-Slavic tensions in Kosovo increased.⁴⁹ Fearing that the Serbia’s republican leadership might abolish those provisions which had granted Kosovo some degree of autonomy, the Albanian provincial leadership engaged in a massive cover-up of the growing problems in Kosovo to such an extent that “few observers were prepared for the vehemence of the nationalistically inspired riots.”⁵⁰

Kosovo’s riots unleashed an aggressive Serbian nationalist response which focused first on endangered Serbs in Kosovo and then widened to include an examination of Serbian grievances with the Yugoslav system itself. The Belgrade media began airing stories about Albanian atrocities against Serbs, and Serbs and Montenegrins who had left Kosovo began to talk of their sufferings. The steady decline in the population of Serbs and

⁴⁵Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 145.

⁴⁶Ibid. and Gagnon, Serbia’s Road to War,” 120.

⁴⁷Silber and Little, 34-35.

⁴⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 191.

⁴⁹Steve Reiquam, “Emigration and Demography in Kosovo,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Background Report 186 (August 4, 1983): 4.

⁵⁰Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 194-195.

Montenegrins in Kosovo, which holds a special place in Serb mythology, further fueled nationalist fervor. In October 1986, the famous "Memorandum" added fuel to the fire, outlining in great detail Serbia's fate in communist Yugoslavia and blaming Tito for having destroyed Serbia.

While Ivan Stambolic headed the Serbian party, little was done to address the threat to Serbs in Kosovo and in the rest of Yugoslavia. But in 1987, Stambolic was ousted by Slobodan Milosevic "and the entire political picture changed overnight."⁵¹ Under Milosevic's leadership, the plight of Serbs in Kosovo became a central concern of the Serbian Party. In 1988 Milosevic purged the leadership of Serbia's two provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo, and installed his own supporters in their place. He then successfully pushed through changes to the constitutions of the two provinces, eliminating much of their autonomy. In January 1989, Milosevic's tactics forced the Montenegrin leadership to resign. Milosevic now controlled four of the eight votes in the federal presidency. The next step in Milosevic's strategy was aimed at undermining the republican leaderships in the other Yugoslav republics, beginning where there were large Serbian populations, in Croatia and Bosnia.

By 1988, the Slovene and Croatian leaderships were becoming convinced that Milosevic posed a threat to the stability of the entire country.⁵² That summer, debates between the writers' associations of Slovenia and Serbia sparked a "war of words" between the two republican leaderships. After the Slovenian Writer's Association held a public meeting criticizing Serbian policies in Kosovo, the Serbian association retaliated by breaking off relations with its Slovenian counterpart. In October 1989, a now radicalized Slovenian Communist Party, claiming that Serbia had set a precedent by changing its constitution, proposed a series of draft amendments that were subsequently passed by the Slovenian assembly over loud Serbian protests. These amendments asserted Slovenia's

⁵¹Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 200.

⁵²Sabrina Petra Ramet, "War in the Balkans," *Foreign Affairs* 71 (Fall 1991): 84.

right to secession, established conditions for the introduction of a state of emergency in Slovenia, and placed restrictions on the deployment of military forces in Slovenia.⁵³

In December 1989, in an attempt to overthrow the liberal Slovene Communist leadership, a group of Serbs and Montenegrins, calling itself the Kosovo Polje Committee, attempted to hold a protest rally of some 30,000-40,000 Serbs and Montenegrins in Ljubljana under the guise of informing Slovenes of “the truth about Kosovo.”⁵⁴ Slovenia’s leadership banned the meeting, but the committee continued with its preparations. However, the protesters were stopped and turned back by the Slovenian and Croatian railway unions.⁵⁵

The Serbian Socialist Alliance of Working People demanded revenge and called on Serbian enterprises to end all cooperative links with Slovenian firms, to which Serbian businesses enthusiastically replied.⁵⁶ A week later some 329 Serbian enterprises had severed business relations with Slovenian firms.⁵⁷ The Slovene assembly returned the favor by cutting off all payments to the federal fund for undeveloped regions (FADURK) intended for the now-annexed Kosovo and reduced its contribution to the federal budget by 15 percent, the amount it estimated was being siphoned off to assist the Serbian economy.⁵⁸ Tensions had escalated into an economic war. The total boycott of economic and cultural ties between Slovenia and Serbia presented an important first step in destroying the ties that held Yugoslavia together.⁵⁹

Croatia’s response to Milosevic’s policies was at first muted. Known as the “silent republic” since the purges of 1971, Croatia had become the bastion of conservatism in Yugoslavia. Eventually Serbian tactics, including efforts to mobilize Serbs in the Krajina,

⁵³Milan Andrejevich, “Reactions to Slovenia’s Constitutional Amendments,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 12 (October 23, 1989): 8-11.

⁵⁴Banac, “Post Communism as Post-Yugoslavism,” 179.

⁵⁵Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 242.

⁵⁶Ramet, “War in the Balkans,” 84.

⁵⁷Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 242.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Gagnon, “Serbia’s Road to War,” 123.

backfired, discrediting conservatives and emboldening the reformist minority.⁶⁰ Having gained the upper hand by linking the conservatives with Milosevic's aggressive policies, reformists took over the Croatian Communist Party and called for multiparty elections. Intellectuals and nationalists responded by demonizing Serbs, and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the new party of Franjo Tudjman, easily captured the vote with its pledge to realize Croatia's "thousand year old dream" of statehood.⁶¹

In the decade after Tito's death, the debate over reform had gradually been transformed to one over constitutional reform and exclusivist national republican interests. With Milosevic in power, recentralization became associated with Serbian nationalism. The Serbs sought to create a centralized Yugoslav state, one which they presumably would control. The confederalists, with Slovenia in the forefront, sought to expand the powers of the republics even further, to reduce their financial obligations to the federation, and to transform Yugoslavia ultimately into a de jure confederation.⁶² As a consequence of these demands, the very role of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) came into question.

The final showdown between Serbia and the Slovene and Croat leaderships took place at the Fourteenth Party Congress on January 23, 1990. For three days, delegates argued over the fate of the party, but the gulf between Serbia on the one side and Slovenia and Croatia on the other had become unbridgeable. The congress appeared deadlocked. In protest, the Slovenian delegation walked out on January 23, 1990, and the Croat delegation abandoned the Congress in support of the Slovenes.⁶³ It was the last congress attended by all six Yugoslav republics. Twelve days later, the Slovenian party severed its links with the LCY and renamed itself the Party for Democratic Renewal, "shattering the remaining superficial semblance of unity"⁶⁴ and "seal[ing] the fate of the party, whose privileged

⁶⁰Gagnon, "Serbia's Road to War," 122.

⁶¹Silber and Little, 82.

⁶²Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 221.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 247.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

constitutional position rested on such weak soil that it succumbed to the deadlock over the constitution for the common state it had created in 1943-1945 and to the willingness of Slovenia to go its own way.”⁶⁵

As the system dissolved, there were fewer restraints to prevent the crisis from escalating out of control and greater incentives to seize the moment and pursue exclusivist nationalist policies. By the end of 1990, the lines of confrontation were clearly drawn. Slovenia and Croatia, on the one side, having failed to bring about a consensus on a new confederal structure for Yugoslavia, were preparing for secession. In December 1990, Slovenia’s held a referendum, and 80 percent of the electorate (with voter turnout at 94 percent) voted for a sovereign and independent Slovenia.⁶⁶ Croatia’s referendum produced a similarly high percentage of support. Although boycotted by Croatia’s Serbian population, 93 percent of the population that voted favored turning Croatia into a “sovereign and independent country.”⁶⁷

During the first six months of 1991, the leaders of Yugoslavia’s six republics convened a number of conferences in an attempt to find a solution to the impasse over the structure of Yugoslavia. Slovenia and Croatia continued to seek complete confederalization, with the retention only of an economic union and coordination in foreign policy and military matters, and Serbia and Montenegro insisted on recentralization. Bosnia-Herzegovina and later Macedonia came to support the confederal option.⁶⁸ On June 6, 1991, Bosnia’s president Alija Izetbegovic and Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov proposed a plan for an “asymmetrical federation” that gained the support of both Tudjman and Milosevic.⁶⁹ Less than a week later, Slovenia announced that its preparations for

⁶⁵Woodward, 115-116.

⁶⁶Banac, “Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism,” 181.

⁶⁷Silber and Little, 153n3.

⁶⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 256.

⁶⁹Silber and Little, 148.

independence were progressing, and neither Croatia nor Serbia were interested in discussing the proposal any further.⁷⁰

Slovenia had promised to secede by June 26, 1991 if no agreement could be reached, and Croatia promised to follow suit. On June 25, 1991, a day before the deadline, first Croatia and then Slovenia declared their secession from Yugoslavia. According to Mihailo Crnobrnja, the former Yugoslav Ambassador to the European Community (EC), “this bold and reckless move by the two republics can be taken as the date the war started.”⁷¹ It laid the groundwork for the massive, open and violent confrontations that were soon to follow.

The Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) responded by sending troops into Slovenia on June 27. The Slovenian war lasted ten days, during which the JNA bombed Slovenian airports and attempted, unsuccessfully, to seize control of Slovenia’s borders. EC mediation produced the Brioni Agreement of July 7, 1991, and the JNA began to withdraw. Within two months of the ten-day war in Slovenia, armed hostilities between the Croatian government and the Krajina Serbs escalated dramatically, and the role of the JNA shifted from supporting and protecting the Serb militias to directing the war against the Croatian government. Repeated attempts on the part of the EC to negotiate a ceasefire failed. Finally, faced with the imminent recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, Milosevic turned to the United Nations (UN), and in January 1992, a ceasefire agreement was signed in Sarajevo. A United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed to separate the two sides. The war in Croatia officially ended in January 1992 with the negotiation of a ceasefire agreement under UN auspices. While it signaled the end of hostilities in Croatia, it did not end the war between Serbs and Croats. Rather than resolve the conflict, outside mediation had only forced a change of venue. Three months later, violence exploded in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁷⁰Silber and Little, 148.

⁷¹Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 161.

In violation of the power-sharing agreement, the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite strong Serb opposition, applied for recognition to the EC and held a referendum, as required by the Badinter Commission, in late February and early March 1992. Serb deputies boycotted the referendum and withdrew in protest from the parliament in Sarajevo and from the power sharing arrangement. A last minute attempt to resolve the growing crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the part of the EC produced a cantonization plan, which the Muslims and then the Croats rejected. A few days before the West granted Bosnia-Herzegovina "preventive recognition" in the hopes that it would deter Serbian aggression, violence erupted in Bosnia. Yugoslavia disintegrated into a cataclysmic interethnic conflict between Croats, Muslims, and Serbs.

What prompted the Serbs in Croatia and later in Bosnia to embark upon a strategy of interethnic violence? Was it because their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened, or was it the emergence of an increasingly chauvinistic version of Serbian ethnonationalism that prompted the Serbs to attempt to destroy the ethnic other? To what extent were the various nationalist leaders responsible for Yugoslavia's bloody collapse? How did the devolution of power from the federal center to the republics in the years preceding Tito's death contribute to the outbreak of violence? To what degree did international organizations, outside states, and non-state actors influence the outbreak of ethnic violence, and to what extent was the vast amount of arms available both within Yugoslavia and on the international black market a critical source of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia?

The brief synopsis of the events that led to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of interethnic violence among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims clearly indicates that there is no single factor responsible for Yugoslavia's collapse, nor is there a single source of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia. Six of the propositions developed above are potentially useful for explaining the violence in Yugoslavia, each of which will be discussed in detail below. At the group level, ethnic chauvinism and ethnic group leadership are potential

sources of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia. At the state level, Yugoslavia's weak federal structure and the threatened exclusion of Serbs in an independent Croatia and Bosnia present additional sources of violence. Finally, at the interstate level, international support on the part of international organizations, outside states, and non-state actors combined with the availability of arms and financial resources are two additional critical sources of ethnic violence which will be examined below.

Ethnic Chauvinism

A tenet of post-war Yugoslavia's nationalities policy was the rigorous prosecution and repression of any expressions of overt nationalism. Milosevic's rise to power in Serbia was accompanied by a departure from this Titoist policy and the emergence of increasingly aggressive national policies, centered in the republics. The most aggressive of these nationalisms emanated from Serbia. It destroyed the existing system of multiethnic coexistence and fostered an environment that was increasingly viewed as zero-sum. According to Proposition 2, if ethnic chauvinism is propagated by members of an ethnic group, then there is a strong tendency for the ethnic group to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers. Virulent Serbian ethnochauvinism prompted the adoption of an offensive strategy of interethnic violence, leading to some of the worst atrocities of the war first in Croatia and then in Bosnia.

Serbian nationalism is founded on the mythology of Kosovo, five centuries of struggle against the Ottoman Turks, and the expansion of the Serbian state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷² Kosovo was the cradle of the medieval Serbian kingdom, the seat of the Serbian Patriarchate at Pec, and the site of the tragic defeat of the Serbian army of King Lazar at the battle at Kosovo Polje in 1389 by the Ottoman army of Murad I.

⁷²Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 141.

Kosovo was a massive Turkish victory, but the story of Serb heroism in that battle became the subject of many epic poems, the *pesme*, told and retold through five centuries of Ottoman occupation. According to the most revered epics, King Lazar was given a choice at the start of the battle between fighting to the death and capitulation. The Turks offered a reward for his surrender. But he refused, choosing the kingdom of heaven over the betrayal of his nation to a foreign oppressor.⁷³ Following their defeat, many Serbian nobles became vassals of the Sultan. One of the most famous of these was Kraljevic Marko, whose heroism, gentleness, and even his cruelty, but above all his fierce opposition to the Turks and his intense national pride, made him an embodiment of all that the Serbs wanted to believe of themselves.⁷⁴ The tragedy and heroism symbolized by Kosovo were kept alive by the legends of Serbian heroism and by the commemoration of the anniversary of the battle at Kosovo Polje on June 28, St. Vitus Day.

Kosovo represents the hallowed place where ethno-history intersected with a decisive point in the history of the Serbian nation. Kosovo thus remains central to Serbian nationalist mythology. According to Milosevic, "Every nation has a love which eternally warms its heart. For Serbia it is Kosovo. That is why Kosovo will remain in Serbia."⁷⁵ The Serbian Association of Writers expressed this same sentiment even more forcefully: "There is so much Serbian blood and so many sacred relics that Kosovo will remain Serbian land, even if not a single Serb remains there."⁷⁶

Kosovo's central importance to the Serbian myth is best described by Matija Beckovic, a contemporary Serbian nationalist poet:

The battle of Kosovo was never finished. It is as if the Serbian people have waged only one battle—by widening the Kosovo charnel-house, by adding wailing upon wailing, by counting new martyrs to the martyrs of Kosovo....Kosovo is the equator of the Serbian planet. The ceiling of the lower and the foundation of the upper world. Here the conscience of the

⁷³Silber and Little, 71.

⁷⁴Singleton, 45.

⁷⁵Slobodan Milosevic, quoted in Silber and Little, 63.

⁷⁶Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 243.

Serb people was split into the period before and after Kosovo. Kosovo is the Serbianized story of the flood—the Serbian New Testament.⁷⁷

For many Serbian nationalists, the battle over Kosovo continues to this day. As part of his broader strategy of creating a Greater Yugoslavia upon the ruins of the Titoist system, Milosevic skillfully used the “image of innocent Serbs being victimized and driven out of their ancient homeland”⁷⁸ to inflame nationalist opinion. Before a crowd of millions of Serbs who had flocked to Gazimestan to celebrate the six hundredth anniversary of the battle on June 28, 1989, Milosevic stated,

The Kosovo heroism does not allow us to forget that at one time we were brave and dignified and one of the few who went into battle undefeated.... Today, six centuries later, we are again fighting a battle and facing battles. They are not armed battles, *although such things cannot yet be excluded.*⁷⁹

Kosovo and all that it symbolizes is central to the Serbian nation’s “myth of ethnic chosenness,”⁸⁰ to the belief that the Serbs share a common fate and a common destiny. The mythology of Kosovo defines the Serbian nation and reflects many of the attributes and experiences which Serbs believe define them as a distinct ethnic group. Prominent in this self-identification is the heroism of the Serbian people and their special role as the historic guardian of Yugoslavia and the strongest supporters of a common Yugoslav state. Serbs believe they alone have a living tradition of independent statehood prior to the founding of the first Yugoslavia, a tradition which, along with their historic role as guardians of the South Slavs, entitles them to primacy within Yugoslavia. As Milosevic stated, “Serbs in their history have never conquered or exploited others. Through two world wars, they liberated themselves and, when they could, they also helped others to liberate themselves.”⁸¹ Furthermore, Serbs believe that this preeminence is rightfully theirs because of their nation’s enormous sacrifices during both world wars. “More Serbian and

⁷⁷Quoted in Banac, “Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism,” 174.

⁷⁸Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 189.

⁷⁹Quoted in Milan Andrejevich, “Milosevic’s Speech at Kosovo Polje,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 9 (July 20, 1989): 8. Italics added.

⁸⁰Smith, 53.

⁸¹Quoted in Silber and Little, 72.

Montenegrin blood was spilled on the Allied side in both wars than that of any other people in Yugoslavia.”⁸² In addition, Serbs and Montenegrins provided the bulk of the manpower and leadership of Tito’s partisans. Serbs furthermore believe, that in general, they have produced better political and military leaders throughout history than other peoples. This sentiment is reflected in Milosevic’s vow, “if we have to fight, we’ll fight. I hope they won’t be so crazy as to fight against us. Because, if we don’t know how to work and do business, at least we know how to fight.”⁸³ Finally, as the largest nation in Yugoslavia, Serbs believe that their sheer size entitles them to primacy.⁸⁴

This belief in the heroic Serbian character and the uniqueness of the Serbian nation is best reflected in a famous speech by Dobrica Cosic in March 1977 before the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade:

No people in Europe has in the last two centuries and in particular in the twentieth century expended such great efforts in the making of history, sacrificed so much for liberation and great change as has the Serbian nation....But both fathers and sons are aware that the victories on the battlefield were in vain, for the point of some liberation struggles and battlefield victories in this century has been repudiated in peacetime....What kind of nation and what kind of people are we that so many of us lay down...[our] lives for freedom in war, only to have victory deprive us of freedom? How is it possible that somebody here at home can take away from us what a much stronger enemy could not wrest from us?⁸⁵

Serbian national mythology thus became fused with a belief in the superiority of the Serbian nation, a nation whose great ancestral heritage, history of independent statehood, historic guardianship of Yugoslavia, sacrifices during two world wars, and whose sufferings throughout history, particularly the great injustices suffered by the Serbian nation under the Titoist system, justified employing violence to realize the nation’s dreams of a “Greater Serbia,” redress its grievances, and secure its rightful place in Yugoslavia.

⁸²Patrick Moore, “Yugoslavia’s ‘Serbian Question,’” *Radio Free Europe Research, Yugoslav Background Report* 140 (July 22, 1988): 4.

⁸³Quoted in Silber and Little, 129.

⁸⁴Moore, “Yugoslavia’s ‘Serbian Question,’” 3-4.

⁸⁵Quoted in Zdenko Antic, “The Danger of Increasing Serbian Nationalism,” *Radio Free Europe Research, Yugoslav Background Report* 63 (March 24, 1983): 6-7.

After the Kosovo riots of 1981, Serbs increasingly felt that the time had come to reclaim that which their sacrifices had entitled them. Before Milosevic's rise to power, this sentiment was confined to the nationalist intelligentsia. Once Milosevic became head of the Serbian party, however, this sentiment became increasingly predominant among the Serbian leadership, and Milosevic, after ousting Stambolic, became the champion of efforts to secure for the Serbian republic its rightful place in Yugoslavia.⁸⁶ In a speech in 1988 Milosevic appealed to Serbia's place in the world and to struggle, enemies, and solutions:

This is not time for sorrow; it is a time for struggle (*indistinct shouting*). This awareness captured Serbia last summer and this awareness has turned into a material force that will stop the terror in Kosovo and unite Serbia (*indistinct shouting*). This is a process which no longer can be stopped by any force, a process in the face of which all fear is weak. People will even consent to live in poverty but they will not consent to live without freedom, at least not the people gathered here and the people in Serbia, to whom I myself belong and therefore I know that they can only live in freedom and in no other way (*indistinct shouting*). Both the Turkish and the German invaders know that these people win their battles for freedom.... We shall win the battle for Kosovo regardless of the obstacles facing us inside and outside the country (*cheers*).... We shall win despite the fact that Serbia's enemies outside the country are plotting against it, along with those in the country (*cheers*). We tell them that we enter every battle (*interrupted by cheers*) with the aim of winning it.⁸⁷

The militant and aggressive chauvinistic version of Serbian nationalism that became predominant upon Milosevic's rise to power was carefully cloaked by the language of ethnic injustice. As the greatest victims of Yugoslavia, Serbian efforts to change the system were not a reflection of Greater Serbian nationalism or ethnic chauvinism, to which paradoxically, Serbs believe themselves to be immune.⁸⁸ Rather, these efforts were both historically validated and morally justified by virtue of the great injustices the Serbian nation had suffered at the hands of Yugoslavia's other nations.

Cloaked in the language of ethnic injustice, an increasingly aggressive chauvinistic Serbian nationalism led to a reexamination of past injustices that gradually brought into the

⁸⁶John B. Allcock, "In Praise of Chauvinism: Rhetorics of Nationalism in Yugoslav Politics," *Third World Quarterly* 10 (October 1989): 219.

⁸⁷Milosevic in a speech in Belgrade, November 19, 1988, quoted in Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 229-230.

⁸⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 117.

open an extensive list of Serbian grievances. This process coincided with the violent demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981, which drew attention to the alleged “genocide” of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo by the majority Albanian population. Serb nationalists claimed that the efforts on the part of Kosovo Albanians to create an ethnically pure Albanian state threatened the loss, once again, of their “Jerusalem” to Muslim “aliens.”⁸⁹ The 1981 riots drove additional Serbs and Montenegrins out of Kosovo, and their tales of woe were given vast coverage by the Belgrade media. This latest exodus from Kosovo, together with reports that the seat of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate at Pec in Kosovo had been burned and that Serbian churches and cemeteries had been demolished, further inflamed nationalist opinion. The Albanianization of the province and the fact that it had acquired many of the prerogatives of a republic within the Titoist system as a result of the 1974 Constitution were some of the primary grievances of the Serbian nationalists.

The increased attention on the situation in Kosovo and the plight of Serbs in general led to a reexamination of history and an airing of Serbian grievances not just with the situation in Kosovo, but with Serbia’s “unequal” position within the federation, a position that, according to Serb nationalists, was no accident but part of a “conscious and persistent effort to make Serbs feel inferior.”⁹⁰ This argument was taken up in the famous “Memorandum” of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, released in 1986. It alleged that Serbia had been discriminated against within Yugoslavia, a position that became the program of Serbia’s communist party after Milosevic became its head.

A primary Serbian grievance was with the Yugoslav system itself. The Yugoslavia that emerged after World War II was formed without the participation of the Serbian people, and its borders were reduced to Serbia’s pre-1912 boundaries. No political organization representing Serbia as a whole was present when the second Yugoslavia was founded at the November 29, 1943 meeting of the Antifascist Council of Liberation in

⁸⁹Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 191.

⁹⁰Alex N. Dragnich, *Yugoslavia’s Disintegration and the Struggle for Truth*, East European Monographs, no. CDXXXVI (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 17.

Jajce. Without Serbian participation, it was thus simple to carve out Yugoslavia's federal units at the expense of Serbs and Serbia.⁹¹ According to Mihailo Markovich, "the borders of the Serbian republic were so drawn that millions of Serbs remained minorities in other republics....Serbia found itself in the absurd political position with a third of its population in other republics, divided into three parts in its own republic, [and] deprived of any legal or political status in its central part."⁹² Yugoslavia, in its present form, the "Memorandum" concluded, was no longer an adequate solution to the Serbian question with 40 percent of Serbs living beyond Serbian borders.⁹³

The blame for Serbia's unequal position rested with the "Serbophobic" Comintern legacy and the national policies of the LCY. Tito and Kardelj's anti-Serbian policies were created "with the purpose of holding Serbia in a politically inadequate position."⁹⁴ According to the Comintern position, the prewar Serbian bourgeoisie was the only hegemonic power in Yugoslavia and the main enemy of the working class and oppressed peoples.⁹⁵ This "Serbophobia" was similarly reflected in the indoctrination efforts of the Yugoslav communist party, whose main slogan, "Destroy Greater Serbian Yugoslavia,"⁹⁶ fostered an anti-Serb bias reflected in both the new state's policies and its federal structure. The "Memorandum" claimed that this Serbophobia continued to be present in the Slovene- and Croat-led anti-Serb coalition.⁹⁷

The "Memorandum's" sharpest attacks were reserved for the 1974 constitution: "a worse historic defeat in peacetime cannot be imagined."⁹⁸ It denied Serbia a position and

⁹¹Zdenko Antic, "The Serbian Question," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 12 (December 23, 1988): 22.

⁹²Mihailo Markovic, "Societal Development in Serbia After the Second World War," unpublished manuscript, Belgrade, 1986. Quoted in Dragnich, 14.

⁹³Silber and Little, 32.

⁹⁴"Memorandum" of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, quoted in Antic, "The Serbian Question," 24.

⁹⁵Antic, "The Serbian Question," 21.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁷Banac, "Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism," 176.

⁹⁸John Zarnetka, *The Yugoslav Conflict*, Adelphi Paper 270 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Summer 1992), 21.

influence equal to the other republics in the federal structure of the country.⁹⁹ Even worse, the constitution had practically effaced Serbia's sovereignty over its two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina.¹⁰⁰ The two provinces were granted independent representation in the highest federal bodies, where they could veto any legislative proposal made by Serbia. Even more controversial, according to the Serbian position, was the "unique form of federalism" that allowed the provincial political representatives to take part in the formal legislative proposals of the National Assembly of Serbia and to veto these proposals, but did not give the National Assembly of Serbia any influence over the decisions made by the provincial assemblies in its two provinces, an arrangement that prevented Serbia from adopting certain pieces of legislation.¹⁰¹ Milosevic adopted the "Memorandum's" argument, stating in 1988 that "Serbia is the only republic...that does not have the basic rights of a state on its territory; this cannot go on any longer....Serbia did not take it upon itself to have two provinces in order to become a second-class republic or to abolish itself.... The people will not tolerate this."¹⁰²

Injustices suffered by Serbs during World War II, particularly the wartime massacre of Serbs by the Ustase forces, became another important topic in the Serbian nationalist revival of the early 1980s. The emotional evocation of the wartime massacres, even when presented in an objective, historically documented way, awoke feelings of national danger, solidarity, and hatred against the Croatian fascists who perpetrated the atrocities as well as the Albanians and Bosnian Muslims for their "genocidal acts" against the Serbian people.¹⁰³ It was a simple task for nationalists to evoke the horror of the Serbian experience and to awaken in the Serbs a desire to avenge the past. Nationalist Serbian intellectuals raised the specter of Croatia's wartime fascists, dwelling at length on

⁹⁹Antic, "The Serbian Question," 21.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 23.

¹⁰²Slobodan Milosevic quoted in Moore, "Yugoslavia's Serbian Question," 1-2.

¹⁰³Antic, "The Serbian Question," 3-4.

the massacres and mutilations of Serbs and “none too subtly implying that Croats as a people were ‘genocidal.’”¹⁰⁴

The media began to give play to lengthy documentary programs about World War II, dwelling on the atrocities and blaming other ethnic groups exclusively for their sufferings.¹⁰⁵ Mass graves were disinterred with great ceremony and political symbolism,¹⁰⁶ and the Serbian Academy of Sciences organized a scientific meeting with the theme, “Jasenovac, 1945-1995,” in order “to keep alive Serbian resentments of the liquidation of Serbs at the wartime concentration camp at Jasenovac.”¹⁰⁷ The purpose of the “mythologization” of history was not just “to determine what happened in the past and interpret it for the present but to provide ammunition for...claims in the present situation and [to] recall grievances against other groups in the past so that one may avenge them in the present.”¹⁰⁸

A number of novels and plays began dealing with the history of World War II and the suffering of the Serbian nation. In December 1982, the play *Golubrijaca*, “Pigeon Cave,” by Jovan Radulovic, which deals with the wartime massacres of Serbian peasants by the Croatian Ustase and emphasizes the positive role of the Serbian Orthodox Church during the war, sparked a heated debate in Serbia as well as in the rest of Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the novel *Noz*, “The Knife,” by Vuk Draskovic, addressed the persecution of Serbs in Herzegovina, which was then part of the NDH. At the center of the novel is the massacre of Serbs by their Muslim neighbors on Orthodox Christmas day, January 7, 1942. While historically accurate, this novel sparked controversy for its failure to mention the Serbian Chetnik massacres of Muslims.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴Gagnon, “Serbia’s Road to War,” 123.

¹⁰⁵Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 225.

¹⁰⁶Silber and Little, 93.

¹⁰⁷Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 230.

¹⁰⁸Paul Mojzes, “The Role of the Religious Communities in the War in the Former Yugoslavia,” unpublished manuscript (April 1993), 13.

¹⁰⁹Antic, “The Serbian Question,” 1, 4.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 4.

Subsequently a whole series of articles, plays, novels and pamphlets by Serbs in Belgrade and Bosnia emerged, such as Bosnian Serb Milorad Janjic's *Kako Sam Izdao Nacionalnu Stvar*, "How I Have Betrayed the National Cause," and a leading Serb surrealist painter, Milic Stankovic's historical pamphlet *Sorabi*, which attempts to prove that the Serbs are the oldest indigenous population in the Balkans.¹¹¹ The most popular author during this period was Dobrica Cosic, a former partisan, political commissar, and author of a number of novels dealing with the civil war in Serbia and the struggle between the nationalist Chetniks and the communist partisans, who was ousted from the Serbian Central Committee for his strong opposition to the concessions made in Kosovo in the late 1960s.¹¹² One of his most popular publications is *Stvarno i Moguce*, "Reality and Possibility," a collection of literary and political essays, including his famous speech, quoted above, on the occasion of his election as a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in March 1977.¹¹³ His four part series of historical fiction, *Vreme Smrti*, chronicles the tragedies of Serbia during World War I and portrays Serbia as the innocent victim of its neighbors, its supposed allies, and other Yugoslav nations.¹¹⁴ Together, Cosic's numerous works present a specific view of Serbian nationalism whose main theme is that Serbs are the greatest victims of Yugoslavia, portraying them as the "tragic people."¹¹⁵

This preoccupation with the massacres of World War II and Serbia's wartime sufferings had a significant impact on the general populace, not just in Serbia, but throughout Yugoslavia, heightening tensions in those regions where large Serb populations resided. The atrocities of World War II became personally relevant to Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, who suffered most under the Ustase and for whom the memories of those massacres were still recent. The lengthy examination of Serbia's experiences during World

¹¹¹ Antic, "The Serbian Question," 4.

¹¹² Ibid., 4-5.

¹¹³ Antic, "The Danger of Increasing Serbian Nationalism," 5.

¹¹⁴ Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 145n33.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 144-145n33.

War II reawakened memories, sensitivities, and mutual suspicions, and predisposed individuals to expect the worst or to reinterpret behavior in the light of physical danger.¹¹⁶ The discourse of injustice created an environment in which Serbs, in Serbia proper as well as in Croatia and Bosnia, felt increasingly threatened.

Serbia's nationalistic chauvinism became even more aggressive as it shifted its attention from past sufferings of the Serbian nation to current injustices suffered by Serbs outside Serbia. This dangerous turn in the nationalist discourse of injustice was particularly critical for the large Serb populations in Croatia and Bosnia. One of the most dangerous flashpoints in Yugoslavia was the Serbian region in Croatia, the Krajina.

Under Milosevic, the Serbian press repeatedly claimed that living conditions for Serbs in Croatia were deplorable and that life was so unbearable that the average Serb had to flee to avoid repression. Those who remained, confronted "an open state of terror."¹¹⁷ In the summer of 1989 following two days of celebration of the six hundredth anniversary of the battle of Kosovo, some 50,000 Serbs, many from Serbia, Kosovo, and Vojvodina, participated in a demonstration in Knin protesting Croatia's discriminatory cultural and social policies.¹¹⁸ That same summer, Croatia suppressed the Zora Society, a Serbian cultural association, and the Croatian assembly voted to retain the republic's 1974 constitutional amendment which stated that "the Croatian Literary Language is the standardized form of the popular language of Croats and Serbs in Croatia" rather than adopting the party presidium's proposal of 1987 to modify this amendment so that the official language would be either Croatian or Serbian.¹¹⁹ By 1990, Serb nationalists in

¹¹⁶Woodward, 239-240.

¹¹⁷Stan Markotich, "Ethnic Serbs in Tadjman's Croatia," *RFE/RL Research Report 2* (September 24, 1993): 30.

¹¹⁸Milan Andrejevich, "The Yugoslav Crisis and the National Question," *Radio Free Europe Research, Yugoslav Situation Report 10* (August 17, 1989): 4.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 5.

Serbia and in the Krajina were claiming that Serbs were second class citizens and that they had were being denied their basic freedoms.¹²⁰

Although Serbs in the Krajina were not yet physically threatened, nationalist leaders and propagandists in Belgrade successfully mobilized Serbian opposition to Zagreb by convincing a majority of local Serbs that they were indeed threatened by genocide.¹²¹ Following the election of Tudjman's HDZ in April 1990, this fear had turned to panic. Throughout the summer of 1990, the Serbian media broadcast stories detailing the World War II massacres and furthering the implicit link with the HDZ.¹²² As it became clear that Croatia would attempt to secede from Yugoslavia, Milosevic stated,

It has not occurred to us to dispute the right of the Croatian nation to secede from Yugoslavia, if that nation decides of its own free will in a referendum...but I want to make it completely clear that it should not occur to anyone that a part of the Serbian nation will be allowed to go with them. *Because the history of the Serbian nation in the Independent State of Croatia is too tragic to risk such a fate again.*¹²³

Serb nationalists claimed that the last time there was an independent Croatia, the Serbs had only saved themselves from extinction by taking up arms. The Krajina people were the descendants of those who had survived by fighting back, in the words of nationalist poet Beckovic, "the remnants of the slaughtered people."¹²⁴

Increasingly the media portrayed the new Croatian government as fascist and claimed that its intent was to exterminate all Serbs. Serb nationalists blamed Germany and Austria for supporting Croatian fascism in the hopes of rebuilding their former empires.¹²⁵ Their claims were all the more persuasive when the newly elected Croatian government passed constitutional provisions adopting traditional Croatian ethnic symbols as the republic's official insignia. Most offensive was the red and white checkerboard shield, the

¹²⁰ Milan Andrejevich, "Croatia between Stability and Civil War (Part I)," *Report on Eastern Europe* 37 (September 14, 1990): 38.

¹²¹ Milan Vego, "The Army of Serbian Krajina," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (October 1993): 438.

¹²² Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 155.

¹²³ Italics added. Quoted in Silber and Little, 131.

¹²⁴ Matija Beckovic, *Knizevne Novine* (Belgrade: September 15, 1989), 3. Quoted in Silber and Little, 93.

¹²⁵ Gagnon, "Serbia's Road to War," 126.

Sahovnica, which Croatia's Serbs strongly associate with the hated Ustase regime. The reemergence of this symbolism was, for Krajina's Serb leaders, certain evidence of the reemergence of Croatian fascism.

The chauvinistic nationalism emanating from Serbia also had a significant impact on Serbs living in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Increasingly, the alleged sufferings of Bosnia's Serb population became a part of the overall discourse of ethnic injustice. Like the Krajina Serbs, nationalists claimed, Bosnian Serbs, by virtue of living outside Serbia's borders, were subject to many injustices and indignities and were denied their basic rights. In 1989, Dobrica Cosic, Antonije Isakovic and Vuk Draskovic, leading Serbian nationalists, and Vovjislav Seselj, a Serb nationalist dissident and future leader of the Serbian "Chetniks," voiced concerns over the status of the Serbian minority in Bosnia, claiming that its cultural and religious rights were being denied and suggesting that Serbia should annex Bosnia.¹²⁶ Religious celebrations became venues for pursuing nationalist purposes, attended by Serbs from outside Bosnia who were given free round-trip transportation from their homes in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Vojvodina, and Kosovo.¹²⁷ Those attending the celebrations would chant, "Slobo, Serb, One Constitution, One Serbia," and other nationalist songs.¹²⁸

As it became apparent that Bosnia's Muslim and Croat communities would seek independence, Serb nationalists questioned the true intentions of Bosnia's Muslims, alleging that their aim was to create an Islamic fundamentalist state.¹²⁹ Serb nationalists cited Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic's "Islamic Declaration," in which he advocated the creation of an Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia and the "destr[uction of] the existing non-Islamic power."¹³⁰ In addition, Izetbegovic had vowed that "there can be neither peace nor co-existence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic social and political

¹²⁶ Milan Andrejevich, "Serbia Accused of Interfering in Bosnian Affairs," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 12 (October 23, 1989): 27.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁸ "Slobo" is a nickname for Slobodan Milosevic.

¹²⁹ Crnobrnja, 176.

¹³⁰ Zarnetica, 38-39.

institutions.”¹³¹ Serbia’s enemy in Bosnia had become the allegedly fundamentalist Muslim population that was seeking to impose an Islamic state and perpetrate genocide against the Bosnian Serbs.¹³² As Serb refugees from Croatia fled to Bosnia, their tales only increased this fear and made the chauvinistic Serb rhetoric all the more appealing.

Although Serbian grievances were not without foundation, this long list of injustices, including the alleged genocide of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo, Serbia’s “unequal” position within the Yugoslav system, particularly as a result of the 1974 constitution, Serbia’s wartime sufferings, particularly the massacre of Serbs by the Ustase during World War II, and, finally, current injustices suffered by Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, served to cloak the larger aim of recentralizing Yugoslavia under Serbian control. Thus it was the discourse of injustice as it was formulated by the Serb leadership and intelligentsia, and not blatant Serbian chauvinism, that defined Serbia’s relations with the other republics.

Once the discourse of injustice took root in Serbia, interaction among the republics became one of nationalist and ethnic claims and counterclaims, with Serbia taking the moral highground through its characterization of Serbia as the victim of Yugoslavia and of the “viciously anti-Serbian” Albanians, Muslims and Croats. In order to protect Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, Serbian nationalists and increasingly Serb populations argued, Croatia and Bosnia’s borders would have to be changed. Protecting Serbs provided the pretense for provoking violent conflict in those regions of Yugoslavia that lay beyond Serbia’s borders.

Militant chauvinistic rhetoric promoted patterns of exclusivism, intolerance, and hatred and created the belief among Serbs in Yugoslavia that the adoption of a strategy of violence to “protect” the Serbian nation by expanding it and to redress past injustices by expelling non-Serbs was both morally justified and historically validated. The Serb nation

¹³¹Zametica, 38-39.

¹³²Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 162-163.

was justified in its efforts to reclaim its rightful place: predominance in the Yugoslav system. Predominance meant the exclusion, if not annihilation, of the “other” who would prevent this morally justified aim.

Although the Serbs were by no means alone in the development and propagation of a militant ethnic chauvinism, the focus here has been on Serbian ethnic chauvinism rather than the equally militant Croatian chauvinism because it was the Serbs who first embarked upon a strategy of ethnic violence. To understand the sources of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia thus required a careful examination of Serbian ethnic chauvinism even though the other Yugoslav nationalities developed equally exclusive nationalisms based on that ethnic group’s innate superiority. Ethnic chauvinism created a zero-sum environment which precluded, for the Serbs, negotiation with the “viciously anti-Serbian” other. Ultimately, it prompted Serbs to adopt an offensive strategy of violence that aimed to ethnically cleanse large regions of Croatia and Bosnia and, in attaching them to the Serbian republic, realize the historic dream of a greater Serbia.

Ethnic Group Leadership

The incitement first of incidents of interethnic violence followed by massive ethnic cleansing and open warfare was not the result of an explosion of “ancient ethnic hatreds” but a direct consequence of the implementation of a well planned and carefully coordinated strategy adopted by the Serbian leadership in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia itself. The Serbian leadership, under the direction of Milosevic and with the close cooperation of Milan Babic, Radovan Karadzic, and Ratko Mladic, as well as the Serbian nationalist intelligentsia, successfully articulated a “group ideology” based on ethnic injustice and images of threatened Serbdom that mobilized Serbs in Yugoslavia. It formulated a strategy that had as its aim the creation of a greater Serbian state upon the ruins of the second Yugoslavia. It determined that interethnic violence was the optimal strategy for realizing this aim and subsequently implemented it. As Proposition 4 suggests, the Serbian

leadership's successful articulation of grievances, mobilization of the Serbian nation, and formulation of a strategy of interethnic warfare was a direct source of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia.

The alliance of conservatives who ultimately adopted a strategy of interethnic violence included the many local level party bureaucrats and managers of enterprises who were most threatened by the far more radical proposals for reform that emerged after Tito's death. These local level bureaucrats who had earned their positions by virtue of having participated in the partisan forces rather than because of any real knowledge of economics faced being rendered irrelevant by reforms that would replace political criteria with economic criteria in economic decision making. It also included conservatives in the Serbian communist party leadership, local and regional party elites, orthodox Marxist intellectuals, nationalist writers, and parts of the Yugoslav army whose very source of power, prestige, and economic security were based not on "owning" anything but on their position within the bureaucracy and their consequent control over resources.¹³³ This conservative coalition was united by its opposition to the changes being advocated by reformists within the ruling Serbian communist party as well as by reformists in Slovenia and Vojvodina, changes that threatened the very structure of their economic and political power. For this coalition, losing the battle over reform thus meant losing everything.¹³⁴

Between 1982 and 1985, the debate over reform was gradually shifting in favor of the reformists as the conservatives' initial strategy of emphasizing orthodox Marxist themes proved both unpopular and counterproductive, particularly when compared with the reformists' emphasis on freedom of expression, tolerance of difference, and market principles.¹³⁵ As Yugoslavia's economic crisis deepened, the debate over reform became deadlocked, offering conservatives the necessary respite to switch to a strategy that had proved successful in thwarting economic reform in the 1960s. "By diverting political

¹³³Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 186.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 189.

discourse away from the issue of reform toward alleged threats to the 'nation'...and by provoking violent conflict along ethnic lines, these conservative forces managed to overcome the opposition of liberals within the communist party and then opposition forces outside of it."¹³⁶

Yugoslavia's federal system facilitated the implementation of this strategy. Because Yugoslavia's republics were organized along national lines and because these republics functioned as independent actors in the federal system, claiming a threat to republican interests was easily translated into a threat to ethnic interests. Yugoslavia's other republics were thus forced to respond in kind, and the focus of the debate was shifted from economic reform, which transcended individual republican interests, to a debate of ethnic interests, and in Serbia, ethnic injustices.

The 1981 riots in Kosovo and the grievances of Kosovo's Serbian population provided conservatives with a threat to the nation they could exploit in their quest to discredit and sideline the increasingly popular reformists in Serbia. The crisis in Kosovo proved to be ideal for the Serbian conservatives. Not only was the timing fortuitous, but Serbian grievances over the events in Kosovo were shared by the Serbian population as a whole and could be manipulated with relative ease to mobilize it. In addition, Serbian grievances in Kosovo were unrelated to the actual grievances of the Serbian leadership, whose true intentions aimed not at resolving the issues in Kosovo, but at strengthening their own position within Serbia.

By 1986, Kosovo had become the centerpiece of the conservative counterattack and the catalyst for nationalist attacks on a whole host of injustices suffered by Serbs, first in Serbia itself and increasingly in Yugoslavia as a whole. This discourse of ethnic injustice and the propagation of a chauvinistic Serbian nationalism created a common identity and provided a link between the Serbian conservatives and the Serbian people, including workers in inefficient state companies, pensioners, and Serbs from underdeveloped regions

¹³⁶Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 179.

who stood to lose most from the reforms. Cast as the saviors of the imperiled Serb nation, the leadership and the nationalist intelligentsia were able to mobilize the Serbian population, in Serbia itself as well as in Croatia and Bosnia, and to create a sense of threat, even of impending genocide. In addition, they were able to mobilize the Serbian population in support of their goal of building a greater Serbian state that would include all of Yugoslavia's Serbs, thus protecting the endangered Serbian nation and securing for it its rightful place in Yugoslavia as the dominant ethnic group. The success of this strategy, however, was ultimately the result of the rise to power of the single most important post-Tito Yugoslav leader and avowed Serbian nationalist, Slobodan Milosevic.

The Kosovo crisis propelled Milosevic, a hitherto little known bureaucrat with ties of friendship to the head of the Serbian communist party, into the limelight. In 1984, Milosevic was appointed by Ivan Stambolic to succeed him as chair of the Central Committee of the Serbian Party while Stambolic assumed the presidency of Serbia. Friends since childhood, Stambolic and Milosevic would begin to part ways following the release in 1986 of the famous "Memorandum." Stambolic was willing to pay only lip service to the demands of Serbian nationalists, but Milosevic was deeply impressed by the claims in the Memorandum.

On April 24-25, 1987, a critical event occurred in Kosovo that was to propel Milosevic into Serbian mythology and convince him that he had power over people. As the head of the Serbian party, Milosevic attended a meeting in Kosovo Polje of 300 party delegates, most of whom were ethnic Albanians, that was to address the deteriorating situation in the province. Some 15,000 Serbs and Montenegrins attempted to gain access to the meeting, but were rebuffed by the ethnic Albanian police wielding clubs. Milosevic raised his hands and signaled to the police to let the Serbs into the meeting, telling them, "nobody, either now or in the future, has the right to beat you."¹³⁷ With these words,

¹³⁷Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 227.

Milosevic was “assured a place in Serbian mythology.”¹³⁸ He stayed until dawn, listening to the troubles Serbs suffered under the Albanian leadership of Kosovo’s provincial government. Milosevic sided with the demonstrators and told them,

The first thing I wish to tell you comrades, is that you must remain here. This is your land, your houses are here, your fields and gardens, your memories....It was never characteristic of the spirit of the Serb and Montenegrin people to knuckle under to difficulties, to demobilize itself when it must fight, to become demoralized when the going is tough. You must remain here on account of your ancestors and descendants. Otherwise, we would be shaming the ancestors and disillusioning the descendants.¹³⁹ But I don’t suggest that you stay, endure, and tolerate a situation you’re not satisfied with. On the contrary, you should change it with the rest of the progressive people here, in Serbia, and in Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁰

Milosevic emerged from that meeting profoundly changed. He suddenly realized that he had power over people.¹⁴¹ Instead of restraining the anger of Kosovo’s Serbs and attempting to reconcile their differences with the ethnic Albanian leadership, Milosevic urged them to resist. In doing so, he “hijacked the nationalist movement,”¹⁴² using the sufferings of Kosovo’s Serbs as a means of strengthening his own position in Serbia and undermining the more popular reformists in the Serbian party.

The year 1987 proved to be critical not only for Serbia itself, but for Yugoslavia as a whole. In fact, “the decisive battle in Yugoslavia’s disintegration was fought not in 1991 but in 1987. The struggle was not between Serbs and non-Serbs but between two wings of the Serbian League of Communists, between adherents of a Serb nationalist ideology...and those who clung to the concept of a multinational state.”¹⁴³ In September 1987, Milosevic ousted Stambolic, the Serbian president, and Dragisa Pavlovic, the Belgrade Party chief, both avowed Titoists, in an emotionally charged two day meeting of the Central Committee of the Serbian Party.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 227.

¹³⁹Quoted in Banac, “Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslaviism,” 177.

¹⁴⁰Quoted in Silber and Little, 38.

¹⁴¹Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 227.

¹⁴²Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 94.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴Silber and Little, 45.

Milosevic subsequently overturned the whole policy of the party. Under Milosevic, the Serbian party organization was turned into *the* party of Serbian nationalism, and communist policy and ideology were turned into instruments of a pan-Serb nationalist movement.¹⁴⁵ Milosevic put the party-state of Serbia, with its media, cultural and educational institutions, armed power and federal influence, and even the usually disloyal intelligentsia, into the service of Serbian national homogenization and supremacy.¹⁴⁶

Milosevic subsequently assumed Stambolic's former position as president of Serbia and began to implement a four part strategy. Milosevic's first step was to assume full control of Serbia itself, which required a pliant press. He fired a number of editors and journalists at the prestigious Politika publishing house such that the daily papers *Politika* and *Politika ekspres* as well as the weekly magazines *Duga* and *NIN* became "mouthpieces of Milosevic."¹⁴⁷ A pliant press proved critical in the "uncovering" of atrocities against Serbs in Albania. The media demonization of ethnic Albanians gradually extended to include Croats and involved an active campaign to portray Tito's Yugoslavia as specifically anti-Serbian. The media also played a critical part in boosting Milosevic's popularity and support as the only post-war politician to fight for Serbian rights.¹⁴⁸

Milosevic's rise to power was accompanied by a growing cult of personality that fueled a small industry producing posters of Milosevic, recordings of his speeches, framed photographs, Milosevic calendars, coffee mugs and badges. Songs about his popularity, such as "Slobodan, Dear Brother" by Snezana Petkovic, became increasingly popular and three editions of a volume of selected speeches by Milosevic sold out in 1989, to be followed by a fourth edition printed both in Cyrillic and Latin scripts.¹⁴⁹ Shops, vendors, and restaurants displayed photo portraits of "Comrade Slobo" in front windows. Milosevic

¹⁴⁵Banac, "Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism," 177.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁴⁷Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 227-228.

¹⁴⁸Milan Andrejevich, "Serbia's First Lady in Politics," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 12 (October 23, 1989): 32.

¹⁴⁹Andrejevich, "Serbia's First Lady in Politics," 32-33.

was so successful in his consolidation of power that “it became impossible for Serbs to criticize Milosevic publicly and retain jobs of any importance.”¹⁵⁰

Having successfully consolidated his power in Serbia itself, Milosevic implemented the second part of his strategy. Serbian conservatives needed to remove the danger of being outvoted by reformists in other republics and to prevent the danger of Serbian reformists forming federal-level alliances with reformists in other republics.¹⁵¹ To remove this threat, Milosevic implemented a strategy aimed at securing his control over Serbia’s two autonomous provinces and over neighboring Montenegro. Successful implementation of this strategy would give Serbia control of four of the eight federal votes, ensuring that the federal presidency could not take a single decision without Milosevic’s approval.¹⁵²

The Committee for the Protection of Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins, established in 1988, was a key instrument in Milosevic’s strategy to bring the provinces and Montenegro under Serbian control. The committee began organizing rallies, and Serbs and Montenegrins took to the streets in record numbers. It built a series of networks in the villages and vowed, “if we don’t get our rights, we will take up arms.”¹⁵³ The first demonstrations took place in Vojvodina in July 1988, and on October 6, the leadership of Vojvodina resigned.¹⁵⁴ Milosevic installed his own supporters in their place.

Vojvodina was only a dress rehearsal for Kosovo, however. Massive demonstrations beginning in August of 1988 led to the resignation of Kosovo’s Albanian leadership, many of them loyal Titoists, in February 1989, and its replacement by Milosevic’s loyal followers. Milosevic then pushed through the adoption of Serbo-Croatian as the sole official language in Kosovo and prepared for a series of constitutional amendments designed to strip the provinces of their autonomy.

¹⁵⁰Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 228.

¹⁵¹Gagnon, “Serbia’s Road to War,” 122.

¹⁵²Silber and Little, 63.

¹⁵³Miroslav Solevic, quoted in Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 213.

¹⁵⁴Milan Andrejevich, “Resignations and Unrest in Vojvodina,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 9 (October 11, 1988): 9.

The committee's actions in Kosovo coincided with similar protests in Montenegro aimed at unseating the Montenegrin leadership. In August 1988 and again in October 1988, massive demonstrations organized by the committee in Titograd eventually led to the resignation of Montenegro's leadership on January 11, 1989.¹⁵⁵ In its place, Milosevic placed his own supporters. By the spring of 1989, the committee had organized almost a hundred protest demonstrations involving some five million people.¹⁵⁶

With a loyal Montenegrin leadership and firm control over Serbia's two provinces, Milosevic turned his attention to the "unequal position" of Serbia within Yugoslavia. Milosevic's third step involved changing the Serbian constitution and reversing the 1974 constitutional provisions that had removed Serbian control over its two provinces. In February 1989, despite massive strikes in Kosovo protesting the impending changes, Milosevic successfully pushed through changes in the constitutions that eliminated the provinces' authority to pass their own laws and established the Supreme Court of Serbia as the highest court of appeal for Kosovars and Vojvodinians.¹⁵⁷ The new constitution also gave the president of Serbia an unusual new prerogative: it granted the president the power to declare war and conclude peace.¹⁵⁸

By mid-1989, Milosevic controlled half the votes on the Yugoslav Federal Presidency. However, to dominate the federal presidency, he would need at least five of the eight votes.¹⁵⁹ Milosevic thus implemented the fourth part of his strategy: the removal of the republican leaderships in the remaining four Yugoslav republics and their replacement with loyal conservative leaderships opposed to reform and willing to acknowledge Serbian supremacy in a recentralized Yugoslavia. Milosevic again relied on mass rallies under the guise of explaining "the truth" about Serb persecution and genocide

¹⁵⁵Milan Andrejevich, "Unrest in Montenegro," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Situation Report 9 (October 11, 1988): 3.

¹⁵⁶Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 213.

¹⁵⁷Ramet, "War in the Balkans," 83-84.

¹⁵⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 235.

¹⁵⁹Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 150.

in Kosovo. Massive protest rallies were held in Serb populated areas in Croatia beginning in 1988 with the intention of eventually moving on to Zagreb to overthrow the Croatian party leadership.¹⁶⁰ Agents of the Serbian Security Service were also sent into Bosnia.¹⁶¹ In Slovenia, the plan was for a military crackdown and imposition of a conservative centralist party leadership by force, but it was uncovered in May 1988 before it could be implemented.¹⁶² In December 1989, Milosevic attempted to undermine the Slovenian leadership a second time with a “meeting of truth” rally in Ljubljana, which the Slovenian leadership banned. As a result, Serbian-Slovenian relations worsened dramatically, and Serbian firms severed all business relations with Slovenian firms.

Milosevic’s strategy of subverting the other republican leaderships backfired. It emboldened the reformists and radicalized the other republican parties while weakening conservatives who were accused of being allied with Milosevic and his aggressive rhetoric. In March 1989, reformists succeeded in having Ante Markovic appointed as federal prime minister. By Spring 1990, Markovic’s policies were proving successful in lowering inflation and improving the country’s economic situation,¹⁶³ and Markovic had become more popular in Serbia than Milosevic.¹⁶⁴ Milosevic’s efforts to recentralize the federal party at the Fourteenth Party Congress in January 1990 failed and resulted in the collapse of the LCY. Furthermore, multiparty elections were scheduled in Croatia and Slovenia for spring 1990, and openly anti-socialist parties were campaigning to loosen rather than tighten political ties. Serbian conservatives thus faced a whole new series of threats that presented an even greater danger than the original proposals for reform.

The original goal of Serbian conservatives had been to recentralize Yugoslavia in order to crush reformist trends and eliminate the threat to their own power. By 1990, however, the reformist backlash in the other republics meant that Serbian conservatives

¹⁶⁰Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 150.

¹⁶¹Andrejevich, “Serbia Accused of Interfering in Bosnian Affairs,” 25.

¹⁶²Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 189.

¹⁶³Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 153.

¹⁶⁴Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 190.

were now faced with a critical choice: either they had to accept defeat and Yugoslavia's transformation into a confederalist system with a market economy or they could fight to create a new, Serb-dominated state. They chose the latter, adopting a strategy known as "project RAM" that sought to "use military force to expand Serbia's borders westward and create a new Serbian Yugoslavia."¹⁶⁵ The campaign to demonize other nationalities in Yugoslavia was stepped up, and nationalists and private militias began provoking confrontations and violent incidents, particularly in the Krajina but also in Bosnia. The Serb leadership in Belgrade took over the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in Croatia, which had been formed in February 1990, replacing moderate leaders such as Raskovic with hardliners such as Milan Babic. The more militant Serbian leadership in Croatia, with Belgrade's prompting, rejected all compromises with Zagreb, organized mass rallies and demonstrations, and threatened moderate Serbs who refused to accept the new confrontational strategy.

Since most of Croatia's Serbs had supported a more moderate reformist course, voting mostly for the former Communist Party in Croatia's elections, the SDS used confrontations and violent incidents as a means of persuading Croatia's Serbs that its confrontational nationalist strategy was a better defense against Tudjman's "Ustase" government. The Belgrade leadership encouraged this link between Tudjman and the Ustase and used the media to instill fear in the Serb population in the Krajina and elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Local forces in the Krajina provoked armed incidents with the Croatian police, stormed villages adjacent to regions already under Serb control, annexed them to their territory, and proclaimed the establishment of the "Republic of Serb Krajina" which Belgrade subsequently recognized. Moderate Serbs that could not be persuaded by the violent incidents and alleged genocidal tendencies of the new Croatian government were threatened and silenced by paramilitary groups, many from Serbia itself, who played an important role in cleansing mixed villages of ethnic Croats. Their efforts made it

¹⁶⁵Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 159.

increasingly difficult for more moderate Serbs to pursue negotiations with the Croatian government or with Croatian opposition parties. By August 1990, the SDS was setting up armed barricades, pressuring villages with large Serb populations to join the Krajina, and redoubling its efforts against moderate Serbs.¹⁶⁶

By the spring of 1991, the Krajina rebellion had spread, and towns in western Slavonia were being targeted by paramilitary groups, whose efforts were gradually being coordinated by the JNA. Called in ostensibly to separate the two sides in Croatia in August 1990, the JNA in fact protected the Serb populations there and secured Serbian gains on the ground. In the summer of 1991, when Ratko Mladic, a Serb from Bozinovici in Bosnia, was sent to Knin as the new Chief of Staff of the Knin Corps of the JNA, coordination between the local militias and the federal army became even stronger.

The battle at Kijevo on August 26, 1991 set the pattern for the remainder of the war in Croatia. After Kijevo, the JNA played an increasingly central role. At first, its artillery would support Serbian rebel forces, composed partly of conscripts and partly of locally-recruited Serbian volunteers.¹⁶⁷ Later the militias would flank the JNA forces, who began to direct the war against the Croatian government. JNA involvement also signaled the widening of the conflict as the war spread to eastern Slavonia and escalated. Soon Serb forces controlled between a quarter and a third of Croatian territory.¹⁶⁸

Belgrade's strategy in the Krajina was closely tied to events within Serbia itself. As the fighting in Croatia spread from the Krajina, where Serbs were in the majority, to other areas in Croatia, such as Slavonia, where Serbs were often in the minority, the Serbian leadership suddenly faced massive demonstrations by the political opposition in Belgrade in early March 1991. Milosevic did not hesitate to use force against the opposition, mostly supporters of Vuk Draskovic and his nationalist Serbian Renewal Movement that had converged on Belgrade's central square. The Serbian police arrested Draskovic and raided a

¹⁶⁶Gagnon, "Serbia's Road to War," 124-125.

¹⁶⁷Silber and Little, 172-173.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 174.

liberal radio station and the only Belgrade television station not under government control. Students joined the demonstrators and demanded Draskovic's release, the resignation of the interior minister, and the dismissal of the head of Belgrade television.

For a week, demonstrators remained in the center of Belgrade. Finally, in attempt to get the students off the street, Milosevic agreed to fire the television editor, asked for the resignation of the interior minister, and freed Draskovic. In addition, he printed more money to pay workers.¹⁶⁹ At the end of March, to forestall Croatia from taking advantage of his weakened position, Milosevic met secretly with Tudjman and agreed to the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the media continued to give play to charges that Draskovic, in a secret alliance with Tudjman's "Ustase regime," was plotting to destabilize Serbia.¹⁷¹

These short term measures were accompanied by a broader strategy that relied on escalating interethnic violence in Croatia as part of a "deliberate policy of violently shattering ethnic peace throughout the region" in order to undermine Serbian opponents to Milosevic's strategy.¹⁷² Croatian extremist groups responded in kind, and their reprisals were used as proof of Milosevic's claim that Croatia's "Ustase" government was genocidal. Milosevic used the escalating war in Croatia both to crush internal party dissent in Serbia and to marginalize his opposition. Opponents were branded as traitors, and any criticism of the war in Serbia was met by physical threats from neofascist gangs.

To insulate itself further from any opposition, the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) entered into an open alliance with the neofascist Serbian Radical Party of Vojislav Seselj, whose "Chetnik" guerrilla groups were at the forefront of cleansing Serb regions in the Krajina and Slavonia of Croats. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, when asked what he would do if he were Serbia's president, Seselj responded, "I would immediately mobilize

¹⁶⁹Silber and Little, 127.

¹⁷⁰Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 158.

¹⁷¹Silber and Little, 119-120.

¹⁷²Gagnon, "Serbia's Road to War," 126.

all Serbs, amputate Croatia in a blitzkrieg, and then inform the international community of the new Serbian borders.”¹⁷³ When asked where those borders would be, Seselj answered, “the current Serbia, including the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo...[and] the republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and the Serbian areas of Croatia.”¹⁷⁴ In comparison with the extremist Seselj, the SPS and Milosevic appeared a more moderate option.

Finally, the Serbian leadership used the war to destroy its opponents physically. Reservists sent to the front were drafted first from counties that had voted for opposition parties in the elections, and opposition leaders and outspoken antiwar activists were sent to combat zones. The opposition was thus weakened, and the SPS’ core supporters were insulated from the dangers of the war and its hardships.¹⁷⁵

By the end of 1991 the opposition, which seemed poised to defeat Milosevic in April, was in shambles. Milosevic’s strategy of marginalizing and physically weakening the democratic opposition had proved successful. However, the costs of the war were beginning to mount. Croatia’s efforts to build its armed forces had proved successful, and Croatian forces were beginning to regain ground. The EC was preparing to recognize Croatia. In addition, Serbia’s reputation abroad had begun to suffer, particularly following the destruction of Vukovar and Dubrovnik.¹⁷⁶ Milosevic thus shifted his strategy, finally conceding that a ceasefire was necessary. In December 1991, Milosevic reversed his opposition to the deployment of UN peacekeepers and pressured the Krajina leadership to accept the deployment of UNPROFOR in Serb-occupied areas of Croatia. Milosevic was forced to exert a great deal of pressure upon local Croatian Serbs to obtain their agreement, for which he was subsequently praised by the international community. In order to contend

¹⁷³Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 263.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵Gagnon, “Serbia’s Road to War,” 127.

¹⁷⁶Zametica, 23-24.

with domestic criticism, Milosevic argued that UNPROFOR would protect Serbian areas from Croatian reprisals.¹⁷⁷

Open warfare in Croatia was temporarily halted, but the Serb-Croat war did not end. In April 1992 it broke out again, not in Croatia, but in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Milosevic had no intention of abandoning his efforts to create a greater Serbia. For the moment, the venue of warfare would simply be shifted to Bosnia.¹⁷⁸ While the war in Bosnia was a continuation of the war in Croatia, it was different in one important respect: in Bosnia the interests of former foes came together. Already in January 1991, and possibly even as early as June 1990, Tudjman and Milosevic had begun meeting secretly to work out the details of the eventual division of Bosnia-Herzegovina between them.¹⁷⁹ Both leaders agreed that Yugoslavia was finished and that three, or more, successor states would emerge. In the Bosnian war, Milosevic was willing to negotiate with the "Ustase" government of Franjo Tudjman when it served Serbian interests, thus proving further that the war was not an explosion of "ancient ethnic hatreds," but the careful manipulation of those hatreds to serve the wider Serbian aim of creating a Greater Serbia and the broader Croatian goal of creating an expanded Croatian state.

Serbian tactics in Bosnia-Herzegovina were identical to those employed in Croatia, although the scale was much greater. Serbian strategy involved the proclamation of "autonomous" Serbian regions that declared their independence from the government in Sarajevo, held their own referendum, proclaimed the creation of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and eventually declared their independence and desire to join Serbia. When violence erupted in Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992, again the overriding goals were to secure Serbian populated areas and cleanse them and to create a land corridor linking territories in Croatia with Serbia proper.

¹⁷⁷Woodward, 189.

¹⁷⁸Lenard Cohen, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia," *Current History* 91 (November 1992): 374.

¹⁷⁹Woodward, 172.

Serbian strategy for the war in Bosnia was planned well in advance. Milosevic had met with Radovan Karadzic, the SDS leader in Bosnia, to discuss the timing and to coordinate the eventual assault on Bosnia as early as October 1990.¹⁸⁰ Their strategy was also closely coordinated with the JNA. When JNA forces withdrew from Croatia, they did not return to Serbia, but pulled back into Bosnia and positioned themselves at important road junctions. Milosevic subsequently withdrew the JNA from Bosnia-Herzegovina in May 1992, but it left behind the bulk of its weaponry and 80,000 troops who were Bosnian citizens, including General Ratko Mladic who became the Commander in Chief of the Bosnian Serb Army.¹⁸¹ Paramilitary groups and private militias also entered the war in Bosnia, looting and expelling Muslim and Croat populations by threat, intimidation, and massacre.¹⁸²

Gradually Serb forces secured control of some 70 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina and forcibly expelled most of its non-Serb population.¹⁸³ Together with Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic conducted a strategy aimed at occupying territories along the Serbian border, cleansing those areas and then moving westward to link Serbia and the ethnically cleansed territories along the Serbian border in eastern Bosnia with Serbian-populated areas in western Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ultimately these areas would link the Krajina with Serbia proper and would include the vast majority of the Serbian population in one state. Such a strategy required massive ethnic cleansing and the destruction of the will of Bosnia's citizens to live in a multiethnic state.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the war in Croatia were waged to create a Greater Serbia upon the ruins of Tito's Yugoslavia. The Serbian leadership mobilized the Serbian nation around the alleged genocide of Serbs first in Kosovo and then in Croatia, adopted a strategy of deliberately destroying interethnic peace to justify the measures they

¹⁸⁰Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, 2d edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 245.

¹⁸¹Woodward, 262.

¹⁸²Crnobrnja, 179.

¹⁸³Gagnon, "Serbia's Road to War," 128.

were to adopt and to build a consensus among Serbs in Yugoslavia, and embarked upon a strategy of interethnic violence and massive ethnic cleansing. The violence in Croatia and in Bosnia was a direct result of the actions of the Serbian leadership. Although the leaderships of the other Yugoslav republics all bear responsibility to some degree for the events that led to the gradual collapse of Yugoslavia following Tito's death, it was the Serbian leadership, especially Slobodan Milosevic, whose strategies provoked interethnic violence. It was the Serbian leadership who sought not to reform the existing system, but to destroy it, for fear of losing its power and position. The Serbian leadership used the opportunity provided by Tito's death and the lack of consensus among the other republican leaderships about Yugoslavia's future to embark upon a strategy of ethnic violence and ethnic cleansing to realize the dream of a Greater Serbia.

The Weak State

Yugoslavia's disintegration and the onset of ethnic violence that accompanied it were a direct consequence of the structure of the Yugoslav system itself. Following the devolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Yugoslavia became, in essence, a confederation with a fundamentally weak federal center based on consensus, eight powerful republics, and a powerful ninth actor at the federal level, the JNA, entrusted with defending the state against both external and internal enemies.

While Tito was alive, the system continued to function since Tito remained the final arbiter of disputes between the republics. Tito had been content to let the republics govern themselves. While he served as the final arbiter of the system, the federal center relinquished its preponderance within the system and participated, if at all, in interrepublican negotiations as an equal.¹⁸⁴ Upon Tito's death, however, the system started to decay, at first slowly and after 1987, rapidly. As the system unraveled, the federal presidency was unable to constrain the republics or to force agreement on systemic reform.

¹⁸⁴Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 34.

Tito's death created a vacuum which the republics, led by Serbia, set out to fill. The confederalists, with Slovenia and Croatia in the forefront, sought to devolve the system even further, while Serbia, supported initially by Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, sought to recentralize Yugoslavia and undo the hated reforms embodied in the 1974 constitution.

The devolution of the Yugoslav system which created the conditions for Yugoslavia's collapse upon Tito's death was undertaken in order to integrate Yugoslavia's republics and to lessen regional disparities between them. However, it failed to accomplish these goals because conservative forces undermined the reforms by shifting the focus of the debate from reform to threats to the system presented by the nationalist activities in Croatia in the early 1970s. As a result, reform was derailed by the purges of 1971-1972. While economic integration was sabotaged by the conservative effort, the confederalization that had accompanied it remained in place, resulting in "eight statist autarkic units with limited interest in creating a common economic space or cross-republic economic activity beyond a trade in commodities."¹⁸⁵ Federal level functions were devolved to the republics who were granted a maximum degree of autonomy. These fundamental changes were enshrined in the 1971 constitutional amendments and subsequently in the 1974 constitution.

One important consequence of the devolution of power was the weakening of the federal center. It became, in effect, a committee of eight republican representatives who decided matters of federal jurisdiction by consensual agreement.¹⁸⁶ As a result, "the success and stability of the state depended entirely on the sincere willingness and desire of the various republic and province leaders to compromise in order to reach solutions."¹⁸⁷ As long as Tito was alive, he could force the republics to accept changes that were harmful to their interests. But at the very time that he died, Yugoslavia faced an economic crisis triggered by a global recession and Yugoslavia's huge foreign debt burden of some \$20

¹⁸⁵Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 188.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 188.

billion by the early 1980s.¹⁸⁸ The consensual arrangement that remained upon his death was ill-equipped to manage the pressures brought on by the economic crisis.

While the federal center was weakened to the degree that it could only function on the basis of consensus, the republics were fundamentally strengthened and became the most powerful actors within the system. This devolution of power to the republics by the federal center was a second factor accounting for the weakness of the Yugoslav system, one that became particularly critical following Tito's death. The constitution of 1974 had granted the republics exclusive jurisdiction in regulating the use of agricultural lands, mining, transport, forestry, and urban planning and in the planning and erection of investment projects in education, science, culture, health, and public safety.¹⁸⁹ While the federal budget required the unanimous consent of the republican representatives on the federal presidency,¹⁹⁰ each republic could determine its own budget with complete autonomy.¹⁹¹ Although devolution was to be accompanied by coordination among the republics, they enjoyed vast political, cultural, and administrative autonomy as well as an effective veto in many areas of federal legislation.

A third factor that emerged out of the 1960s reforms with potentially dangerous implications for the future of federal Yugoslavia was the increased prominence granted to the JNA by Tito himself. The army was directly involved in the conservative backlash of the 1970s that succeeded in derailing economic reform: parts of the army leadership were critical in persuading Tito of the need to purge the liberal reformists in 1971-1972 and the army veterans' organizations played a key role in ousting liberals in all the republics during this same period. Following the purges, Tito declared that the JNA "must participate" in political affairs within Yugoslavia. Within a few years, army officers comprised 12 percent of the central committee membership, a significant increase from only 2 percent in 1969.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 188.

¹⁸⁹Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 73.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁹²Gagnon, "Historical Roots," 194.

Even more ominous, Tito charged the army with an additional role. It was no longer to defend the country solely against external enemies. Its new role would be to ensure the domestic political order against external *and* internal enemies. The JNA occupied a privileged position within Yugoslav society as a result of these changes. It received higher pay and better housing, benefited from a large budget, and controlled its own arms industry. The overall result was that the army became, in effect, the “ninth” republic in the federal system.¹⁹³

As a consequence of this broadened mission, the JNA’s alliance with conservative forces in Yugoslavia became even stronger. This “natural alliance” between the JNA and conservatives in Yugoslavia was already strong due to the fact that the JNA officer corps drew heavily from economically underdeveloped regions in Yugoslavia, particularly from Serb-populated regions in Croatia and Bosnia which had strong traditions of military service.¹⁹⁴ Sixty to seventy percent of the general staff consisted of Serbs and Montenegrins.¹⁹⁵ The preponderance of Serbs and Montenegrins within the officer corps of the JNA would prove critical as Yugoslavia began to decay. Ensured with protecting the Yugoslav system, the JNA resisted changes proposed by the liberal Slovenian and Croatian party leaderships and increasingly supported the position of conservatives such as Milosevic. Eventually Slovenia and Croatia would stop sending recruits to the JNA and cease funding its budget, strengthening the link between the JNA and the two republics of Serbia and Montenegro, who continued to fulfill their federal obligations to the army.

The federal government was rapidly decaying: its staff was trimmed back and its revenues disappeared. Entrusted with protecting Yugoslavia from internal enemies and threatened by the weakening of the federal government upon which its continued existence depended, the JNA had found it increasingly difficult to remain neutral. By 1991 the federal government had lost control of the Yugoslav army. The “ninth” republic allied itself

¹⁹³Gagnon, “Historical Roots,” 194-195

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 245.

with the Serbian block. Gradually it became involved in the conflict, at first serving to separate Serbs and Croats in the Krajina, but gradually fighting on the side of Serbs in Croatia and then in Bosnia as its interests increasingly became those of the rump Yugoslavia. With the state it was entrusted to protect gradually disappearing, the JNA became the army of the Serbs and Montenegrins in Yugoslavia.

A fourth factor accounting for the weakness of the Yugoslav system was the increase in the number of actors at the federal level that resulted from the devolution of the system following the 1960s reforms. Until the 1960s there were six actors in the federal system, the six socialist republics of Yugoslavia. Serbia's two provinces were inferior to the republics, with no independent representation in federal bodies. Their borders were also subject to modification at Serbia's discretion. In the late 1960s, however, Kosovo and Vojvodina, supported by the Croatian nationalists, began pressing for more equal treatment within the system. Until 1968, none of these demands were granted. However, the 1968 riots in Kosovo finally forced changes in the system, and Tito instituted a number of measures aimed at meeting some of the provinces' demands and granted the provinces' statutes the legal status of constitutions. In addition, amendment 16 to the Yugoslav constitution guaranteed that the boundaries of the provinces could not be changed without the consent of their skupstinas, a guarantee subsequently incorporated into Serbia's constitution. By 1971 further constitutional amendments granted the two provinces extensive legislative and judicial powers. The Yugoslav system now had nine actors: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo, Vojvodina, and the JNA.

As a result of these measures, the provinces enjoyed the same degree of administrative autonomy as the republics and were treated by the other federal actors as republics in everything but name. Although the provinces had only eight delegates instead of twelve in the Chamber of Republics and Provinces, the difference in delegation size was of no consequence because only eight delegates were required to act as a block or to

introduce or veto bills.¹⁹⁶ The differences between Socialist Republics and provinces were thus only symbolic. In terms of the power they wielded, the provinces were equivalent to the republics.

By the 1980s, Kosovo and Vojvodina were making changes to their constitutions autonomously with no provision for either review or recommendative proposals by any Serbian government organ. In effect, the provincial assemblies were empowered to make amendments without consulting with the Serbs.¹⁹⁷ This crucial shift in power to the provinces at Serbia's expense came to constitute one of the major grievances of Serbian nationalists in the mid-1980s, was identified as one of the primary injustices suffered by Serbia in the famous "Memorandum," and became a key part of Milosevic's strategy to reclaim Serbia's rightful place within the Yugoslav system. It was on the basis of these changes made in the 1970s that Milosevic would claim the provinces had usurped their autonomy illegally.

After 1987, Milosevic began to institute changes that would reestablish Serbia's right to legislate unilaterally on the territory of its provinces without their consent.¹⁹⁸ Because of the increase in actors within the federal system, however, Milosevic, by controlling the votes of Serbia's two provinces, would be able to control three of the eight actors at the federal level. In effect, Milosevic would use the changes that had weakened Serbia in the 1970s to strengthen Serbia's position in the 1980s in a way that was never intended by Tito's devolution. Milosevic's efforts to reverse Tito's concessions to the provinces and thus increase Serbia's weight at the federal level presented a direct challenge to the power of other Yugoslav republics. Milosevic's strategy to establish Serbian dominance of the federal center directly contributed to the worsening of relations between Slovenia and Serbia that ended finally in the collapse of the LCY, the last vestige of the

¹⁹⁶Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 76-77.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 77.

multiethnic Titoist system, and, ultimately, in Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia in June 1991, signaling the end of the second Yugoslavia.

A fifth factor that contributed to the weakness of federal Yugoslavia was the national character of the true actors in the system, the republics. Except for the populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina, which were highly heterogeneous, the titular nationalities of the other federal units accounted for at least two-thirds of the republics' population, and in four of the republics, this percentage was as high as three quarters of the republics' populations.¹⁹⁹ Republican leaders could thus claim to represent the ethnic interests of their titular nationality and portray themselves not only as republican leaders, but as leaders of the ethnic group, the defenders of "the nation." Devolution only served to strengthen this tendency to frame issues in terms of ethnic interests. By strengthening the power of the republics at the expense of the center, the regime itself "elevated the republics and provinces to the status of being the only legitimate bearers of openly competing interests within the system."²⁰⁰

Regional elites deliberately played the role of ethnic leaders and presented issues in ethnic terms to mobilize support for their policies. Ultimately, the elevation of national over broader, non-ethnic interests blocked the formation of cross-republican alliances that were so critical to building the necessary consensus for the continued functioning of the federal center. Once Tito died, any remaining incentive to accept reform for the good of the whole over individual republican interests disappeared. National ethnic interests and the sovereignty of individual republics transcended broader Yugoslav interests and destroyed any remaining hope of salvaging the existing system either through full confederalization or recentralization.

Finally, the Yugoslav system was fundamentally weakened by a crisis of legitimacy after Tito's death. "Self-management" had failed to generate a "legitimizing rhetoric," and

¹⁹⁹Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 20.

²⁰⁰Allcock, 215.

alternatives to nationalism were unacceptable or unworkable. Socialist self-management, the supposedly distinctive “badge of the Yugoslav road to socialism,” failed to provide a source of political legitimacy because “its very essence... [was] to obscure the character of social conflict.”²⁰¹ This failure created a vacuum into which nationalism moved.²⁰² Nationalism was able to fill this void precisely because it was the only regime-sanctioned, although semi-legitimate, alternative. The ethnic bases of the republics combined with the devolution of federal power to the republics elevated republican nationalisms over the broader “Yugoslav” identity and served to make nationalism the most attractive alternative.

After Tito’s death, any remnants of support for multiethnic coexistence were rapidly destroyed by the policies of the various republican leaderships, particularly those of Milosevic and the Serbian nationalists, who unleashed a discourse of ethnic injustice that produced similar nationalist discourses in the other republics and set Yugoslavia on a course that would ultimately result in its collapse. Without a unifying ideology that could take precedence over more exclusive nationalisms, republican leaderships were able to mobilize their populations in support of their republics’ nationalist interest, often at the expense of other Yugoslav republics and certainly at the expense of a united, multiethnic Yugoslavia. These policies gradually destroyed the belief in a multiethnic Yugoslav state as the republics increasingly pursued their own, often divergent, interests. The federal center was too weak to combat this trend and gradually it succumbed to the divergent policies of the more powerful republics who had no interest in the continuation of Tito’s Yugoslavia and could not agree on a formula for its reform.

Yugoslavia’s disintegration and the onset of ethnic violence that accompanied it were a direct consequence of the weak Yugoslav system. First, the devolution of power following the 1971 constitutional amendments and the 1974 constitution weakened the federal center, transforming it to little more than a committee of eight republican

²⁰¹Allcock, 214.

²⁰²Ibid., 215.

representatives whose decisions were reached by consensus. Second, the changes enshrined in the 1974 constitution fundamentally strengthened the individual republics who became the most powerful actors within the system. Third, the JNA emerged from the 1960s reforms with a substantially broadened mission such that it became, in effect, a “ninth” republic, strongly allied with conservative forces in Yugoslavia. Fourth, the 1960s reforms increased the number of actors at the federal level from six to nine by granting the provinces equal power to the republics and increasing the prominence of the JNA. Fifth, the national character of each of the republics except Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina allowed republican leaders to assume the mantle of a group’s national leadership, presenting issues in ethnic terms to mobilize support for increasingly exclusive policies. Finally, the Yugoslav system was weakened by a fundamental crisis of legitimacy after Tito’s death that created a vacuum into which nationalism moved.

Each of these six factors ensured that Yugoslavia could be defined as a weak state. According to Proposition 5, Yugoslavia had neither the resources or capabilities to reach accommodation with the far more powerful republics nor the means to repress the emergence first of Serbian ethnic chauvinism and then of other Yugoslav nationalisms which undermined the commitment to multiethnic coexistence upon which the Titoist system had been founded. The powerful republics, led by Serbia and Slovenia, set out to destroy the Yugoslav system. The federal center was too weak to respond. Its failure either to repress the destructive policies of its republics or to offer concessions and broker compromise resulted in its collapse and the outbreak of ethnic violence.

Exclusion and Denial

Ethnic groups in Yugoslavia were structured such that each group constituted an “incipient whole society.” This unranked or parallel structure was given a degree of permanence by Yugoslavia’s federal structure, which granted each of the major nationality groups in Yugoslavia their own republic. Yugoslavia’s structure, its division into republics

and along ethnic cleavages in an unranked manner, ensured that ethnic identities were “powerful, permeative, passionate and pervasive.”²⁰³ Where there was conflict, it was viewed to be zero sum. Yugoslavia was a “severely divided society,” deeply riven by ethnic cleavages which clearly demarcated lines of division which in turn determined who was included and excluded in the polity.

According to Horowitz, the primary concern of groups in unranked systems is inclusion and exclusion rather than subordination. Inclusion represents power, indicates group status, and signals “ownership” of the state. As Yugoslavia proceeded to disintegrate in the late 1980s and early 1990s, interethnic politics became a contest over group worth. Power was sought to confirm ethnic status, and thus “ownership” of the state, and to secure or reclaim the benefits of inclusion. Politics became increasingly zero sum with the result that ethnic groups began to fear their imminent exclusion from the benefits of rule and from participation in the state. Serbia sought to improve its status, first within Yugoslavia through a strategy of recentralization. When this strategy proved unworkable, Serbia sought to claim the state for itself, building a greater Serbia upon the ruins of the second Yugoslavia.

Serbia’s efforts directly threatened the power and status of the other republics, particularly Slovenia and Croatia, who had no interest in remaining in a state dominated by Serbia. Consequently, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence and seceded from Yugoslavia. Slovenia’s secession was not seriously contested because it was a homogeneous state. Its secession did not threaten the status of the other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia. But Croatia’s secession directly threatened the status of its significant Serb minority, concentrated in the Krajina, who suddenly became an excluded minority. The secession of Croatia and Slovenia left Bosnia-Herzegovina with the choice of remaining in a Serb-dominated rump Yugoslavia, which its Muslim and Croat population fiercely

²⁰³Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 12.

opposed, or opting for independence, which its Serbian population strongly opposed. Either option meant exclusion of one or more of Bosnia's ethnic groups.

Exclusion leaves groups with little alternative but to challenge the system in an effort to seize the benefits of inclusion for themselves. As a result, the structure of an unranked system is conducive to periodic violence that aims at excluding parallel groups and transforming the system to one that is ranked. According to Proposition 6, if an ethnic group is excluded or faces exclusion, it *may* adopt a strategy of violence to transform the system into one that is ranked, seizing the benefits of inclusion for itself and excluding ethnic strangers. However, if a group faces a seemingly perpetual exclusion from a severely divided polity, and it has attempted to address those claims through non-violent means and failed, then the ethnic group *will* adopt a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 6.1). In addition, if that ethnic group is regionally concentrated and is threatened with exclusion, then it *may* adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to *secede* from the extant state (Proposition 6.2).

Both the Serbs in Croatia and the Serbs in Bosnia, faced with the threat of imminent exclusion from the polity, adopted a strategy of interethnic violence to secure a state for themselves. For the Croatian Serbs, violence became a choice strategy after efforts to secure autonomy within Croatia failed. Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia threatened the Croatian Serbs with permanent exclusion, subject to the whims of a "fascist" and "Ustase" Croatian government. The Serbs in Bosnia embarked upon a strategy of ethnic violence after the international community recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina. The tenuous power sharing agreement collapsed, and Bosnian Serbs chose to fight rather than remain in a state where they faced permanent exclusion, subject to the rule of a seemingly perpetual Croat-Muslim majority.

With the election of the new government of Franjo Tudjman in April 1990, a number of policies were adopted that radically changed the status of the Serbian population, which constituted a sizable minority with 12.2 percent of the population of Croatia

concentrated in the Krajina, Slavonia, and in Zagreb itself.²⁰⁴ In May 1990, on the day that the Zagreb parliament appointed Tudjman president, it adopted, without the two-thirds majority required by the constitution's thirty-ninth amendment, a new constitution which revoked "some of the finest Titoist legislation protecting the rights of minorities."²⁰⁵ It elevated Croats to the rank of "sole nation of the state" and accorded Croatia's Serbs the status of an official minority, a radical change from their position under the constitution of the old socialist Yugoslav state. Under the terms of the 1974 constitution, Serbs were not a minority, but were recognized as one of the six constituent nations in Yugoslavia.²⁰⁶

Serbs had had considerable influence in Croatia's communist party before Tudjman was elected, constituting roughly 25 percent of the membership of the Croatian Communist Party despite their much smaller percentage of Croatia's population.²⁰⁷ In addition, some professions, such as the police, were completely dominated by ethnic Serbs. In fact, 67 percent of Croatia's police force was made up of Serbs.²⁰⁸ However, upon coming to power, Tudjman sought to end the privileges accorded to the Serbian community by removing many Serbs from privileged posts in the police and government bureaucracy and by purging the media. Across the republic, thousands of Serbs were side-lined or fired. Those that remained were forced to wear the new uniform of the Croatian police with the hated *Sahovnica* checkerboard shield. As Serbs were being fired, the Interior Ministry started a recruitment drive to bring young Croats into the police force to replace the Serbs. When the war began in earnest a year later, thousands of Serb policemen, who might otherwise have been persuaded to live in an independent Croatia, enthusiastically joined the rebels.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴Markotich, "Ethnic Serbs in Tudjman's Croatia," 28.

²⁰⁵Bennett, 141.

²⁰⁶Markotich, "Ethnic Serbs in Tudjman's Croatia," 28.

²⁰⁷Stan Markotich, "Croatia's Krajina Serbs," *RFE/RL Research Report 2* (October 15, 1993): 5.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰⁹Silber and Little, 108.

Further measures adopted by the new Tadjman government served to alienate the Serbian population. The traditional Croatian national symbols that had been last associated with the Ustase Independent State of Croatia were adopted and street names were changed to honor leaders in the NDH. In Zagreb, the “Victims of Fascism Square” became the “Croat Heroes Square.”²¹⁰ The Serbian population interpreted these moves as a direct threat, and Serb nationalists used these policies as evidence of what they had been alleging: that the new state of Croatia was Ustase and that Serbs were threatened with genocide. Efforts were undertaken to “purify” the official language to remove all “Serbisms,” and use of the Latin alphabet was made obligatory in all official proceedings, a direct challenge to the many Serbs who held important positions in the Croatian administration in Zagreb.

The election of Tadjman as president of Croatia and the policies subsequently adopted by the Tadjman government directly threatened the status and “group worth” of Croatia’s sizable Serbian population. Serbs suddenly faced the loss of their position and privileges within the Croatian republic. Fired from their jobs and excluded from governance, the Serbian leadership embarked upon an attempt to secure a degree of political and territorial autonomy for the Serbian population in Croatia, an effort which proved unacceptable to the new Croatian government. Its main goal and the source of its election strength had been the promise to realize Croatia’s “thousand year dream” of statehood.

The new symbols of Croatian statehood, last used by the Ustase, were deeply alienating to Croatia’s Serbs. More troubling, however, was the fear that Tadjman planned to sever Croatia from Yugoslavia, either by creating a loose confederation or by outright secession.²¹¹ Either option would leave the Serbs at the mercy of a Croatian majority and a nationalist government that had, in its first few months of rule, succeeded in alienating its Serbian population. These measures did not bode well for the Serbian minority’s peaceful existence in an independent Croatian state. They served instead to persuade many moderate

²¹⁰Bennett, 141.

²¹¹Cohen, 372.

Serbs that confrontation, rather than negotiation, was the better strategy for pursuing their interests within Croatia.

In August 1990, the Krajina leadership held a referendum, which the Croatian government banned and subsequently attempted to prevent by force. Intervention by the JNA prevented the outbreak of violence, but tensions in the Krajina were heightened. Roads were patrolled by armed Serbs, trees were felled and roads blocked, and rail lines into Knin were cut. In October, the Serbian National Council in Knin formally declared the autonomy of Serbian areas in Croatia. During the autumn of 1990 there were many incidents in which local Serbs attacked Croatian police and Croats retaliated against Serbs. In late February 1991, the Serb leadership adopted a resolution to separate the Krajina from Croatia. A few days later in early March, Serb forces took control of Plitvice National Park, an important tourist attraction, and Zagreb responded by sending police units, which the Serb forces ambushed, resulting in the first two casualties of the conflict. The Serbian government in Belgrade responded by recognizing the existence of the self-declared "Serb Autonomous Province of Krajina" for the first time.²¹²

In early May 1991, following the massacre of a number of Croatian policemen in Borovo Selo, Croatia held a referendum on independence, and more than 90 percent of the population voted in favor. The Serbs boycotted the Croatian referendum and then held their own referendum on secession from Croatia. Two days after the Croatian referendum on independence, Croatia's Serbs declared the Krajina to be a "federal unit" of Yugoslavia.²¹³ Territorial or political autonomy within Croatia was no longer a viable option. Faced with being separated from Yugoslavia and relegated to the status of a minority in a nationalist and independent Croatian state, the Serbian minority in Croatia embarked upon a strategy of violence to secede from Croatia. No longer content with storming and barricading villages near Knin, Serb militias and paramilitary groups extended their efforts to cleansing

²¹²Silber and Little, 137.

²¹³Vego, "The Army of Serbian Krajina," 440.

mixed Croat-Serb villages in western Slavonia and expanding the territory under the control of the “Republic of Serb Krajina,” a strategy increasingly directed and coordinated by the JNA.

In Croatia, the contest over group worth was fought between two ethnic groups, the Croats and the Serbs. The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, was far more complicated. The population in Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided among three ethnic groups with diametrically opposed goals and strategies. In the last census of 1991, Bosnia’s population was 43.6 percent Muslim, 31.3 percent Serb, and 17.3 percent Croat.²¹⁴ In addition, Bosnia was composed of 109 municipalities, each with different ethnic majorities. Thirty-seven of these had an absolute Muslim majority, thirty-two had an absolute Serbian majority, and thirteen had an absolute Croat majority. In addition, fifteen municipalities had a simple Muslim majority, five a simple Serb majority, and seven a simple Croat majority.²¹⁵ To complicate matters further, only the Croat municipalities were regionally concentrated, in Western Hercegovina, with the important exception of Mostar.²¹⁶ The Muslim populations were concentrated in urban centers, and the Serb population was mostly concentrated in rural areas such that the Serb areas constituted, before the war, well over 50 percent of Bosnian territory.²¹⁷

Tensions in Bosnia preceded the first multiparty elections held in November 1990. Political leaders mobilized support along ethnic lines and used ethnic stereotypes to simplify voters’ choices and avoid debate on difficult issues.²¹⁸ As a result, nonethnic or multiethnic alternatives were sidelined.²¹⁹ In addition, because of links between the Croatian party and the HDZ in Croatia and similar links between the SPS in Serbia and the SDS in Bosnia, the propaganda and ethnic demonization that characterized the election

²¹⁴Bennett, 180.

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶Woodward, 234.

²¹⁷Črnobrnja, 187.

²¹⁸Woodward, 132.

²¹⁹Ibid., 230.

campaign were not confined to Bosnia alone.²²⁰ Forty-one parties contested the election and predictably, three national parties gained votes and seats almost directly proportional to the choices of ethnic identity in the 1981 census. The Party of Democratic Action (SDA) led by Izetbegovic won 33.8 percent of the vote, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) won 29.6 percent, and the Bosnian wing of the Croatian HDZ won 18.3 percent.²²¹ The three parties agreed to govern in a trilateral power sharing arrangement much like that of the federal government. Two members from each nation and one representative for all the other nationalities formed the collective presidency, headed by Izetbegovic. Cabinet positions were also distributed according to the principle of equal distribution according to nation rather than representation according to number. All three parties were represented in the parliament, headed by a Serb, with 86 seats for the SDA, 72 seats for the SDS, and 44 seats for the HDZ.²²² Finally, the executive council was headed by a Croat.²²³

This tenuous power-sharing arrangement managed to survive through most of 1991 despite the proclamation of six Serb autonomous provinces in Bosnia-Herzegovina that denied the republic's authority and legal system and proclaimed allegiance to the Yugoslav federation. In October 1991, the Hague Peace Conference on Yugoslavia made its conditional offer of recognition to any Yugoslav republic that wished it. Although the Croats preferred to be ruled by Zagreb, remaining in a rump Yugoslavia dominated by Serbia was unacceptable. Similarly, the Muslims were opposed to becoming a minority in a Serb-dominated state. In October 1991, after the definitive withdrawal of Croatia and Slovenia from the Yugoslav Federation, Izetbegovic proposed a declaration of sovereignty as a way of avoiding war, but the Serb members were violently opposed, denouncing it as an unconstitutional attempt at secession and a violation of their power sharing arrangement

²²⁰Woodward, 230.

²²¹Ibid., 122.

²²²Zametica, 37.

²²³Crnobrnja, 174.

which required consensus. As a result, the Serbs withdrew from the power sharing arrangement.

In December 1991, the SDS declared that it would form a Serbian republic out of the six Serbian Krajinas in Bosnia. A month later, an exclusively Serb referendum was held in those six Krajinas, and in January 1992 the independent Serbian Republic was declared in the 66 percent of Bosnian territory that the SDS controlled.²²⁴ Ninety-nine percent of the voters in a turnout of 85 percent supported the creation of a Serbian republic in Bosnia if the republic sought to secede from Yugoslavia.²²⁵

Despite the continued opposition of Serb members, the Muslim and Croat deputies in the Bosnian parliament authorized a referendum in accordance with the criteria established in January 1992 by the Badinter Arbitration Commission attached to the EC peace conference. The commission had recommended that a “referendum of all citizens of [Bosnia-Herzegovina] without distinction” take place before any further consideration could be given to extending recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina.²²⁶ As a result, SDS leader Radovan Karadzic withdrew the SDS deputies from the Sarajevo parliament.

The referendum was duly held on February 28 and March 1, 1992 without the participation of Bosnia’s Serbian population. Indeed, “all citizens” did not participate in the decision on Bosnia’s future as the commission had instructed. With the Serb abstention, only 63 percent of Bosnia’s population participated in the referendum. The Muslims and Croats, forming an automatic majority, voted 99 percent in favor of Bosnian independence. Before the results had even been released, a Serb attending a wedding in Sarajevo was shot dead, and within an hour, masked gunmen erected barricades around the city.²²⁷

In a last minute effort to prevent violence, the HDZ and the SDS along with a reluctant Bosnian government signed Lord Carrington’s cantonization proposal on March

²²⁴Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict,” 163.

²²⁵Bennett, 185.

²²⁶Zametica, 39.

²²⁷Bennett, 186.

18, 1991. However, the agreement did not last long. Izetbegovic reneged on the agreement after having reportedly received encouragement from the US Ambassador not to agree to the partitioning of Bosnia.²²⁸ Violent incidents continued throughout the remainder of March 1991. On April 5, two days before the United States and the EC recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina, full-scale hostilities broke out in Sarajevo.

Bosnia's Serbs were firmly opposed to Bosnian independence, which would remove them from the Yugoslav federation and place them in a state dominated by Muslims and Croats. As the decision over the referendum on independence had clearly shown, a Muslim-Croat alliance would ensure that the Serbs remained a permanent minority, excluded from the governance of the state and subject to Muslim-Croat rule. For the Serbs, remaining in an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina would subject them to a "tyranny of the majority."²²⁹ Invoking their right to self-determination, Bosnia's Serbs embarked upon a strategy of ethnic violence that aimed at securing Serbian territories in Bosnia, cleansing them of non-Serb populations, and eventually joining those territories to Serbia proper. Rather than face a seemingly perpetual exclusion from the Bosnian polity, Bosnia's Serbs chose to secede, a strategy which could only be accomplished by large scale violence.

According to Proposition 6.1, when a group is faced with the threat of being excluded on a seemingly permanent basis, it will adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to seize the state for itself. The Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia were willing to adopt a strategy of violence to prevent their relegation to the status of a minority and their exclusion from participation in the polities in which they found themselves upon Yugoslavia's collapse. In both Croatia and Bosnia, this exclusion, by virtue of the Serb percentage of the population in each state, seemed permanent. Rather than be ruled by Croats, or by Croats and Muslims in a seemingly permanent alliance, the Serbs adopted a strategy of violence to seize the state

²²⁸Steven L. Burg, "The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis," in *International Organizations and Ethnic Conflict*, Milton J. Esman and Shibley Telhami, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 249.

²²⁹Stojan Cerovic, "'Greater Serbia' and Its Discontents," in *Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War*, Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifshultz, eds. (Stony Creek, CT: The Pamphleteer's Press, Inc., 1993): 263.

for themselves. In Croatia, because the Serbs were regionally concentrated, the threat of exclusion prompted them to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence aimed at secession (Proposition 6.2), while in Bosnia, exclusion prompted the Serbs to claim a right to self-determination. To realize their desire to join Serbia, territory in Bosnia with Serbian populations had to be occupied and cleansed and republican authority over that territory had to be denied. In both cases, the threat of seemingly perpetual exclusion was a clear source of some of the most horrific episodes of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia.

International Support

The former Yugoslavia provides one of the best examples of the crucial role international support plays in the outbreak of violent ethnic conflict. International support facilitates the outbreak of violent interethnic warfare. Ranging from diplomatic support to direct invasion, it is direct, clear, and explicit and is actively recruited by groups as part of their strategy of interethnic violence. By internationalizing the conflict, groups hope to secure aid, neutralize an opponent's support, and secure mediation to resolve the conflict. Third party support also carries significant costs. Groups may find their destiny determined by an outside actor whose interests are markedly different from those of the ethnic group. According to Proposition 8, when third parties become involved in a conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers, the stakes of conflict will be raised and the ethnic group will be more likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

No attempt at identifying the sources of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia is complete without an understanding of the critical role outside states, non-state actors, and international organizations played in the outbreak, spread, and escalation of ethnic violence. All of the ethnic groups in Yugoslavia actively recruited outside support with the intention of either internationalizing the conflict in order to end it or prolonging the conflict while gains could be made on the ground. The costs of this involvement, however, were high. The international actors who became involved in the Yugoslav war were fundamentally

inconsistent in their understanding of the conflict, in their goals, in their commitment to ending the violence, in their application of norms and principles, particularly the right to self-determination, and in their application of international law to the question of recognition of the individual republics as successor states. The outbreak of warfare, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and finally and most tragically in Bosnia, can be directly linked to the various attempts by outside states and international organizations to influence the course of violence, to prevent it, or alternatively, to end it. According to Susan Woodward, “western intervention in the Yugoslav crisis...provided the irreversible turning point toward national extremism and war.”²³⁰

International involvement, whether in the form of diplomatic support, mediation and conflict resolution, or in the form of direct assistance, including military and financial aid, strengthened the already severe divisions in Yugoslavia and fostered new ones. Because Western involvement was inconsistent, subject as much to competing domestic issues as to larger security interests, the West’s policies toward the former Yugoslavia strengthened nationalist leaders at the republican level and undermined supporters of a multiethnic solution at the federal level. Competing national interests and domestic disagreements among Western states also reinforced the divisions between supporters of a confederalist arrangement, namely Slovenia and Croatia, and supporters of a recentralized state, namely Serbia and Montenegro. They also reinforced the gap between, on the one hand, the supporters of Markovic and the proponents of a multiethnic Yugoslavia and, on the other hand, confederalists and centralists who sought to reform the Titoist multiethnic system.

The international actors involved in fashioning a solution to the conflict determined not only the nature of the conflict, as between ethnic groups rather than between the federal government and secessionist republics, some of whom were ethnically homogenous, but most of whom were not, but also determined who would be included in the negotiations

²³⁰Woodward, 198.

over Yugoslavia's future and who would be excluded. The West's involvement was so biased in favor of the individual republics that the federal government was treated, at best, as *perfunctory*. By November 1991 it was no longer even included in negotiations between the various ethnic groups in Yugoslavia.²³¹ At the same time, nationalist leaders were promoted by the EC, CSCE, and UN negotiators to the status of international statesmen.²³² Intervention gave more authority to the leaders of the republics than they had had in the federation and it weakened those who considered the creation of democratic procedures, market relations, and guarantees of individual rights within states to be more important than competing national interests.²³³ Nationalist leaders had succeeded in shifting the debate from reform to national interests and alleged ethnic injustices, and the West's failure to support and even include alternatives to these chauvinistic policies served the nationalist leaders' strategy and strengthened their bargaining position vis-a-vis the federal government and the proponents of a federal, multiethnic Yugoslav solution to the crisis.

This tendency to ignore the federal government and focus solely on nationalist leaders of the various ethnic groups had particularly dire consequences for multiethnic Bosnia. Bosnia-Herzegovina had no political force to represent the republic as a whole. When EC negotiations began in February 1992, automatically proponents of multiethnic Bosnian interests were excluded from negotiations. Just as the proponents of a federal Yugoslavia were excluded in negotiations over its future, so the supporters of a multiethnic Bosnian solution were *sidelined*.²³⁴ The power to determine the future of Bosnia was granted solely to the representatives of the three largest ethnic factions, the Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

²³¹Woodward, 173.

²³²*Ibid.*, 198.

²³³*Ibid.*

²³⁴*Ibid.*, 233.

A fundamental point about the policy of the twelve members of the EC and about the policy of Western nations toward Yugoslavia was that it lacked consistency and unity. Germany's partisan view of the Yugoslav conflict forced a break in the EC over the question of recognition, with France, the UK and Spain firmly opposed, making any EC involvement automatically questionable. Almost from the outset, the EC was not perceived as an entirely neutral body.²³⁵ In addition, support for Slovenia and Croatia on the part of Austria, Hungary, Germany, Denmark, the Vatican, and Italy led Slovenia and Croatia to expect political and economic support for independence and encouraged their belief that they could "join" Europe quickly,²³⁶ giving added impetus to their efforts to secure recognition. It also gave Serbia evidence for their suspicions of a revival of the World War II Axis alliance and German revanchism against them. This threat exacerbated fears among Serbs and thus inadvertently strengthened Milosevic's appeal as the leader of the Serbian nation.²³⁷

Evidence that an older geopolitical divide was reoccurring was given further credence by the resistance, on the part of France, Britain, Spain and Greece, to any interpretation of self-determination that would dissolve an existing state.²³⁸ As a result, the right to self-determination was inconsistently applied. It was denied to Serbs outside Serbia while it was recognized as legitimate for the Slovenes, Croats, and the Muslims.²³⁹ By accepting the principle of self-determination for the independence of the individual republics without consideration for the multinational composition of Yugoslavia, without regard for the shared rights to national sovereignty upon which the Titoist system was founded, and without a willingness alternatively to enforce their unilateral decisions on borders, the "Western powers were making war over territory inevitable."²⁴⁰ Such

²³⁵Zametica, 63.

²³⁶Woodward, 156.

²³⁷Ibid.

²³⁸Ibid., 176.

²³⁹Cerovic, 264.

²⁴⁰Woodward, 198.

fundamental inconsistencies, in addition to undermining the effectiveness of EC efforts aimed at ending the conflict, furthered the perception among Serbs that the EC was heavily biased against it.²⁴¹ These divisions among the members of the EC served to revive historical memories and undermined the credibility of EC and CSCE efforts at moral suasion.²⁴² Ultimately, vacillating and inconsistent international involvement led all the political actors in Yugoslavia to believe that they could count on the support of one or more powerful states. Vacillation also encouraged each of the combatants to believe, at various times, that they would win the war, making each of the parties to the conflict more tenacious.²⁴³ Finally, inconsistent application of the right to self-determination forced those for whom this right was denied, namely the Serbs, to fight for territory, cleanse it of non-Serbs, and achieve by force the right to determine in what state they would live and under what conditions.

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia, followed by Croatia, declared its secession from Yugoslavia, prompting the JNA to intervene in Slovenia in what became the short-lived Slovenian war for independence. Because Slovenia's population is relatively homogeneous, its secession did not threaten the removal of any other Yugoslav nationalities and was thus not fiercely contested by the Serbs. Slovenia's secession was critical, however, in that it established an example that Croatia, with a sizable Serbian population, would follow.²⁴⁴

Western involvement played a critical role in the Slovenian war. In June 1991, both the EC and the US sent signals encouraging Yugoslav unity and discouraging the planned secession of Slovenia and Croatia. At the same time, US Secretary of State Baker's opposition to secession, expressed in meetings in Belgrade on June 21, 1991, was interpreted by the JNA and the Serbian leadership as support for military intervention on

²⁴¹Zametica, 62.

²⁴²Woodward, 176.

²⁴³Ibid., 161.

²⁴⁴Zametica, 15.

the part of the federal government if Slovenia and Croatia were to proceed with their planned secession from Yugoslavia.²⁴⁵ Four days after Baker's visit, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. On June 25, the Yugoslav parliament and cabinet ordered JNA units in Slovenia to assert Yugoslav sovereignty over its borders, believing that they had the support of the United States.

The EC response was rapid. Germany called for immediate recognition while the US argued that the break up of Yugoslavia would be highly destabilizing and could not occur without war.²⁴⁶ On July 7, 1991, EC sponsored negotiations produced the Brioni Accords, which in effect recognized the Slovenian military victory. The agreement also made Slovenia and Croatia the subject, de facto, of international law, preparing the way for their eventual recognition.²⁴⁷ Of even greater import, the Brioni agreement accomplished an important goal of the Serbian nationalists: it established a precedent for the redrawing of internal Yugoslav borders.²⁴⁸ If Yugoslavia's internal borders could be successfully contested by Slovenia, why not apply the same principle to other contested territory within Yugoslavia, namely those territories with large Serbian populations? Western involvement had thus opened the door to war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Brioni agreement furthermore undermined the authority of a small faction in the JNA leadership, referred to as "Titoists" by critics on all sides, who still sought to keep Yugoslavia intact and who still hoped to play a mediating role in the unfolding crisis.²⁴⁹ The Brioni agreement signaled the end of Yugoslavia as well as the end of this moderate "Titoist" faction. Again the EC had determined which actors in Yugoslavia would be involved in decisions relating to its future and which would be excluded. Rather than preventing or resolving further conflict, the Brioni Accords made war over territory inevitable.

²⁴⁵Cohen, 373.

²⁴⁶Woodward, 164.

²⁴⁷Ibid., 168.

²⁴⁸Ibid., 169.

²⁴⁹Ibid.

International involvement in the war in Croatia also contributed to the explosion of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia. In August 1991, as the violence in Croatia escalated, German Foreign Minister Genscher threatened the Yugoslav government with German recognition of Slovenia and Croatia if the JNA did not cease its involvement. A cessation of hostilities in Croatia was thus not in the least desirable from the Croatian point of view. In fact, the bloodier the conflict, the greater the chance of receiving recognition. Thus, while the EC was involved in efforts to negotiate a ceasefire and end the violence, German efforts created an incentive to escalate it. As a result, Croatia's strategy was as much aimed at physical control of territory as it was at securing foreign support and influencing international public opinion. Croatia placed sharpshooters on the walls of Dubrovnik to draw fire from the JNA, thereby attracting world attention to the destruction of the beautiful town of Dubrovnik, and it placed mortars and artillery batteries within the walls of hospitals in order to draw fire from Serbian forces and influence international public opinion.²⁵⁰

Successive attempts on the part of the EC to negotiate a ceasefire in Croatia also failed due to Serbian resistance to the involvement of what Serbs believed to be a hostile body. By mid-1991, Serbia's reputation abroad had suffered blow after blow, and EC recognition of Croatia, as a result of German pressure, appeared imminent.²⁵¹ In addition, Serbian forces were beginning to sustain losses as the Croatian forces, now armed and reorganized, began to retake territory under Serbian control, and the EC was threatening Serbia with economic sanctions.²⁵² The Serbian leadership thus began to favor a solution to the crisis, one that would neutralize as well as bypass the anti-Serbian EC. As a result, Serbia turned to the UN and particularly to the US, which it believed would be supportive of Serbian interests and could act as a counterforce to Germany. It was thus no coincidence

²⁵⁰Woodward, 236.

²⁵¹Zametica, 23.

²⁵²Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," 162.

that the fifteenth ceasefire, brokered by UN envoy Cyrus Vance, held firm while previous EC efforts had all failed.²⁵³

Efforts to resolve the conflict in Croatia, on the part of both the EC and the UN, “proceeded with little regard for the consequences in the rest of Yugoslavia.”²⁵⁴ Outside mediators treated the conflict in Croatia as a discrete problem and failed to address the broader implications of the Serb-Croat conflict in Croatia for the rest of Yugoslavia. The ceasefire agreement thus made no provisions for the withdrawal of JNA forces in Croatia beyond simply ensuring that they would be withdrawn. It also left the final status of the Serbian enclaves in Croatia vague, failing to achieve a definitive solution to the Serb-Croat conflict.²⁵⁵ Milosevic and his supporters in the JNA had no intention of abandoning their efforts to secure for Serbia its proper due and to create a greater Serbian state. The ceasefire in Croatia had been accepted in order to sideline the EC and gain UN, and thus US, involvement. With UN peacekeeping troops protecting Serbian gains in Croatia, Serbia shifted its attention to another venue. JNA forces withdrew from Croatia to Bosnia, where they took up strategically important positions, and Serb forces in Bosnia began to prepare for the continuation of the Serb-Croat war there. War in Bosnia was not certain, however, until the EC took a final and fundamentally ill-fated step by offering recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina and requiring a referendum on independence.

In December 1991, Germany had persuaded the other members of the EC to recognize Slovenia and Croatia within a month “despite warnings that without a comprehensive political settlement for the whole of Yugoslavia, the tens of thousands of dead, hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons, and massive destruction of many villages and towns in Croatia would seem a picnic beside a war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”²⁵⁶ German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had obtained the agreements of Britain,

²⁵³Zametica, 24.

²⁵⁴Woodward, 193.

²⁵⁵Bennett, 172.

²⁵⁶Woodward, 146.

France, and Spain on recognition by making concessions on EC monetary union that the British had been seeking and by agreeing to preserve unity among the twelve EC members by declaring that all six Yugoslav republics were eligible for recognition.²⁵⁷ German support for recognition was based on the argument that imminent recognition of Croatia had ended the violence there by signaling international protection and thus deterring further Serbian aggression, which Germany argued, was the cause of the war in Yugoslavia. On December 23, 1991, Germany recognized Slovenia and Croatia, forcing the EC member states to follow suit, despite pleas from Bosnian President Izetbegovic to delay recognition for fear of its impact on Bosnia.²⁵⁸

In order to secure the agreement of the other EC states for Croatia and Slovenia's recognition, Germany had agreed to maintain unity among them by extending the offer of recognition to all six Yugoslav republics. This offer was accompanied by a number of conditions: first, that each of the republics request formal recognition by December 23 1991, and second, that each meet the criteria established by the Badinter Commission.²⁵⁹ With only a week to apply, the coalition government in Bosnia was forced to make a rapid decision. On December 20, the Bosnian government, without the involvement of the Bosnian Serbs, placed its request for recognition. The next day, the SDS leadership declared its intent to create a Serbian republic in Bosnia.

The Badinter Commission imposed an additional condition for recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina: it required that the republic hold a referendum on independence to prove that its request for recognition had popular support. On February 29-March 1, 1992, the ill-fated referendum on Bosnian independence took place, without the involvement of over a third of Bosnia's population and in direct violation of the power-sharing agreement

²⁵⁷Woodward, 184.

²⁵⁸Bennett, 181.

²⁵⁹Other requirements included internal democracy, good faith commitment to peaceful negotiation of their conflicts, respect for the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of ethnic and national minorities, respect for the inviolability of borders and the principle that they may be changed only by peaceful means and common agreement, and finally a commitment to peaceful settlement of disputes. See Burg, 247.

that had required consensus among the three groups. The power sharing arrangement collapsed, and the Croats and Serbs prepared for war while Izetbegovic hoped that his compliance with each of the requirements for recognition would secure Western support for Bosnia should the Serbs attempt to secede. As tensions in Bosnia escalated, pressure for the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, led by the United States, began to build. Since Croatian recognition appeared to have halted the war in Croatia, international policy makers hoped that by recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina, they might prevent the violent incidents already taking place in Bosnia from escalating into full-scale war.

In a last minute attempt to reach accord among Bosnia's three largest ethnic groups, the EC Conference on Yugoslavia, meeting in Lisbon, brokered an agreement according to which Bosnia-Herzegovina would be "composed of three constituent units, based on national principles and taking into account economic, geographic, and other criteria."²⁶⁰ This cantonization solution was initialed by all three parties on March 18. The Croats broke with their Muslim allies and aligned themselves with the Serbs in favor of an ethnically-based partition of the republic. A reluctant Bosnian government also agreed to cantonization, but subsequently reneged after the US Ambassador encouraged the Muslims to reject the plan outright.²⁶¹ Subsequently the Bosnian Croats withdrew from the agreement since it had given them less territory than they wanted.²⁶² The US continued to lobby for recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the hope that it would prevent the outbreak of violence. A week before the US, together with the EC, granted Bosnia-Herzegovina "preventive recognition," violence erupted in Sarajevo.

The ill-fated decision to offer recognition to a republic in which a well-armed third of the population was violently opposed to secession was directly responsible for the outbreak of violence in Bosnia. Not only did international involvement spark the violence, but it also determined what *form* that violence would take. Because the Badinter

²⁶⁰Crnobrnja, 177.

²⁶¹Burg, 249.

²⁶²Woodward, 196-197.

Commission had determined that international recognition required a referendum of residents in a territory on their choice of state, simple military control and occupation of territory would be insufficient for recognition. Occupation of territory would have to be supplemented eventually by a vote.²⁶³ As a result, the blitzkrieg campaign of Serbian forces at the outset of the conflict, which secured the bulk of Serbian territorial holdings in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was accompanied by a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing aimed at permanently altering the population balance in each of these territories. Ethnic cleansing would ensure that those territories under Serbian occupation would subsequently vote correctly in any future referendum on Bosnian Serb independence or, where the referendum established Serbian sovereignty in Bosnia, would justify administration of that territory by Serb leaders.

Ethnic cleansing was not restricted to Serb forces alone. In fact, the Bosnian war involved ethnic cleansing by all parties in order to secure not just military occupation, but permanent control over territory. Where ceasefires were brokered, ethnic cleansing did not cease. The methods simply changed. Population exchanges between individual towns occurred both in Croatia and in Bosnia after ceasefires were negotiated. While less violent, these methods were hardly more voluntary.²⁶⁴ In later phases of the war, when relief agencies attempted to evacuate Muslims from towns in Eastern Bosnia, they were accused of being accomplices to the Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing and were, in many cases, blocked by local Muslim government officials and Bosnian government army commanders. Whether populations were moved by force or were shifted peacefully, once a certain ethnic group vacated a particular territory its ethnic leadership lost political control over that territory.²⁶⁵

Outside involvement in the Yugoslav crisis contributed to the explosion of violence in yet another critical way. In September 1991, in response to the war in Croatia, the UN

²⁶³Woodward, 242.

²⁶⁴Ibid.

²⁶⁵Ibid., 243.

imposed an arms embargo, which instead of lowering the level of violence and preventing the escalation and widening of the conflict, had exactly the opposite effect. It created a local arms race, prompted groups to seize local stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, forced the relocation of assets in preparation for war, made control over local arms production sites more critical, and led the republican governments to begin war production. It fostered a thriving black market in arms and ammunition and forced the various groups to rely on organized crime for both the profits and arms necessary to conduct war. Ultimately, it further weakened those groups with the least access to funds and weapons, in particular the Bosnian Muslims, and gave a significant advantage to those groups with access to the necessary resources, namely the Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia.

Because of the arms embargo, the weaker Bosnian Muslim forces were particularly dependent on outside sources of support. Volunteer Muslim troops comprised of Mujaheddin from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Morocco, Sudan, Lebanon, Algeria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as members of Hezbollah and Sunni Tawheed became involved in the Bosnian war, fighting alongside Bosnian government forces and establishing training camps for Bosnian Muslim soldiers.²⁶⁶ The relative weakness of the Bosnian Muslims meant that their strategy for fighting the stronger Serbian forces had to have, as its central aim, the continued active involvement of the West. This strategy produced such incidents as the Merkale Market bombing in Sarajevo, which was blamed on the Serbian forces but was subsequently established as having come from Bosnian Muslim forces who sought to draw attention to their plight and thus prevent the imminent withdrawal of British and French peacekeepers.²⁶⁷ By repeatedly provoking Serbian attacks, Muslim forces ensured that Sarajevo remained the symbol of the Bosnian Muslim plight and heightened international sympathy for their cause. This strategy of targeting

²⁶⁶ Magnus Ranstorp and Gus Xhudo, "A Threat to Europe? Middle East Ties with the Balkans and their Impact Upon Terrorist Activity throughout the Region," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6 (Summer 1994): 202-203.

²⁶⁷ Peter Brock, "'Greater Serbia' vs. the Greater Western Media," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 6 (Winter 1995): 56-58.

one's own civilians was thus part of the Bosnian Muslim response to the arms embargo. It forced them to rely on outside support and to fashion a strategy that aimed as much at international public opinion as it did at securing success on the ground. While imposed to reduce the level of violence and prevent its spread, the embargo not only led to the escalation of violence, but also changed the way the war was fought.

The former Yugoslavia provides a clear example of the critical role international involvement plays in the outbreak of violent interethnic warfare. In the case of the former Yugoslavia, international involvement not only sparked the outbreak of violence, as Proposition eight suggests, but also determined what form that violence would take and where and when it would spread. It strengthened the already severe divisions in Yugoslavia, elevated nationalists leaders to the fore while undermining pro-Yugoslav factions, and determined which factions would have the means to embark upon a strategy of ethnic violence. Indeed, no attempt at understanding the sources of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia is complete without a careful examination of the truly crucial role international actors played in the outbreak and subsequent course of interethnic violence.

Arms and Financial Resources

Access to arms and the financial resources to sustain war is a crucial threshold for violence. Without such access, interethnic violence on the scale witnessed in the former Yugoslavia cannot be sustained. According to Proposition 9, if the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or from the military itself, then there is a strong tendency for ethnic groups with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of interethnic warfare. The vast resources of the JNA combined with a ready access to arms and ammunition from outside suppliers and financial support from state and non-state actors ensured that all the actors in Yugoslavia had the means to embark upon a large-scale strategy of interethnic warfare. The imposition of an arms embargo in September 1991 made the acquisition of the

necessary resources more complicated, but it did not prevent the various ethnic groups in Yugoslavia from acquiring the necessary weaponry. In fact, it encouraged an arms race as the various actors sought to secure the necessary resources from various outside sources and from the JNA itself.

For the Serbs in the Krajina, where ethnic violence first erupted, the search for weapons and ammunition did not require looking beyond Yugoslavia's borders. As early as 1990, following Croatia's elections, local Serbs began acquiring arms from the JNA, both from individuals in the Interior Ministry in Belgrade and from the local 9th Corps in Knin. In October 1990, cargo trains bearing arms without their usual armed escort were unexpectedly routed through Knin, where they made a lengthy, unscheduled stop during which local Serbs relieved the trains of their cargo.²⁶⁸ The arms were sent by the army's "Technical Repair Facility" in Hadzici, Bosnia.²⁶⁹ In other instances, arms were smuggled on trucks from Montenegro to Knin via Bosansko Grahovo in Bosnia.²⁷⁰

Individuals in the JNA and in the Interior Ministry were engaged in arms smuggling with tacit official approval. Radmilo Bogdanovic, a close associate of Milosevic and until March 1991 Serbian Interior Minister, later admitted that the Krajina Serbs had been armed by Serbia's Interior Ministry throughout 1990 and 1991.²⁷¹ Most of the weaponry, however, came from local sources in the Krajina, from JNA garrisons in Croatia, and from military officers stationed in the Krajina, most of whom were ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins.²⁷² Indeed, all of the senior positions of the 9th corps were held by Serbs or Montenegrins.²⁷³ By early autumn 1990, there were numerous instances of arms "theft" from army stores in Croatia. Officially, the Knin militias stole their weapons, although there were no comparable thefts elsewhere in Croatia. The extent of this covert arming

²⁶⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 249.

²⁶⁹Vego, "The Army of Serbian Krajina," 439.

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*

²⁷¹Silber and Little, 142.

²⁷²*Ibid.*, 145.

²⁷³Vego, "The Army of Serbian Krajina," 439.

operation became evident with the tension that erupted following the Krajina leadership's decision to hold a referendum on autonomy in August 1990. Initially, Serbian rebels had used hunting rifles. By the end of the summer, they were armed with large numbers of sophisticated arms, weaponry that because of the sheer quantity and degree of sophistication could only have come from JNA stores.²⁷⁴ When Croatia subsequently held a referendum on independence, the Serbs were prepared to resist Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia by force. They had the necessary means to embark upon a strategy of violence as well as sufficient resources to sustain it.

Beginning in 1991, the Serbs in Bosnia benefited from the same policy of covert arms shipments by the JNA and the Serbian interior ministry.²⁷⁵ The bulk of their weaponry, however, was directly transferred from the JNA to the Army of the Bosnian Serbs in early May 1992 when the JNA officially withdrew from Bosnia-Herzegovina and became the army of the new Serb-Montenegrin federation. Only 20 percent of its personnel, those who were citizens of Serbia or Montenegro, withdrew. The JNA left behind 80,000 troops who were Bosnian citizens and the bulk of its weaponry, including two-thirds of its ammunition and most of its heavy artillery and equipment.²⁷⁶

The JNA had made careful preparations prior to the outbreak of war in Bosnia. With the imposition of the arms embargo in September 1991, JNA troops were moved out of Bosnian cities, JNA control over Bosnia's defense industries was strengthened, and in some instances, whole factories were moved to Serbia.²⁷⁷ In addition, the JNA disarmed the Territorial Defense Forces (TDF), an all-people's civilian militia under the control of the individual republics. As a result, some 200,000 small arms in the custody of the TDF were returned, with the exception of the weaponry of the TDF staffs in the Croatian populated

²⁷⁴Patrick Moore, "Yugoslavia: Ethnic Tension Erupts into Civil War," *RFE/RL Research Report 1* (January 3, 1992): 71.

²⁷⁵Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 259.

²⁷⁶Woodward, 262.

²⁷⁷Zametica, 85.

areas of western Herzegovina, which ignored the General Staff's order.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, on the eve of the Bosnian war, 68 percent of the federal army's 140,000 troops were stationed in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁷⁹ This large concentration of troops in Bosnia was a result of the decision by the JNA leadership to withdraw troops from Slovenia and Macedonia, and because of UN stipulations from Croatia, into Bosnia, rather than into the Serbia or Montenegro.²⁸⁰ Thus, when the Bosnian Serb Army inherited the lion's share of the JNA, it acquired a well-equipped army that had made careful preparations for eventual war. The weaponry and forces they acquired proved crucial in the rapid expansion of war in the spring of 1992 that placed Serb forces in control of some 70 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The JNA also proved to be an important source of weaponry for the Croatian government that embarked upon a massive rearmament effort after the outbreak of war in the Krajina and in Slavonia. On September 14, 1991, the Croatian national guard laid siege to thirty-three JNA garrisons across the republic, cutting off electricity, food and water supplies, and telephone lines. The garrison in Gospic tried to fight its way out, but was captured.²⁸¹ Similarly, the entire 32nd Corps of the JNA in Varazdin surrendered to Croatian forces.²⁸² One by one, the garrisons surrendered, allowing Croats to confiscate JNA weaponry. The TDF in Croatia had also been disarmed by the JNA such that Tudjman's incoming government had no armed forces capable of acting independently of the JNA except for the police, which he organized into a national guard.²⁸³ The weaponry eventually confiscated from the JNA was thus critical to the Croatian war effort.

While Serb forces were armed mostly by the JNA, the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims were forced to rely on outside sources to secure the necessary weaponry and the

²⁷⁸Milan Vego, "The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (February 1993): 63.

²⁷⁹Woodward, 259.

²⁸⁰Zametica, 44.

²⁸¹Silber and Little, 174.

²⁸²Milan Vego, "The Croatian Army," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (May 1993): 206.

²⁸³Silber and Little, 107.

financial resources to purchase them, circumventing the arms embargo in the process. Neither group was severely limited in its search for reliable and sustainable assistance. Croatia relied on its émigré network abroad to purchase and traffic arms and organize gun-running operations that included drugs-for-arms arrangements. Croatian businessmen in Croatia reportedly purchased arms from South Africa, and Croatian émigrés in Chile arranged arms shipments through black market dealers.²⁸⁴ Croatia used funds provided by its network of émigrés to purchase 30,000-40,000 Kalashnikov rifles, 300,000 AK-47 rifles, and antitank rockets from Hungary, SAR-80 automatic rifles from Singapore, Spanish pistols from Austria, and numerous other weaponry from private companies in Austria, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Great Britain, the United States and Spain.²⁸⁵ In addition, Argentina, Panama and Israel sold arms on the Yugoslav market.²⁸⁶ Many of these weapons were imported under the cover of import-export companies in Zagreb.²⁸⁷ Arms were brought in by ferry, truck and even by private car. By 1992, Croatia had reportedly spent some \$250 million buying weapons on the black market.²⁸⁸

The beleaguered Bosnian Muslims were most constrained by the arms embargo and faced the greatest difficulties in securing outside sources of weaponry and funds. Beginning in 1992, Iran began purchasing arms for the Bosnian Muslims and persuaded the Croatian government to transport these arms across its territory into Bosnia in exchange for a share of each shipment, usually a third.²⁸⁹ Based on those that have been seized, Iranian arms shipments included a thirty-two truck convoy of surface-to-air missiles and Stingers, accompanied by Afghan Mujaheddin, an Iranian aircraft carrying 4,000 automatic weapons destined for Sarajevo but seized in Zagreb, and another Iranian shipment of over

²⁸⁴Shultz and Olson, 30.

²⁸⁵Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 250, 252; Woodward, 149, 263; Kitty McKinsey, "Croatia Rearms on Black Market," *The Gazette* (Montreal) (February 5, 1993): A10.

²⁸⁶Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 252.

²⁸⁷Silber and Little, 111.

²⁸⁸McKinsey, A10.

²⁸⁹Ranstorp and Xhudo, 204.

sixty tons of explosives and weapons manufacturing equipment.²⁹⁰ Sent under the guise of “humanitarian aid,” many of these shipments were confiscated by the UN and the Bosnian Serbs, as well as by Croatian authorities in an effort to earn much needed goodwill from the United States.²⁹¹ While the transit of weapons to Bosnia was not always certain, Iranian arms shipments remained the most reliable source of weaponry for the Bosnian Muslims. Continued shipments of these weapons and of ammunition were crucial to the Muslims’ ability to fight the better-equipped Serbs.

The vast majority of arms shipments arrived in Bosnia via overland routes, following the same path by which drug shipments entered Western Europe from the Middle East via Cyprus, Turkey, and Greece.²⁹² The transport of these shipments was often carried out by the same criminal gangs and organized crime that handled the drug trade through the Balkans into Western Europe. Weapons from the Middle East arrived via Turkey, through Macedonia and then across the Albanian border, transported to ports on the Dalmatian coast by Albanian profiteers, usually members of organized Albanian crime gangs.²⁹³ Heavy weapons, such as 155mm artillery, entered Bosnia via the Dinaric Mountains in northern Albania.²⁹⁴ Weapons also crossed the Greek and Macedonian borders by truck before arriving at Albanian ports where they were then smuggled up the Albanian coastline to Croatian ports on the coast of Dalmatia.

The transport of weapons into Bosnia and Croatia was closely tied to organized crime, which profited from the arms embargo and the general breakdown of internal order in Yugoslavia. This close link between organized crime and the Croatian and Bosnian arms smuggling operations served to change the nature and course of the conflict, extending it in both time and place and raising the level of violence (Proposition 9.1). Yugoslavia had a long-standing role in the international heroin trade as part of the Balkan route leading from

²⁹⁰Ranstorp and Xhudo, 203-204 and 219n51.

²⁹¹Vego, “The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 65.

²⁹²Ranstorp and Xhudo, 204.

²⁹³Ibid.

²⁹⁴Ibid., 220n54.

Southwest Asia through the Balkans to Western Europe and North America.²⁹⁵ When war erupted in Yugoslavia, the traditional smuggling routes were disrupted. Active fighting, shifting borders and control procedures, a breakdown in institutional affiliations, and especially the arms embargo, changed the routes and priorities for both the smugglers and the groups fighting in Yugoslavia and “resulted in an innovative series of measures and readjustments being taken by affected states *and* criminal groupings.”²⁹⁶ Arms smugglers were forced to target new sources, and both arms and drug traffickers were forced to explore new routes for delivery. These groups were able to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Yugoslav federal system and the subsequent violent war that followed. Working in tandem with ethnic groups to smuggle weapons, the collapse of border controls allowed these criminal groups to capitalize upon the war, working with the shifting lines of battle to transit drugs and embargoed goods through the war zones and selling them for a significant profit.

The reliance on outside sources for arms and funding also fostered new relations between the various ethnic groups on the one hand and criminal organizations and terrorist groups on the other hand. Local mafias established close ties with international criminal organizations who benefited from the continued violence and disruption of border controls. States were forced to rely on the profits from criminal activities to fund the war effort. Close ties between local Bosnian Muslims and Middle East states and terrorist organizations provided these outside actors with the opportunity to establish a base of operations in the Balkans, one that could prove beneficial in the future for further drug smuggling and terrorist activity.²⁹⁷

The extensive reliance on criminal organizations also opened the door for a “new breed of fighters,” the so-called “technicians of violence,” who capitalized on the disorder to maximize their personal gain. When not engaged in fighting alongside regular units,

²⁹⁵Turbiville, 134.

²⁹⁶Ibid.

²⁹⁷Ranstorp and Xhudo, 196-197.

these thugs, small-time criminals, and profiteers would loot, plunder, rape, and kill. Their personal objective was profit, but their role in the conflict was to facilitate ethnic cleansing by intimidating, if not destroying, the enemy.²⁹⁸ One of the most notorious of these criminals was Zeljko Raznjatovic, better known as Arkan, who, in addition to leading one of the more notorious private militias responsible for some of the most atrocious incidents of ethnic cleansing, was also an entrepreneur engaged in gun-running, illegal foreign exchange, and sanction-busting.²⁹⁹

Arkan was one of the new, multiethnic elite, the warlords turned entrepreneurs who profited from shuttling goods and peoples across battle lines. Another example of this new brand of entrepreneurs was Fikret Abdic, a Muslim business tycoon who before the war was known as “Mr. Chicken,” the Colonel Sanders of Yugoslavia. He capitalized on the war by selling food to beleaguered Serbs in Krajina, purchasing weapons from the Croats, and establishing a personal police force engaged in numerous activities for profit. His forces even engaged the 5th Army Corps of the Bosnian Muslim army in Bihac when their presence threatened his operations. He was so successful that many Muslim soldiers from the 5th Corps deserted to join Abdic’s police force.³⁰⁰ Another example of this new breed of soldier-entrepreneur is Naser Oric, the Bosnian Muslim commander of the Srebrenica “safe haven” who, prior to its fall, extorted some 80 percent of the income of Muslim civilians working for the UN in Srebrenica for his own personal gain.³⁰¹

The close ties between criminal groups engaged in arms and drug smuggling operations and the various ethnic groups involved in the conflict altered both the nature and course of the conflict. Lines of battle and occupied territory delineated not only which territory belonged to each ethnic group, but also what routes were available for criminal organizations to traffic arms and other embargoed drugs. The importance of organized

²⁹⁸Crnobrnja, 169-170.

²⁹⁹Ibid., 170.

³⁰⁰Matt Frei, “The Mafia Move In,” *The Spectator* 271 (October 16, 1993): 12.

³⁰¹Lieutenant Colonel John E. Sray, *Selling the Bosnian Myth to America: Buyer Beware* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1995), 7.

crime and the vast profits that could be made also created a new breed of fighter, one whose interest was as much securing territory and ethnic cleansing as it was personal profit. Criminal organizations and the local mafias had much more to gain from continued warfare and the consequent disruption of internal order than from ceasefires and negotiations. Their activities were thus aimed at disrupting regions where profits could be made and where transport of illegal goods could continue unrestrained.

The arms and financial resources available to each of the combatants to the conflict made ethnic violence a viable and sustainable strategy to redress grievances and seize territory. The links between those groups engaged in conflict and the criminal organizations who benefited from the disruption and violence served only to heighten the violence in Yugoslavia, creating opportunities for vast profit and personal gain and incentives to extend the conflict in both time and space. Ethnic cleansing was no longer just a means to secure territory for one's ethnic group, but a highly profitable strategy for private militias, warlords, and criminal organizations. Links with criminal organizations provided not only the necessary arms, but also an important source of profit for sustaining ethnic warfare over the long-term. The search for reliable sources of arms and resources and the linkages with organized crime that this search engendered served to heighten violence and make continued ethnic conflict both possible and profitable.

Conclusion

Based on an analysis of the events that led to Yugoslavia's collapse and the outbreak of violent ethnic war, six of the ten propositions developed in Section I are relevant to understanding the sources of ethnic violence among the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims first in Croatia and then in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These six propositions identify the critical triggers of interethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia.

One central source of ethnic violence at the group level is the militant and aggressive version of Serbian nationalism that sought the destruction of Yugoslavia and the creation of

a Greater Serbia upon its ruins (Proposition 2). Following Milosevic's rise to power, Serbian nationalists began to examine a long list of injustices, including the alleged genocide of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo, Serbia's "unequal" position within the Yugoslav system, particularly as a result of the 1974 constitution, Serbia's wartime sufferings, particularly the massacre of Serbs by the Ustase during World War II, and, finally, current injustices suffered by Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, all of which served to cloak the larger Serbian aim of recentralizing Yugoslavia under Serbian control. This discourse of injustice led an increasing number of Serbs to believe that the great ancestral heritage of the Serbian nation, its history of independent statehood, its role as the historic guardian of Yugoslavia, its sacrifices during two world wars, as well as its sufferings throughout history, justified the adoption of an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion and annihilation of ethnic strangers, the Croats and the Muslims, in order to redress past grievances, secure Serbia's rightful place in Yugoslavia, and ultimately realize the dream of a Greater Serbia. Indeed, virulent Serbian ethnic chauvinism sparked some of the worst atrocities of the war first in Croatia and then in Bosnia.

A second source of ethnic violence at the group level and arguably the most important trigger of violence in the Yugoslav case study is the decision by the Serbian leadership in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia itself to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 4). The Serbian leadership, together with the Serbian nationalist intelligentsia, mobilized the Serbian nation around the alleged genocide of Serbs first in Kosovo and then in Croatia, adopted a strategy of deliberately destroying interethnic peace to justify the measures they were to adopt and to build a consensus among Serbs in Yugoslavia, and embarked upon a strategy of interethnic violence and massive ethnic cleansing. The violence in Croatia and in Bosnia was a direct result of the actions of the Serbian leadership. Although the leaderships of the other Yugoslav republics all bear responsibility to some degree for the events that led to the gradual collapse of Yugoslavia following Tito's death, it was the Serbian leadership, especially Slobodan Milosevic, whose strategies

provoked interethnic violence. It was the Serbian leadership who sought not to reform the existing system, but to destroy it, for fear of losing its power and position. The Serbian leadership used the opportunity provided by Tito's death and the lack of consensus among the other republican leaderships about Yugoslavia's future to embark upon a strategy of ethnic violence and ethnic cleansing to realize the dream of a Greater Serbia.

The first source of ethnic violence at the state level is the weak structure of the Yugoslav system itself. The weakness of the Yugoslav system can be attributed to six factors which are critical to understanding Yugoslavia's disintegration and descent into ethnic warfare. First, the devolution of power following the 1971 constitutional amendments and the 1974 constitution weakened the federal center, transforming it to little more than a committee of eight republican representatives whose decisions were reached by consensus. Second, the changes enshrined in the 1974 constitution fundamentally strengthened the individual republics who became the most powerful actors within the system. Third, the JNA emerged from the 1960s reforms with a substantially broadened mission such that it became, in effect, a "ninth" republic, strongly allied with conservative forces in Yugoslavia. Fourth, the 1960s reforms increased the number of actors at the federal level from six to nine by granting the provinces equal power to the republics and increasing the prominence of the JNA. Fifth, the national character of each of the republics except Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina allowed republican leaders to assume the mantle of a group's national leadership, presenting issues in ethnic terms to mobilize support for increasingly exclusive policies. Finally, the Yugoslav system was weakened by a fundamental crisis of legitimacy after Tito's death that created a vacuum into which nationalism moved.

As a result of its weak federal structure and the devolution of power to the republics, Yugoslavia had neither the resources or capabilities to reach accommodation with the far more powerful republics nor the means to repress the emergence first of Serbian ethnic chauvinism and then of other Yugoslav nationalisms which undermined the

commitment to multiethnic coexistence upon which the Titoist system had been founded. The powerful republics, led by Serbia and Slovenia, set out to destroy the Yugoslav system. The federal center was too weak to respond. Its failure either to repress the destructive policies of its republics or to offer concessions and broker compromise resulted in its collapse and the outbreak of ethnic violence (Proposition 5).

A second source of ethnic violence at the state level is the exclusion of the Serbs from the newly independent Croatian and Bosnian states (Proposition 6). The Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were willing to adopt a strategy of violence to prevent their relegation to the status of a minority and their exclusion from participation in the politics in which they found themselves upon Yugoslavia's collapse. In both Croatia and Bosnia, this exclusion, by virtue of the Serb percentage of the population in each state, seemed permanent. Rather than be ruled by Croats, or by Croats and Muslims in a seemingly permanent alliance, the Serbs adopted a strategy of violence to seize the state for themselves (Proposition 6.1). In Croatia, because the Serbs were regionally concentrated, the threat of exclusion prompted them to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence aimed at secession (Proposition 6.2), while in Bosnia, exclusion prompted the Serbs to claim a right to self-determination. To realize their desire to join Serbia, territory in Bosnia with Serbian populations had to be occupied and cleansed and republican authority over that territory had to be denied. In both cases, the threat of seemingly perpetual exclusion represents a critical source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia.

There are two critical sources of ethnic violence at the interstate level, both of which served not only to trigger violence, but also to change the nature, course, and duration of the violence in Yugoslavia. The outbreak of warfare, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and finally and most tragically in Bosnia, can be directly linked to the various attempts by outside states, non-state actors, and international organizations to influence the course of violence, to prevent it, or alternatively, to end it (Proposition 8). The international actors who became involved in the Yugoslav war were fundamentally inconsistent in their

understanding of the conflict, in their goals, in their commitment to ending the violence, in their application of norms and principles, particularly the right to self-determination, and in their application of international law to the question of recognition of the individual republics as successor states. International involvement strengthened the already severe divisions in Yugoslavia and fostered new ones. The international actors determined not only the nature of the conflict, as between ethnic groups rather than between the federal government and secessionist republics, some of whom were ethnically homogeneous, but most of whom were not, but also determined who would be included in the negotiations over Yugoslavia's future and who would be excluded. In fact, Western involvement made war over territory inevitable and contributed directly to the explosion of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia. More importantly, it determined what *form* that violence would take, where and when it would spread, and how the war would be fought.

The final source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia is the access to arms and financial resources (Proposition 9). The massive amount of weaponry available locally, combined with the search for outside sources following the imposition of the arms embargo, ensured that the various ethnic groups had the weaponry and funding necessary to sustain interethnic war. While Serb forces were armed mostly by the JNA, the Croats and Bosnian Muslims were forced to rely on outside sources to secure the necessary weaponry and the financial resources to purchase them, circumventing the arms embargo in the process. As was demonstrated above, neither group was severely limited in its search for reliable and sustainable assistance. In fact, the transport of weapons into Bosnia and Croatia was closely tied to organized crime, whose close links to the Croatian and Bosnian arms smuggling operations served to change the nature and the course of the conflict, extending it in both time and place and raising the level of violence (Proposition 9.1). The search for reliable sources of arms and resources and the linkages with organized crime that this search engendered served to heighten violence and make continued ethnic conflict both possible and profitable.

Each of these six propositions presents a clear source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia. The four remaining propositions developed in Section I are not directly relevant to explaining the violence in Yugoslavia. It is to the reasons for their exclusion that we will now briefly turn.

First, ethnonationalism is not a source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia (Proposition 1). Although Gurr identifies the Serbs as ethnonationalists in his *Minorities at Risk* study, the Serbs were to some degree autonomous since a majority of the Serbian population resided in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, which following the devolution of the 1970s had a significant degree of power within the federal system. In addition, the Serb's "special homeland," Kosovo, was already under Serb control even though the Serb population in Kosovo in both relative and absolute terms had decreased dramatically and Serbia's control over Kosovo had been weakened since the 1970s. Thus, if ethnonationalism were a source of ethnic violence in Yugoslavia, ethnic warfare should have erupted in Kosovo. Violence in Yugoslavia erupted not in Kosovo, however, but in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was sparked not by a desire to reclaim historical autonomy or a special homeland, but was the result of an aggressive Serbian ethnic chauvinism that destroyed the existing system of multiethnic coexistence and prompted the adoption of an offensive strategy of ethnic violence.

Ethnic group survival is similarly not a source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia despite claims to the contrary (Proposition 3). Serbian ethnic chauvinism was expressed through a discourse of ethnic injustice that relied on claims of genocide, on the dire threat to Serbs in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia, and on the persistent denial of their basic rights, even their survival as a nation. A careful examination of these claims will reveal if in fact the very survival of the Serbian nation as a distinct ethnic group was threatened, if this belief was in fact shared by Serbs, and if the Serbs' strategy of interethnic violence was in fact adopted in self-defense.

The first claims of ethnic “genocide” were directed against the Kosovo Albanians following the riots in 1981. Serb nationalists argued that the genocide of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo by the majority Albanian population was in fact an attempt to create an ethnically pure Albanian state. According to one Serbian author,

“the Kosovo Albanians raped and pillaged. They desecrated Serbian cemeteries and Serbian religious institutions. They set Serbian barns and haystacks on fire. They cut down timber on Serbian lands, and constructed buildings on Serbian property. No method or tactic was excluded in the effort to force the Serbs to flee Kosovo. And they did so in large numbers.”³⁰²

These atrocities, Serbs claimed, were responsible for the massive exodus of Serbs and Montenegrins from the province.

One factor that leads groups to perceive a threat to their survival is the decrease in group size. The high birthrate of 32 per 1,000 of the Albanian population in Kosovo, the highest birthrate in all of Europe, combined with the continued and growing exodus of Serbs and Montenegrins from the province, resulted in a marked decline in the Serbian and Montenegrin populations while the Albanian population continued to increase, both in absolute and relative terms. In 1948, Albanians numbered 498,000. By 1981, they numbered 1, 227,000. As a percentage of the total population, Albanians increased from 68.5 percent of the population in 1948 to 77.5 percent of the population in 1981.³⁰³

During this same period, the Serbian population increased only in absolute terms until the 1971 census: from 171,000 in 1948 to 228,000 in 1971. In 1981, the Serbian population dropped to 209,792. In relative terms, the Serb population stagnated and then decreased in this same period: from 23.6 percent of the population in 1948 to 13.2 percent in 1981. The Montenegrin population similarly experienced first an increase between 1948 and 1961, then declined rapidly from 1971 to 1981. By 1981, Montenegrins accounted for only 1.7 percent of the population.³⁰⁴

³⁰²Dragnich, 6.

³⁰³Reiquam, 2.

³⁰⁴Ibid.

Between 1971 and 1981 an alarming total of 100,000 Serbs and Montenegrins left Kosovo.³⁰⁵ Following the riots of 1981, additional numbers of Serbs and Montenegrins left. In 1982 alone, 5,810 Serbs and Montenegrins left Kosovo.³⁰⁶ By 1983, the total number of Serbs and Montenegrins who had left Kosovo was more than 13,000³⁰⁷ and by 1988, that total had grown to 30,000.³⁰⁸ By 1987, Serbs and Montenegrins together comprised only 10 percent of the population in Kosovo.³⁰⁹ Clearly, the Serbian and Montenegrin population had decreased both in absolute (Proposition 3.1) and relative (Proposition 3.2) terms, which “may lead the group to conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened.”

Serb nationalists did indeed conclude that the survival of the Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins was threatened. When Milosevic replaced Stambolic, concern over this alleged genocide became a primary policy of the Serbian government. With Milosevic’s support, the Committee of Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins began demonstrating in protest over the precarious position of the remaining Serb and Montenegrin populations in Kosovo. These mass rallies were not directed necessarily at the situation in Kosovo, however, but became an important vehicle for Milosevic to bring down the governments of Montenegro and Vojvodina, as well as the provincial leadership in Kosovo.

While the Serb and Montenegrin populations in Kosovo did have legitimate grievances, there is no evidence of genocide. The importance of Kosovo for Serbian mythology, however, and its potential “loss” to ethnic Albanians did present a dangerous threat to Serbs, both inside Kosovo and in the rest of Yugoslavia. The decline in the Serbian population in both relative and absolute terms thus led some to conclude that the existence of the Serb nation was threatened. The Albanian threat was present not in the

³⁰⁵Louis Zanga, “Rise of Tension in Kosovo due to Migration,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Yugoslav Background Report 149 (June 28, 1983): 1.

³⁰⁶Reiquam, 2.

³⁰⁷Zdenko Antic, “Yugoslav Government Concerned About Internal Security,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Background Report (Yugoslavia) 159 (November 15, 1983): 2.

³⁰⁸Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 200.

³⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 201.

actual growth of the Albanian population, however, but in what that growth represented: a concerted effort on the part of the Albanian population to “purify” Kosovo.

Whether or not the majority of Serbs believed that their very existence as a distinct group was threatened by the growth of the Albanian population in Kosovo alone is not critical to determining whether demographic shifts in Kosovo ultimately prompted violence. The violence that led to Yugoslavia’s demise never took place in Kosovo. Rather, using the alleged threat to Serbs in Kosovo, Serbs held rallies in the other republics to undermine the leaderships there. Under the guise of explaining the “true” situation in Kosovo, these rallies, organized by the Serb leadership in Belgrade, were a direct attempt to remove Yugoslavia’s republican and provincial leaderships in order to realize the greater aim of building a centralized state in Yugoslavia dominated by the Serbs. When violence broke out in the Krajina and later in Bosnia, it was neither aimed at redressing the population balance in Kosovo, nor was it defensive. Despite claims to the contrary, the Serbian nation was not facing a threat to its very survival. In fact, Serbia’s strategy was one of aggression and of aggrandizement, not defense. To realize a Greater Serbia meant seizing territory and expelling non-Serb inhabitants, not in Kosovo, which was already firmly under the control of the Serbian republic, but in Croatia and Bosnia.

The loss or lack of cultural autonomy constitutes another factor that leads groups to determine that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened (Proposition 3.3). While in Kosovo the threat was one of “ethnic genocide,” in Croatia, Serb nationalists claimed that Serbs were facing “cultural genocide.”³¹⁰ As with the situation in Kosovo, it is necessary to assess these claims of cultural genocide to determine if in fact the very survival of the Serbian nation as a distinct ethnic group was threatened, if this belief was in fact shared by Serbs in Croatia, and if the Serbs’ strategy of interethnic violence was in fact adopted as a measure of self-defense.

³¹⁰Vuk Draskovic, quoted in Dragnich, 11.

With the election of the new government of Franjo Tudjman in April 1990, a number of policies were adopted that radically changed the status of the Serbian population in Croatia. Discussed in greater detail above, these policies relegated Croatia's Serbs to the status of a minority. Serbs responded by demanding autonomy. Milan Babic, the mayor of Knin and increasingly the leader of the SDS, began visiting areas in the Krajina where Serbs were in the majority and persuading them, often by force, to join an association of Serbian municipalities. Eventually they were to hold a referendum on Serbian sovereignty in August 1990. As long as Croatia remained within Yugoslavia, the referendum was to secure cultural autonomy within Croatia.³¹¹ Should Croatia decide to join a new confederation of Yugoslav states, however, the referendum was to indicate the desire of Croatia's Serbian population to join Serbia proper.

Tudjman did make an effort to include the Serbian leadership in the new government, which it refused to accept. However, Tudjman ignored its pleas to wait on adopting the constitutional changes, thus weakening the faction in the Serbian leadership that would have been willing to negotiate with the new Croatian government. Tudjman's hasty adoption of these measures to realize the "thousand year old dream" of Croatian statehood alienated moderate Serbs and strengthened more militant leaders who were eventually able to sideline the moderate leadership and embark on a strategy of violence. This more militant faction of the Serbian leadership adopted provocative measures which eventually forced the Croatian government to react. In fact, it began preparing for war with Croatia well before the elections that brought Tudjman to power had taken place and well before the measures used as evidence of impending cultural genocide had been adopted.³¹²

The Croatian government under Tudjman clearly acted too hastily in its adoption of a new constitution and in its dismissal of Serbs throughout the republic. Furthermore, its adoption of the symbols of the Croatian nation, with little regard for the historical meaning

³¹¹ Andrejevich, "Croatia Between Stability and Civil War (Part I)," 39.

³¹² Milan Vego, "The Army of Serbian Krajina," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (October 1993): 438.

its Serbian population attached to these symbols, was an ill-planned strategy that give little thought to the potentially dangerous implications. Although Serbs in Croatia were not physically threatened and although there was no evidence of “genocide,”³¹³ the actions on the part of the Croatian government made it a simple task for Serbian nationalists to persuade the Serbian population otherwise.

Croatia’s Serbs thus went on the offensive to claim Serbian territory for a greater Serbian state. Their strategy was not one of protecting and ensuring the survival of Croatia’s Serbs, which could have been achieved through continued negotiation of a special status, negotiations that were ongoing prior to the outbreak of violence. Rather, they first secured territories with large Serb populations and then moved into Slavonia, into areas where the Serbian population was much smaller, in an effort to secure a land bridge linking Serbian territory in Croatia with Serbia. This was not a strategy aimed at securing cultural autonomy for Croatia’s Serbian population within Croatia, but an offensive strategy aimed at building a greater Serbian state that would include not only parts of Croatia, but parts of Bosnia as well. Although the rhetoric of “survival” and “genocide” was widely used, Proposition 3 does not represent a source of violence in Yugoslavia.

Two final propositions, both at the interstate level, did not have a bearing on the outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia. The adoption of violence by transnational kindred did not have a demonstration effect upon the various groups in Yugoslavia (Proposition 7). As in the case of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan discussed below, none of the Yugoslav groups were prompted to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence by transnational kindred. Finally, no sudden “triggering event” ignited communal tensions to spark interethnic war (Proposition 10). The only potential trigger could be Tito’s death, which predated the outbreak of violence by nearly a decade and thus does not constitute a “sudden” triggering event. In fact, the disintegration of Yugoslavia that led to

³¹³Vego, “The Army of Serbian Krajina,” 438.

the outbreak of violence was carefully planned and implemented by the republics of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia.

Six of the ten propositions developed in Section I were relevant for identifying what caused the outbreak of ethnic violence among Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia: ethnic chauvinism, ethnic leadership, the weak state, exclusion and denial, international support, and arms and financial resources. The remaining four propositions were not directly relevant to the case of Yugoslavia, namely ethnonationalism, ethnic group survival, contagion and diffusion, and a “triggering event.” Together, the relevant six propositions explain the sources of ethnic violence in what has clearly been one of the bloodiest conflicts in the post-Cold War period.

Chapter Six

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Introduction

The two most common explanations for the sources of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war attribute the outbreak of violence either to a clash between civilizations over a territory that sits astride one of the major civilizational faultlines in the Caucasus, or alternatively, to the resurgence of ancient ethnic hatreds between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" paradigm suggests that "the fault lines of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future"¹ and that along these faultlines adjacent groups will "struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other."² The violent war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis is thus a manifestation of the civilizational violence that will characterize conflict in the post-Cold War era. Alternatively, the "ancient ethnic hatreds" thesis, widely used to explain the war in Yugoslavia, attributes interethnic violence to the sudden resurgence of long-suppressed ethnic hatreds that explode into new cycles of violence when repression is lifted. According to this argument, the violence in Nagorno-Karabakh that erupted following the Soviet collapse is but the latest phase in a centuries-old conflict between the Armenians and the Azerbaijani "Turks."

Neither of these arguments offers a complete explanation of what caused the horrific violence and atrocities that have marked this war. While the "clash of civilizations" paradigm offers an appealingly simple explanation for what at first glance seems to be a war between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis, it fails to provide a convincing

¹Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 22-23.

²*Ibid.*, 29.

explanation for the outbreak of ethnic violence in Nagorno-Karabakh. A closer examination of the war and the various parties that became involved on both sides quickly disproves the argument that civilizational differences alone would drive Armenians and Azerbaijanis to adopt a strategy of violence and that a common civilization alone would prompt regional powers to support either the Armenians or the Azerbaijanis. If the “clash of civilizations” argument were in fact true, then Russia should have supported the Armenian position exclusively, Iran should have intervened solely on the Azerbaijani side, and the Kurds should have fought alongside the Azerbaijanis. Instead, Russia supported both sides when it suited its broader regional interests, as did Iran, and the Kurds fought with the Armenians against the Azerbaijanis in the hope that they would be granted some form of autonomy in return.

The ancient ethnic hatreds thesis is no more convincing in the Nagorno-Karabakh case than it is in the Yugoslav case. Although the history of relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis has been longer and more troubled than the history of relations between the Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia, ancient ethnic hatreds are not a source of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh. As the Soviet Union began to collapse, violence was sparked not by hatred, but by a battle for control over a territory that both sides believe is part of their historic patrimony. The Armenians initially attempted to transfer the region to Armenia through non-violent methods. It was Moscow’s vacillating and indecisive response, from concessions to repression and direct intervention, as well as a power struggle within the Azerbaijani leadership, competition between regional powers, particularly the Russian Federation, for influence, and a readily accessible stockpile of Soviet weaponry that prompted the outbreak of ethnic violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Although “ancient ethnic hatreds” are not a source of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, an understanding of the history of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations is critical for identifying which factors prompted the outbreak of ethnic violence. This history, based

as much on legends and ideas about history as on historical fact, has been used by both sides to prove categorically that the contested region belongs to them and them alone. In addition, the many causes of the Nagorno-Karabakh war cannot be understood without an examination of Russia's role in the Caucasus. Without a knowledge of these critical historical experiences, no explanation for the sources of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war can be complete.

A Brief History of Nagorno-Karabakh

The conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis over Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave in Azerbaijan with a large Armenian population, begins with the expansion of Tsarist Russia into the Caucasus in the eighteenth century. In a series of wars fought against the Persian Safavid Empire, Moscow won Baku in 1724, the rest of modern-day Azerbaijan, including Karabakh, in 1813, and Erevan, present-day Armenia, and Nakhichevan in 1828.³ By the late 1850s, the Khanates that had ruled the region prior to Russian expansion were dismantled, and Transcaucasia⁴ was divided into four provinces (*gubernii*): Baku, Elizavetopol (which included Karabakh), Erevan, and Tiflis.⁵

Although Russian conquest of the region was rapid, the Transcaucasus were not pacified until 1864. Once established, imperial rule brought relative peace and security, fostering commerce and industry, growth of towns, the building of railroads, and the slow end to the isolation of many villages. Baku became a major source of oil for Russia, and Russian economic and political influence grew. Tens of thousands of Persian workers came in search of employment. Migrant Muslim villagers from elsewhere in Russian

³ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-1921* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1951), 5-7; and Tadeusz Swietochowski, "National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azerbaijan, 1905-1920," in *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, Ronald Grigor Suny, ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), 209-210.

⁴ Transcaucasia is the Russian term for the region of Caucasia that includes present-day Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

⁵ Audrey L. Altstadt, "Nagorno-Karabakh—'Apple of Discord' in the Azerbaijan SSR," *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 4 (1988): 68; and Swietochowski, "National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azerbaijan," 210.

Transcaucasia and from Persian Azerbaijan soon found themselves in a city dominated by Russians and Armenians.⁶

Baku was complexly segregated with Russians and Armenians in the central part of the town and Muslims clustered in distinct districts. A hierarchy of skills, education and wages began with the Muslims at the bottom, Armenians and Russians in the middle, and Christians and Europeans at the top.⁷ In what Horowitz would term a ranked system, social status and ethnicity overlapped one another in complex ways. Poor Muslim workers developed resentments against skilled workers and employers, most of whom were Christians. By virtue of property holdings and a legal quota on Muslim representation, the Baku city Duma remained in the hands of wealthy Armenians and Russians.⁸ The migrant Muslim villagers, referred to as *temnye* (“dark”) by the urban Christians and often considered to be an unenlightened people by members of educated society, found themselves in a town dominated by Russians and Armenians.⁹

In 1905, the first bloody clashes between Azerbaijanis and local Armenians erupted in Baku and then spread elsewhere in the Baku gubernia.¹⁰ The cause of the interethnic clashes remains a matter of dispute. According to Suny and Swietochowski, interethnic violence was sparked by Muslim “weakness” in competition with the more successful Armenian merchants and their Russian rulers.¹¹ Altstadt offers an alternative explanation: “the root of the conflict must be sought in the historical differences manipulated over

⁶Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 28.

⁷Ronald Suny, “The Revenge of the Past: Socialism and Ethnic Conflict in Transcaucasia,” *New Left Review* 184 (November/December 1990): 17.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰Niall M. Fraser, Keith W. Hipel, John Jaworsky and Ralph Zuljan, “A Conflict Analysis of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Dispute,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34 (December 1990): 655.

¹¹See Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993).

decades by Tsarist colonial policies meant to incite jealousy, perhaps violence, as a means of control.”¹²

Whether precipitated by Russian imperial policies that favored the Armenians over the Azerbaijanis and Muslim immigrants, or by the disparity in economic success between the Azerbaijani and Muslim groups and the more successful Armenians, violence was aimed not at the Russians, but at the Armenian population of Baku and elsewhere in Russian Transcaucasia. This same pattern would characterize the first incident of interethnic violence in 1988 when Azerbaijanis, angered by Moscow’s apparent willingness to consider the Armenian request, lashed out against the Armenians, and not the Russians, in Azerbaijan.

As a result of the October Revolution and the outbreak of World War I, violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis shifted from Baku to Nagorno-Karabakh. The 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman controlled Eastern Anatolia created a flood of refugees that sought the relative safety of Russian-controlled Transcaucasia. By the beginning of the 1920s, Armenian refugees constituted at least one-fourth of the population of Russian Armenia.¹³ As the new immigrants added to the wartime pressures on the limited resources of the collapsing Russian empire, ethnic tensions erupted between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.¹⁴ In 1918, the Armenians in the Erevan gubernia and the Azerbaijanis in the Baku and Elizavetopol gubernii, each declared their independence, and a bitter struggle for control of Nagorno-Karabakh erupted between them.

Independence was short lived. In 1920 the Red Army conquered the Transcaucasus, and Moscow subsequently became the indisputable mediator in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵ The new Soviet authorities

¹²Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 43.

¹³Nora Dudwick, “Armenia: The Nation Awakens,” in *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 265.

¹⁴Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 16.

¹⁵Arie Vaserman and Rami Ginat, “National, Territorial or Religious Conflict? The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 17 (October-December 1994): 346.

promised that Nagorno-Karabakh would be transferred to Armenia.¹⁶ On July 3, 1921, Nagorno-Karabakh was duly transferred to the newly created Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). Two days later, however, the decision was reversed and the territory was returned to the Azerbaijan SSR.

On July 24, 1923, the Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh (AONK) was created in Azerbaijan against the wishes of both the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. In 1937, its name was changed to Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). As a result, “a situation was created...that was sure to sustain the competition and conflict between the two republics. It would keep them too busy to fight the Russian overlordship.”¹⁷

The decision over Nagorno-Karabakh was complicated by Nakhichevan, another disputed region with an Armenian minority that is physically separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenian territory. In 1920, it was conquered by the Red Army and joined to Azerbaijan only to be awarded to Armenia at the end of the year. In 1921, Nakhichevan was transferred back to Azerbaijan and declared an Autonomous Republic (a higher designation than an autonomous oblast). The decision to establish an autonomous region in Karabakh was taken shortly after the decision to place Nakhichevan under the government in Baku and may have been intended as “compensation” to the Armenians. The promises, transfers, and subsequent reversals of both territories created the foundation for the current dispute over the “ownership” of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Although Armenian resistance in Nagorno-Karabakh never completely died, it was not until after Stalin’s death that the Armenians could begin voicing their demands to transfer the region to the Armenian SSR. In the 1960s, activists in the NKAO and in the Armenian SSR began to agitate for the incorporation of Karabakh into Armenia. By the 1970s, Armenian activism had increased in both the Armenian SSR and the oblast,

¹⁶Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 194.

¹⁷Altstadt, “Nagorno-Karabagh—’Apple of Discord,’” 68.

exacerbating communal tensions and resulting in armed clashes.¹⁸ Despite numerous petitions and letters, the central Soviet government repeatedly affirmed that the NKAO would remain a part of the Azerbaijan SSR.¹⁹

The introduction of glasnost and perestroika following Gorbachev's rise to power in March 1985 provided Armenians with the opportunity to raise the issue of the NKAO more publicly. In this more open political environment, the Armenian intelligentsia mobilized, believing the moment had finally come to restore historical justice and rectify Stalin's arbitrariness. The current conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh began in the fall of 1987 when a petition with some 75,000 signatures requesting the transfer of the oblast to the Armenian SSR was sent to the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).²⁰

Although Moscow failed to respond to the request in the fall of 1987, Armenians had reason to hope that their demands for justice might still receive a favorable response. Gorbachev's economic advisor, Abel Aganbegyan, in a speech to Armenian war veterans in Paris, stated that Moscow was considering giving Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.²¹ In addition, between November 1987 and early February 1988, three delegations of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh went to Moscow to lobby the CC and the USSR Supreme Soviet and were reportedly given assurances that a settlement of the NKAO issue was under active consideration.²²

Believing that the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh was now within their grasp, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh began organizing meetings to pass resolutions on the "reunification" of the NKAO with Armenia. These resolutions, accompanied by a stream of

¹⁸Shireen T. Hunter, *The Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation-building and Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 98.

¹⁹Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 27.

²⁰Kevin Devlin, "L'Unita on 'Armenian Documents Sent to Kremlin,'" *Radio Free Europe Research*, USSR Background Report 39 (March 11, 1988): 1-5.

²¹Vaserman and Ginat, 348.

²²Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 284-285.

telegrams, began to arrive in Moscow in February 1988.²³ On February 11, strikes and demonstrations erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh protesting the cultural and economic policy of the Azerbaijani authorities in the oblast and calling for the transfer of the oblast to Armenia.²⁴ The next day, senior Azerbaijani officials arrived in Nagorno-Karabakh and announced that there could be no question of changing the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.²⁵ On February 13, 1988, demonstrations grew and spread throughout the region as Karabakh Armenians demanded the incorporation of the oblast into Armenia.²⁶ The last of the three delegations from the NKAO returned from Moscow on February 18, convinced that their mission had been successful.²⁷ That same day, Gorbachev tried to placate the protesters by offering to hold a special session of the Central Committee of the CPSU to discuss Soviet policy toward the nationalities in general.²⁸ The following day thousands of Armenians in Yerevan, the capital of the Armenian SSR, began demonstrating in support of Karabakh.

The conflict continued to escalate. Defying the Azerbaijani authorities, one local soviet after another in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to join the region to Armenia. On February 20, the Armenian-dominated regional NKAO Soviet voted 110 to 17 to intercede with the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for the transfer of Karabakh to Armenia and petitioned the Supreme Soviets of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the USSR Supreme Soviet to allow the oblast to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia.²⁹ Moscow suddenly faced an unprecedented ethno-political crisis. Acting quickly, the politburo rejected the demands for incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia on February 21.³⁰

²³Fraser et al., 658.

²⁴Vaserman and Ginat, 348.

²⁵Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285.

²⁶Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 27.

²⁷Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285.

²⁸Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 27.

²⁹Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 198.

³⁰Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285.

But the conflict was still escalating out of control. Despite the media blackout of events in the oblast, reports of the NKAO resolution of February 20 reached Yerevan that same day as massive demonstrations against the construction of a chemical factory outside Yerevan were taking place. By February 26, a reported 700,000 to one million Armenians massed in the city streets and squares, an alarming number since the population of Armenia, according to the last census of 1979, number 2.5 million.³¹ The demonstrations marked the first massive expression of popular nationalism that the Soviet Union had known in nearly seventy years.³²

Faced with a crisis that was rapidly escalating out of control, Gorbachev appeared on television, appealing for calm and “a reasonable approach” to the issue.³³ On February 26, he met with Silva Kaputikian and Zori Balayan, two leading Armenian activists, in Moscow and reportedly promised that the situation in the NKAO would be thoroughly examined and that a “just solution” would be found.³⁴ Gorbachev requested that the demonstrations be halted for the period of one month to allow the central authorities to examine the issue carefully.³⁵ Upon the return of the two activists from Moscow, the organizers of the demonstrations in Yerevan agreed to a moratorium on all protests until March 26.³⁶

The relative calm in Armenia did not spread to Azerbaijan. Demonstrations and strikes continued in Stepanakert, the capital of the NKAO. On February 28-29, Azerbaijanis took to the streets in Sumgait, a depressed industrial suburb of Baku. For two days rioters roamed the streets in search of Armenian victims. Before the military intervened, thirty-one Armenians had been killed and hundreds wounded.³⁷ The riot was

³¹Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285-286.

³²Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 7.

³³Mikhail Gorbachev, quoted in Nahaylo and Swoboda, 286.

³⁴Vaserman and Ginat, 349.

³⁵Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 198.

³⁶Fraser et al., 658.

³⁷The official death toll was set at 32, but Armenian sources claim that more than 200 people were killed. See Vaserman and Ginat, 348; and Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 28.

apparently triggered by a radio report of the death of two Azerbaijanis near Agdam in Nagorno-Karabakh on February 25 which, because of the media blackout, was not released until a few days later.³⁸ The Sumgait pogrom was the first incident of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Whether the riots were spontaneous or organized, they marked the beginning of a new phase in the conflict.³⁹ After Sumgait, the possibility of a peaceful transfer of Karabakh to Armenia became increasingly remote as attitudes on both sides hardened. Sumgait also sparked a massive flow of refugees. Within a month of the riots, most of the Azerbaijani population in Armenia, which numbered some 160,000 before the war, fled to Azerbaijan, and the first Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan fled to Armenia.⁴⁰ Suddenly the Soviet Union faced a refugee crisis, the first such crisis since Stalin's forced deportations and the displacements of World War II.⁴¹

At the end of March, Armenian despair over the Sumgait killings was further compounded by Moscow's decision to oppose any change in the territorial status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In attempt to resolve Armenian grievances, the Politburo announced the implementation of a package of spending measures, which failed to satisfy either side. In protest of the ruling from Moscow, a general strike in the NKAO paralyzed Stepanakert for several days. As protests and violent incidents continued, a number of Armenian activists were arrested, and Moscow removed the first secretaries of both the Azerbaijan and the Armenian Communist Parties.⁴² Moscow's attempt to improve the situation failed. On June 15, the Armenian Supreme Soviet, with the support of the newly appointed First Secretary, voted unanimously in favor of the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to the

³⁸Nahaylo and Swoboda, 286.

³⁹Fraser et al., 658.

⁴⁰Vaserman and Ginat, 349. The Armenian population in Azerbaijan numbered some 300,000 before the war. Although a large number of Armenians left following the riots, the Armenian exodus from Azerbaijan was more gradual. When riots broke out in Baku in January 1990, there were still some 30,000 Armenians in Baku.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Fraser et al., 659.

Armenian SSR.⁴³ Two days later, the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet “was equally unanimous in its decision that the vote was a violation of the Soviet constitution.”⁴⁴

Armenian demands were finally turned down during a crucial meeting of the USSR Supreme Soviet on July 18, 1988,⁴⁵ and a “special commission” from Moscow was established to monitor conditions in the NKAO.⁴⁶ In essence a form of direct rule, the need for a “special commission” under Moscow’s control underlined the fact that a mediated settlement satisfactory to both sides had become all but impossible.

Discontent in both republics continued to grow, and radical elements in both republics began to win support among the general populace. Strikes and mass rallies in Armenia and in the NKAO throughout the summer of 1988 were countered by mass rallies in Azerbaijan, which had begun in May 1988.⁴⁷ Having failed to achieve legal satisfaction for their demands, authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh began minimizing ties with Baku. Organizational and party ties were broken and economic links between the republic and the oblast were greatly reduced. As the number of violent incidents escalated, the head of Moscow’s “special commission,” Arkady Volsky, imposed martial law in September 1988 in Stepanakert and Agdam, a region bordering the oblast in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijanis accused Moscow of helping to isolate the province from the republic. Beginning on November 17, a two-week-long demonstration in Baku’s Lenin Square virtually paralyzed Azerbaijan. Daily crowds reached half a million, with some 20,000 demonstrators remaining during the night.⁴⁸ Dissatisfied with the Azerbaijani Communist Party’s failure to assert control over the NKAO, the demonstrators demanded the abolition of the Volsky Commission.⁴⁹ As the demonstrations continued, new outbreaks of anti-

⁴³Vaserman and Ginat, 351.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Fraser et al., 660.

⁴⁶Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 198.

⁴⁷Vaserman and Ginat, 350.

⁴⁸Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 200-203.

⁴⁹Mark Saroyan, “The ‘Karabakh Syndrome’ and Azerbaijani Politics,” *Problems of Communism* 39 (September/October 1990): 25.

Armenian violence in Azerbaijani cities and towns led to another exodus of Armenians from Azerbaijan. The demonstrations were ended by the imposition of “special regulations” and, finally, by the arrest of the remaining demonstrators on December 4, 1988.⁵⁰

Having used force to quell the demonstrations in Baku, Moscow opted to use the same tactic to end months of intercommunal violence in the NKAO. On January 12, 1989, Moscow established a “special government administration” for the NKAO under the leadership of Volsky⁵¹ and dissolved the Armenian-dominated local party and government organizations in the oblast. The Volsky Commission, now the Volsky Committee, enjoyed plenipotentiary power in the NKAO, answering only to the Kremlin.⁵² Convinced the commission was implementing pro-Azerbaijani policies in the region, Armenians in the NKAO organized unauthorized elections to a National Council, which fashioned itself as the only legitimate authority in the oblast and issued a proclamation of independence “to add an aura of legality to what had long since become political fact.”⁵³

During 1989, the crisis developed into an even bloodier conflict and interethnic tensions reached a critical point. By the end of 1988 virtually no Azerbaijanis remained in Armenia, and the thousands of Armenians who remained in Azerbaijan faced an increasingly insecure situation as threats against ethnic Armenians became increasingly frequent.⁵⁴ In August, the newly formed Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF) organized a blockade against the Armenian republic and initiated strikes to force the Azerbaijan Communist Party to recognize the Front and to abolish the Volsky Committee.⁵⁵ By November, the Azerbaijan Communist Party had essentially capitulated to the Front and demanded that Moscow abolish its direct rule.

⁵⁰ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 202.

⁵¹ Saroyan, “The ‘Karabakh Syndrome,’” 20.

⁵² Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 204.

⁵³ Saroyan, “The ‘Karabakh Syndrome,’” 25.

⁵⁴ Vaserman and Ginat, 352.

⁵⁵ Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 30.

In an attempt to bolster the communist leadership in Azerbaijan, which faced in increasingly powerful opposition movement led by the APF, Moscow ended its direct rule over Karabakh on November 28, 1988 and restored the authority of the local soviet. In place of the Volsky Committee, a Republican Organizational Committee (Orgkom), headed by the Second Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, was established to rule the oblast. On December 1, the Armenian Supreme Soviet and representatives of the NKAO Soviet rejected the change in the NKAO's administration and voted for the unification of the two territories under a single Armenian government.⁵⁶

In January, 1990, anti-Armenian pogroms again exploded in Baku. The massacres were attributed to extremists among the 200,000 Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia and the NKAO that flooded into Azerbaijan's urban and rural districts. Faced with an endemic housing shortage, high unemployment and a relatively poor distribution of social services, the refugees were outsiders in their own homeland.⁵⁷ During demonstrations in Baku on January 13, groups of extremists broke away and began massacring the remaining Armenian residents of Baku who were blamed for the refugees' plight.⁵⁸ The pogrom lasted two days, with no intervention from either the republican or the Soviet authorities.

After a year and a half of trying to avoid direct military intervention, Gorbachev dispatched troops to Baku nearly a week after the pogroms had ended.⁵⁹ Soviet troops invaded Baku on January 20, 1990, resulting in several hundred deaths and more than 700 wounded.⁶⁰ Azerbaijan's First Secretary was ousted and replaced with Ayaz Mutalibov.⁶¹ Simultaneously with the invasion of troops in Baku, a state of emergency was declared in Nagorno-Karabakh, and an additional 17,000 troops were dispatched to the region to

⁵⁶Vaserman and Ginat, 353.

⁵⁷Saroyan, "The 'Karabakh Syndrome,'" 24.

⁵⁸Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 29.

⁵⁹Ibid., 30.

⁶⁰Vaserman and Ginat, 353.

⁶¹Saroyan, "The 'Karabakh Syndrome,'" 29.

enforce it. Coordinating their efforts with the Orgkom, Soviet troops in the NKAO conducted widespread searches and disarmed Armenian villages.⁶²

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan were losing control over their own republics and over the situation in Karabakh. In Armenia, the Communist leadership faced a growing popular movement that demanded the merger of the republic with Nagorno-Karabakh. Paramilitary groups began to form, raiding arsenals and police stations to secure the necessary arms. Buildings were seized in Yerevan, and independent militias operated on the border between the two republics. In April, crowds attempted to storm the KGB building in Yerevan, and a month later Soviet troops clashed with Armenian irregulars at the railroad station in Yerevan, leading to twenty-five deaths. The Armenian First Secretary was again replaced, but a vacuum of power continued as the Communist party's power declined. In July, Gorbachev issued an ultimatum demanding that the militias be disarmed within fifteen days and threatening military intervention if the ruling was not enforced. That same month the Armenian parliament elected Ter-Petrosyan as President, whose first task was the successful disarming of the militias and the restoration of order in Yerevan.⁶³ On August 23, 1990, Armenia declared itself a sovereign and independent state with Karabakh as an integral part of the new Republic of Armenia. In Azerbaijan, Mutalibov and the old-guard Communists remained in power, with the Azerbaijan Popular Front a vocal opposition force.

The abortive coup in Moscow in August 1991 accelerated the push for full independence. In early September, deputies from the NKAO proclaimed the formation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.⁶⁴ Armenia declared its independence on September 23, including the territory of Karabakh, and Azerbaijan declared its independence on August 30. The conflict began to escalate rapidly. On November 26, 1991, in retaliation for the downing of a helicopter carrying officials to the oblast for discussions on the

⁶²Vaserman and Ginat, 354.

⁶³Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 30-31.

⁶⁴Vaserman and Ginat, 355.

implementation of a ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan abolished the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh.⁶⁵ On December 10, the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh voted overwhelmingly for independence in a referendum.⁶⁶ Eighteen Azerbaijani paramilitary battalions moved toward the enclave, which held its first free elections for its Supreme Soviet on December 28 while under heavy artillery fire. On January 6, 1990, the newly elected Nagorno-Karabakh parliament declared its independence from Azerbaijan.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the three-year conflict was effectively transformed into an undeclared war between two independent, post-Soviet republics. Stepanakert was subject to repeating bombing from Azerbaijani strongholds in the surrounding mountains beginning in December 1991. Armenian-Azerbaijani violence escalated and the fighting spread to a vast area.⁶⁷

By 1992 the conflict began to resemble a full scale conventional war between two opposing armies, the Karabakh Self Defense Forces and the Azerbaijani Armed Forces. In February 1992, Armenian forces captured the village of Khodzhal, reportedly with the assistance of the former Soviet 366th Motorized Rifle Division (MRD) stationed in Stepanakert.⁶⁸ By May 1992, with the capture of Shusha, Karabakh Armenian forces secured control of all of Nagorno-Karabakh. Subsequently, Karabakh forces captured Lachin, thereby securing a critical six-mile corridor to the Republic of Armenia through Azerbaijani territory.⁶⁹

The Azerbaijan Popular Front blamed President Mutalibov for the series of Azeri losses, forcing him to resign. In June 1992, the Popular Front candidate, Ebulfaz Elchibey, a pan-Turkic nationalist, was elected by more than 60% of the vote. Elchibey declared as his main priority the recovery of Nagorno-Karabakh. In mid-June, a new Azeri offensive

⁶⁵Elizabeth Fuller, "Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus," *RFE/RL Research Report 2* (October 1, 1993): 32; and Vaserman and Ginat, 355.

⁶⁶Elizabeth Fuller, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Internal Conflict Becomes International," *RFE/RL Research Report 1* (March 13, 1992): 1.

⁶⁷Vaserman and Ginat, 355.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 356.

recaptured fifteen Azeri villages in Nagorno-Karabakh and resumed the heavy bombing of Stepanakert. By the end of 1992, however, Karabakh forces were back on the offensive, recapturing much of what Azerbaijani forces had taken in the preceding months.

In 1993, the war spread well beyond the borders of the oblast as Karabakh Armenian forces conducted large scale operations that resulted in the seizure of all the Azerbaijani populated provinces surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh on the south, west, and east. The series of strategic losses in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin region created a political crisis Azerbaijan. In June, Elchibey was removed from power by a coup d'état, reportedly with Russian involvement. In the midst of the crisis, Karabakh forces launched another offensive and surrounded the strategic city of Agdam, the headquarters of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces for Nagorno-Karabakh.

The rapid series of Armenian successes on the battlefield spurred efforts to bring an end to the conflict. Russia, the CSCE Minsk group, as well as regional powers such as Iran and Turkey made repeated attempts to negotiate a ceasefire, all of which failed. Following the coup in Azerbaijan which brought Geider Aliyev to power, Russia's policy toward the conflict shifted fundamentally. Moscow subsequently assumed the lead in the mediation efforts, marginalizing the CSCE and the tripartite US-Turkish-Russian peace initiatives in a successful attempt to reclaim its historic role as the dominant power in the Caucasus. Direct negotiations between Azerbaijan and the Karabakh Armenians under Russian Federation auspices produced a lasting ceasefire in May 1994. While the violence ended, the underlying causes of the conflict have not been resolved.

What prompted the Armenians to embark upon a strategy of interethnic violence that resulted in their de facto control of over 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory? Was it because of the Armenian desire to reclaim an historical homeland, or was it prompted by a threat to the survival of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh as a distinct ethnic group? To what extent was the power struggle in Azerbaijan between the Communist government and the APF responsible for the escalation of violence to full scale war in Nagorno-Karabakh?

How did the vacillating and indecisive actions of the Soviet leadership contribute to the outbreak of ethnic violence? Finally, to what degree did international organizations and outside states influence the outbreak of ethnic violence and to what extent was the ready availability of weapons from the Soviet military, and after 1991 from the Russian Federation defense establishment, a critical source of ethnic violence in Nagorno-Karabakh?

This brief synopsis of events that led to the war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh clearly indicates that no single factor was responsible for the outbreak of interethnic violence. Based on this brief review, six of the ten propositions developed in Section I are potentially useful for explaining the sources of violence in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. At the group level, ethnonationalism, ethnic group survival and ethnic leadership are three potential sources of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. At the state level, the Soviet Union, weakened by internal challenges and power struggles, presents an additional source of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Finally, at the interstate level, international support on the part of the UN, the CSCE (OSCE), Turkey, Iran, and most importantly the Russian Federation, combined with the availability of the necessary resources to conduct a strategy of interethnic warfare, are two additional critical sources of ethnic violence that will be examined below.

Ethnonationalism

With the relaxation of political control following Gorbachev's rise to power, Armenians pursued their goal of reclaiming Nagorno-Karabakh with renewed vigor, setting off a series of events that ultimately escalated into full-scale war. Although actual warfare was sparked by the Azerbaijani bombing of Stepanakert, Armenian ethnonationalism is a primary source of violence at the group level.

Ethnonationalism is loyalty to the nation. It is a loyalty to the "essence of the ethnic group," to that which makes it unique in some vital way. For ethnonationalists, what

makes the nation unique is autonomy or possession of a special homeland or territory. Ethnonationalists adopt a strategy of violence to reclaim lost autonomy or territory because of what that autonomy or territorial “ownership” represents. Autonomy or possession of a homeland is what makes the group unique in the most vital way: it is the essence of the nation. Without it, the nation is incomplete. Ethnic violence thus becomes a likely strategy to pursue ethnonationalist goals when control of a special homeland is viewed as the essence of a group’s identity by members of that group (Proposition 1).

No explanation of the sources of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war is complete without an understanding of the vital importance of Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenian ethnonationalists. Armenians view Karabakh as a symbol of national resistance and survival. Throughout history, Karabakh served as a refuge for the Armenian nation and a bastion of Armenian culture and civilization. Over the centuries, small “islands of independence” in mountainous Karabakh resisted a succession of Turkic invaders, thereby ensuring a continuous Armenian presence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nagorno-Karabakh represents that which makes Armenians unique in a most vital way. It represents, in the words of a famous Armenian poet, the “soul of this great Armenian body, dismembered and scattered throughout the world.”⁷⁰ Nagorno-Karabakh is the cradle of their national culture.⁷¹ It is one of the last historic Armenian territories not lost to Armenia’s enemies, the Turks, and by extension, the Azerbaijanis, whom Armenians view as the Turks’ proxies in the region. According to one Armenian interviewed after the February 1988 demonstrations, “Karabakh...strikes at the core of our collective essence.”⁷² Without possession of Karabakh, the Armenian nation would be

⁷⁰Silva Kaputikian, quoted in Kevin Devlin, “Armenian Envoys on Crisis Meeting with Gorbachev,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, USSR Background Report 42 (March 15, 1988): 1.

⁷¹Patrick Donabedian, “The History of Karabagh from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century,” in *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geo-Politics of Nagorno-Karabagh*, Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian, and Claude Mutafian, eds. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994), 64.

⁷²Interview with an Armenian schoolteacher, quoted in Levon Chorbajian, “Introduction to the English Language Edition,” in Chorbajian, *Caucasian Knot*, 7.

incomplete for “ownership” of Karabakh is what makes the Armenian nation unique: it is the essence of the Armenian ethnic identity.

Armenian ties to Nagorno-Karabakh are based upon a number of factors which together form the basis of the Armenian belief that Karabakh is central to their very identity as a distinct ethnic group. While many of these factors are emotional and not subject to rational analysis, drawing as much upon legend and perceptions of history as historical fact, they comprise, in their entirety, the foundation upon which Armenians base their claim to the region and upon which they legitimize their efforts to reclaim it.

The Armenian claim to Nagorno-Karabakh rests primarily on lengthy, creative accounts of the region’s history that are used to prove that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of historic Armenia and that Armenians have maintained a continuous presence in the region for millennia. Linked to this historical argument is the claim that Armenians, as the indigenous inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh, have the exclusive right both to possess and rule the region, a right that transcends any Azerbaijani claims to the region. A third element to the Armenian claim to “ownership” of Karabakh rests upon a series of historic injustices, the most recent being the loss of Karabakh, which have denied the Armenians their right to self-determination. Finally, the Armenian claim to ownership is supported by the contention that Nagorno-Karabakh’s original inclusion in Azerbaijan was illegal. As a result, Armenian attempts to “reunite” Karabakh with Armenian are both legally and morally justified.

Armenians contend that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of historic Armenia, a claim which is carefully documented to prove both that Armenians have lived in Nagorno-Karabakh and that the region has been part of historic Armenia for millennia. The name Karabakh was applied initially to two ancient provinces of historic Armenia, Artsakh (also called Kachen after the Middle Ages) and Utik. These provinces stretched between Lake Sevan to the northwest, the Kura river to the north, and the Araks river to the south.⁷³ The

⁷³Donabedian, “The History of Karabagh from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century,” 51.

Armenian historical claim to the territory dates back to the Urartian epoch from the ninth to sixth centuries BC. During this period, the westernmost portion of Karabakh, the province of Urtekhe (the prototype of the Armenian name Artsakh), was conquered by the Urartian King Sarduri II (760-735 BC) who extended the frontiers of his kingdom from his capital of Van in Western Armenia to Transcaucasian Armenia.⁷⁴ Between the fourth and second centuries BC, the province of Utik along with Artsakh were part of the Armenian Kingdom of the Ervandunis. Based on the writings of Strabo, an ancient Greek geographer and historian, by the second or first century BC the entire population of Greater Armenia (including the two provinces Utik and Artsakh) spoke Armenian. At the beginning of the fourth century AD, the Kingdom of Armenia, including the two provinces, converted to Christianity. Artsakh and Utik remained a part of the Armenian Kingdom until its fall in 428 AD, when the Sasanids conquered the region and divided Transcaucasia.⁷⁵

Artsakh and Utik were thus separated from Armenia and became part of the Persian province of Albania, or Arran, which was ruled by local Armenian princes from an old family that would later be called Arranshahik. This Armenian dynasty was founded by Arran, the grandson of the ancestral eponym of the Armenians, Hayk, according to legendary tradition. Arran was entrusted with the northeastern part of the Kingdom, Artsakh and Utik.⁷⁶ At the start of the 7th century, a Persian dynasty, the Mihranids, established itself in Utik, seized Artsakh, and ruled it for about two centuries. Having supplanted the Arranshahiks, the Mihranids eventually became Armenianized. In the seventh and the eighth centuries, Transcaucasia was conquered by the Arabs.⁷⁷ Quoting Arab sources, the Armenians contend that the Arranshahik princes continued to rule Artsakh and Utik, and in the ninth and tenth centuries, established two Armenian-Albanian kingdoms on their lands in Artsakh.⁷⁸

⁷⁴Donabedian, "The History of Karabagh from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century," 52.

⁷⁵Ibid., 53.

⁷⁶Ibid., 54-56.

⁷⁷Ibid., 58-59.

⁷⁸Ibid., 59-60.

In the eleventh century, the Seljuks invaded and occupied nearly all of Armenia and eastern Transcaucasia. All that remained of the Kingdom of Greater Armenia was a number of small enclaves hidden in the mountains.⁷⁹ Karabakh was thus a refuge, sheltering Armenian princes, heirs to the Arranshahiks, through successive invasions by the Mongols, the Ottomans, and the Safavid Persians. "This region was the only part of Armenia to preserve indigenous, hereditary Armenian power and a degree of national sovereignty without interruption until the late middle ages."⁸⁰

Despite the devastation wrought by the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, the Armenian provinces of Artsakh-Kachen managed to retain their administrative structure.⁸¹ In 1259 the Mongol Empire fragmented, and a new Mongol state was established in Transcaucasia and Iran. In the fourteenth century, the Mongols converted to Islam, which combined with the wars between the Mongols centered in Persia and the Golden Horde in Russia meant that Transcaucasia became a central arena of warfare. Further devastation to the region was wrought by the invasion of Tamerlane at the end of the fourteenth century. Despite these incessant upheavals, the Armenian princes in Kachen (Artsakh) survived, and the Armenians maintained their authority over upper or mountainous Karabakh.⁸²

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, several Armenian princely families ruled over "small islands of independence" in eastern Armenia, forming a coalition in the mountainous valleys of Artsakh-Kachen. At the end of the Persian-Ottoman wars of the sixteenth century, the territory came under the control of the Persian Safavid Empire. The Persians established a series of hereditary Khanates: the Khanate of Karabakh (excluding upper or Mountainous Karabakh), the Khanate of Ganja, the Khanate of Erevan, and the Khanate of Nakhichevan. Armenians contend that in the Armenian highlands of Karabakh,

⁷⁹Donabedian, "The History of Karabagh from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century," 62.

⁸⁰Ibid., 70.

⁸¹Ibid., 67.

⁸²Ibid., 68-69.

local Armenian nobles continued to rule the region alongside the Khanates. In 1603 these Armenian nobles, called meliks, received official confirmation of their titles as meliks from the Safavid rulers.⁸³ According to one Armenian author,

the importance of these powers, even though diminished, should be stressed in the case of Armenia, which had lost its sovereignty long before and found itself divided between the Ottoman empire and Safavid Persia, its population stripped of protection. Under these conditions, the meliks constituted the only authority capable of...maintaining national traditions. It should be understood that Karabakh, where the Armenian nobility survived up until the modern period, was an important reference point for national identity. It is often referred to as the ‘bastion of the Armenian political and cultural conscience.’⁸⁴

Another leading Armenian historian notes that “for the Armenians, this region has a particular importance, in that while the rest of Armenia was submerged under foreign control, a flicker of freedom was maintained in Karabakh, albeit under Iranian suzerainty.”⁸⁵

Despite subsequent expansion of Russian power in the region and the attachment of Karabakh to the Elizavetopol province which later became part of Azerbaijan, Armenians claim that Karabakh is historic Armenian territory and that Armenians have “formed the majority [of the population of Karabakh] since time immemorial.”⁸⁶ Karabakh served as a refuge for Armenians and for Armenian civilization against the onslaught of their enemies over the centuries, the Turkic tribesmen, the Ottoman Turks, and the Azerbaijani “Turks.” In certain historical periods, Karabakh was the only Armenian territory not subject to foreign subjugation. Karabakh thus served a critical role in Armenian history: Karabakh was a refuge for threatened Armenians, a bastion of Armenian culture, and thus the cradle of Armenian civilization. Karabakh’s independence over the centuries ensured that the

⁸³Donabedian, “The History of Karabagh from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century,” 70-72.

⁸⁴Ibid., 72.

⁸⁵Richard Hovannissian, quoted in Hunter, 97.

⁸⁶Gerard Chaliand, “Preface,” in *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geo-Politics of Nagorno-Karabagh*, Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian and Claude Mutafian, eds. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994), xiv.

Armenian nation survived intact and that the Armenian link with its historic territories was continuous.

Like the Armenians, the Azerbaijanis have also proven categorically that the contested region is part of their historic patrimony, the cradle of their national culture.⁸⁷ Azerbaijanis claim that Karabakh was controlled not by Armenian princes, but by Azerbaijanis under nominal Persian suzerainty: the Karabakh Khanate, centered in Shusha, was one of the major Azerbaijani states prior to Russia expansion.⁸⁸ Following the expansion of Russian power in the region, the Khanates were dismantled, and in 1867 Transcaucasia was divided into four Russian *gubernii*.⁸⁹ All of the territory of the former Khanate of Karabakh was included in the Elizavetopol gubernia,⁹⁰ which together with the Baku gubernia, formed the territory of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic which was independent from 1918-1920.

When Azerbaijan was reconquered by Moscow in April 1920, Karabakh was included in the newly formed Azerbaijan SSR. In 1923, when the autonomous oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh was created, its borders were drawn so as to ensure an Armenian majority.⁹¹ Citing official Tsarist population records, Azerbaijanis maintain that the population of Karabakh was overwhelmingly Muslim prior to the mass migration of Armenians from Iran, a result of the Treaty of Turkmanchai.⁹² Thus, Armenians were not a majority in Karabakh until the 1840s.

Based on this historical review of events, Azerbaijanis reject the Armenian claim to “reunification,” which implies that Karabakh had belonged to Armenia when in fact it had been a part of Azerbaijan.⁹³ Azerbaijanis view the region as part of their historic patrimony

⁸⁷ Vaserman and Ginat, 347.

⁸⁸ A. N. Yamskov, “Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Theory and Society* 20 (1991): 651.

⁸⁹ Altstadt, “Nagorno-Karabakh—’Apple of Discord,’” 68; and Swietochowski, “National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azerbaijan,” 210.

⁹⁰ Altstadt, “Nagorno-Karabakh—’Apple of Discord,’” 68.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 76n18.

⁹³ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 195.

for Karabakh is the cradle of Azerbaijani civilization, having produced numerous Azerbaijani artists, composers, poets, and other literary figures.⁹⁴ Azerbaijanis also maintain that the Armenian claim to self-determination is a mask for simple territorial aggression. Azerbaijanis claim that Armenia is intent upon dismembering Azerbaijan to create a Greater Armenia in the region. Armenian demands for transfer of the NKAO are attempts to dismember the Azerbaijani homeland and impinge on the national interests of the Azerbaijani people.⁹⁵

Ethnonationalist ties with a special homeland or territory are often founded upon a belief in the ethnic group's historical connection with that territory. When that territory is contested by the ethnic "other," ethnonationalists will claim to be indigenous. Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis have sought to prove their "ownership" of Karabakh by claiming to be indigenous. As a result, the Nagorno-Karabakh war is not only a battle for physical control over territory, but also a moral battle for "ownership" of that territory based upon conflicting claims to indigenesness.

For Armenians, the historic right to possession of Karabakh as well as the moral right to occupation by virtue of their indigenesness to the region transcend any Azerbaijani claim to Karabakh. This critical, uninterrupted link between the Armenian nation and Karabakh grants them the right to exclusive possession of Karabakh. This right is not only historically justified. It is also a moral right that flows from the fact that Armenians have lived in Karabakh "since time immemorial." By virtue of being indigenous, Armenians claim a right to "ownership." Indigenesness grants them the exclusive right to ownership as well as the moral right to rule their homeland.

To justify further their right to possession and self-rule in Karabakh, Armenians cite a series of historical injustices which have denied the Armenians their right to self-determination. The Karabakh issue, for Armenians, is simply the latest in this series of

⁹⁴Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 207.

⁹⁵Yamskov, 649-650.

historical wrongs inflicted upon them by the Turks, the Azerbaijanis, who are viewed by many Armenians as the Turk's proxies in the region, and to a lesser extent the Russians, particularly Stalin. The Karabakh issue is thus closely linked to the experiences of the Armenians over the last century, particularly the massacres of 1894-1896 and the genocide of 1915-1917, which resulted in the loss of more than half of the Armenian population⁹⁶ and "virtually eliminated Armenians from nine-tenths of their historical homeland in eastern Anatolia, leaving them only the small, mangled territory in the Russian Caucasus."⁹⁷ Promised an independent state in the Treaty of Sèvres at the end of World War I, Armenians were again denied national independence. The territories that were to have formed an independent Armenian state were instead incorporated in the Turkish Republic. According to Hovannisian, "it was bitterly ironic for the Armenians that, of the several defeated central powers, Turkey alone expanded its prewar boundaries and this, only on the Armenian front."⁹⁸

In 1921, as Soviet power was reestablished in the Transcaucasus, the Armenians again faced the loss of historic Armenian territory to the Azerbaijani "Turks" as a result of Stalin's "arbitrary reversal" of the decision to include Nagorno-Karabakh in the newly created Armenian SSR. Denied the right to self-determination, the Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh was separated from the Armenian SSR, and ties between the oblast and the Armenian republic were restricted. In a letter to Brezhnev in 1977, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh argued that "the Armenian population of Mountainous Karabakh has never accepted willingly its destiny of today which has meant its separation from the motherland....Such a 'destiny' is, in itself, an injustice."⁹⁹

⁹⁶Bell-Fialkoff, 113.

⁹⁷Dudwick, 265.

⁹⁸Richard G. Hovannisian, "Caucasian Armenia Between Imperial and Soviet Rule: The Interlude of National Independence," in *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, Ronald Grigor Suny, ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), 291.

⁹⁹"Letter by the novelist Sero Khazdian on Mountainous Karabagh addressed to Leonid E. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.," Document 29, in Gerard F. Libaridian, ed., *The Karabagh File: Documents and Facts on the Region of Mountainous Karabagh, 1918-1988* (Cambridge, MA: The Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research & Documentation, March 1988), 50.

Armenians viewed the loss of Karabakh to the Azerbaijani “Turks” as a continuation of Turkish attempts to destroy the Armenian nation, a belief that was strengthened by the massacre of Armenians by Azerbaijanis in Sumgait in February 1988.¹⁰⁰ Virtually every Armenian family retains living memories of close relatives who died during the Azerbaijani massacres of 1905 and 1918-1919 and the Turkish genocide. In Karabakh alone, approximately 20 percent of the population died in internecine clashes in 1918-1919.¹⁰¹ The Turkish forces that were invited into Azerbaijan in the summer of 1918 by the local Mustavat party of nationalists massacred residents of captured Armenian villages.¹⁰² Today in a situation of rapidly increasing national self-consciousness and an increased attention to the history of their people, age-old victories and defeats are becoming widely known and are being actively discussed by the broad masses of the population.¹⁰³ More recent tragedies have revived this historical memory and have reminded people that the horrors of pogroms and massacres could be repeated today. According to one Armenian living in Karabakh, “Our only misfortune was to live among the Turks. And no Christian people can live successfully in a sea of Muslims.”¹⁰⁴

Armenians in Karabakh thus embarked upon a strategy aimed at securing their right to self-determination and preventing yet another historic injustice: the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh to an independent Azerbaijan following the Soviet collapse. As the crisis over Nagorno-Karabakh turned increasingly violent in 1989, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh adopted “new tactics with the purpose of proving that the essence of the conflict was not the demand to include Nagorno-Karabakh in Armenia, but the national liberation struggle of Karabakh Armenians for independence.”¹⁰⁵ According to the Armenian position, “the

¹⁰⁰Ronald Grigor Suny, “Nationalist and Ethnic Unrest in the Soviet Union,” *World Policy Journal* 6 (Summer 1989): 510.

¹⁰¹Yamskov, 656.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴David Rieff, “Nagorno-Karabakh: Case Study in Ethnic Strife,” *Foreign Affairs* 76 (March 1997): 127-128.

¹⁰⁵Vaserman and Ginat, 352.

case of Karabakh is not a territorial, religious, or ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Far from this oft-quoted formula, Nagorno-Karabakh's quest for freedom and self-government is, in fact, a fundamental precedent and the last step in the Soviet Union's decolonization process."¹⁰⁶ Prevention of yet another historic wrong was also employed to justify the expansion of the war to Azerbaijani territory beyond the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992. According to Armenian sources, escalation of the war was necessary to "safeguar[d] Karabakh's territory...and preven[t] a tragic repetition of history."¹⁰⁷ These historic injustices heightened the importance of Karabakh for the Armenian nation. Repeatedly denied the right to self-determination and having suffered the loss of their historic territory and at least a million of their compatriots, Armenians were desperate to prevent the loss of "orphaned Karabakh."¹⁰⁸

As final justification for the Armenian claim to ownership of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenians contend that Nagorno-Karabakh's original inclusion in Azerbaijan was illegal. After Armenia was reconquered by Moscow in late 1920, the new Soviet authorities promised that Karabakh would be transferred to Armenia. On July 3, 1921, the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist party (Kavbiuro) duly transferred Nagorno-Karabakh to the newly created Armenian SSR, declaring Nagorno-Karabakh "an integral part of the Socialist Republic of Armenia."¹⁰⁹

Two days later, however, "expediency overruled ethnic self-determination."¹¹⁰ Stalin intervened and "personally took the decision that openly contradicted...Leninist nationality policy."¹¹¹ The decision was reversed and the territory was returned to the Azerbaijan SSR. Armenians maintain that the decision was revised as a result of the

¹⁰⁶The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, *Nagorno Karabagh: A White Paper*, 2d ed. (Yerevan, Armenia: The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, March 1997): 12.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁸Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 30.

¹⁰⁹"Memorandum to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," quoted in Devlin, "L'Unita on 'Armenian Documents Sent to Kremlin," 3.

¹¹⁰Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 194.

¹¹¹"Memorandum to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," quoted in Devlin, "L'Unita on 'Armenian Documents Sent to Kremlin," 3.

intrigues and manipulations of Stalin, who was a member of the Kavbiuro.¹¹² According to Armenians, “Mountainous Karabagh was taken away from Armenia by Stalin’s criminal hands.”¹¹³ In addition, they contend that the transfer was part of a conspiracy between the Turks and the Azerbaijani Communists to claim the disputed region for Azerbaijan¹¹⁴ and that Stalin “took it upon himself to accede to Turkish demands.”¹¹⁵

A third element in the argument that Karabakh’s inclusion in Armenia was illegal is the claim that Azerbaijan has never existed as an independent state. According to Zori Balayan, “there is no such thing as a distinct country called Azerbaijan. There is only the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan, a multinational state....By using [the term Azerbaijan]...we confirm the existence of such a country. There is no such country.”¹¹⁶ Armenians even refute the existence of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, of which Karabakh was a part, between 1918-1920. Azerbaijan’s declaration of independence on May 27, 1918 “represented the birth of a totally artificial state whose name did not correspond to any prior historical entity and whose diverse population...could not lay claim to the concept of a nation.”¹¹⁷

Armenians furthermore contend that Karabakh’s inclusion in Azerbaijan is illegal because the decision was made by a third party, not a state. Nagorno-Karabakh’s “inclusion in 1921 in the structure of the Azerbaijan SSR was unlawfully ordered by a political party (not even a government) of a third country, that is, the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party.”¹¹⁸ This argument is supported by Raffi Hovannisian, the

¹¹²Vaserman and Ginat, 346.

¹¹³“Segments of a speech by historian Bagrat Ulubabian, at Yerevan demonstrations on February 26, 1988. Dr. Prof. Ulubabian was born in Karabagh and was exiled from the region for his scholarly and preservation work,” Document 53b, in Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, 92.

¹¹⁴“Memorandum to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” quoted in Devlin, “*L’Unita* on ‘Armenian Documents Sent to Kremlin,’” 3.

¹¹⁵“Excerpts of an interview by Ara Kalayjian with historian and journalist Sergei Mikoyan and writer Zori Balayan on contemporary Armenian concerns,” Document 44, in Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, 77.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹⁷Claude Mutafian, “Karabagh in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh*, Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian and Claude Mutafian, eds. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994), 112.

¹¹⁸The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, 12-13.

former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia: “Nagorno-Karabakh has never been part of Azerbaijan. It was made part of Soviet Azerbaijan by the regional party—not Moscow.”¹¹⁹ Armenians thus conclude that “Karabagh has never, legally or otherwise, belonged to a sovereign, independent Azerbaijan.”¹²⁰

Karabakh’s central place in the Armenian concept of nationhood thus prompted Armenians to embark upon a strategy to reclaim “orphaned Karabakh.” According to Proposition 1, ethnic violence became a likely strategy to pursue the “reunification” of Karabakh with Armenia because of what possession of Karabakh meant for Armenian ethnic identity and nationhood. Karabakh represents that which makes the Armenian nation unique; the essence of Armenian nationhood.

Unlike ethnic chauvinism (Proposition 2) which prompts the adoption of an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at territorial aggrandizement, ethnonationalism prompts the adoption of a defensive strategy of ethnic violence to reclaim autonomy or possession of a homeland. The Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh did not employ a large-scale strategy of ethnic violence until Azerbaijan revoked the oblast’s autonomy and began bombing its capital. While Armenian demands for transfer of the region certainly prompted a violent Azerbaijani response, ethnonationalism did not lead to the adoption of an offensive strategy of violence. Instead, Armenian ethnonationalism justified the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense. It prompted the Armenians to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence because of the vital importance of Karabakh for Armenian ethnic identity and nationhood.

Although Gurr argues that ethnonationalists opt for rebellion over non-violent protest, Armenian ethnonationalists first attempted to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh through peaceful means. Once this strategy proved unsuccessful, however, violence became an optimal strategy. This shift to violent tactics was in large part a result of the changing

¹¹⁹Raffi K. Hovannisian, “Prospects for Peace and Security for Armenia and the Caucasus,” Lecture presented at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, September 16, 1996.

¹²⁰The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, 12-13.

structure of the Soviet Union and the implementation of glasnost and perestroika following Gorbachev's rise to power as well as Moscow's vacillating, indecisive and often contradictory responses to Armenian demands in 1987 and 1988. Both of these factors will be examined in greater detail below as sources of ethnic violence at the state level. While the changing correlation of forces and the decrease in state power certainly provided the Armenians with an opportunity to expand their strategy and escalate their demands, the importance of Karabakh for the Armenian's ethnic identity remains a critical factor for understanding what prompted Armenians to shift from a strategy of non-violent protest to one of interethnic violence and full scale war.

Ethnic Group Survival

A second, important source of ethnic violence at the group level in the Nagorno-Karabakh war is the belief, shared by Armenians both in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened by the policies and actions of ethnic strangers, the Azerbaijanis who controlled the autonomous oblast. According to Proposition 3, when a group experiences "serious and manifest threat to [its] vital interests..., to its political position, cultural rights, livelihood, or neighborhoods,"¹²¹ to the extent that members believe their survival as a distinct ethnic group is imperiled, then there is a strong tendency for that ethnic group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense.

One factor that leads ethnic groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened is the decrease in the *absolute* size of an ethnic group through out-migration, assimilation, and forced resettlement. Armenians claim that the Armenian population of the NKAO was forced to emigrate because of Azerbaijani policies aimed at keeping the region backward and underdeveloped.¹²² Policies of underdevelopment and

¹²¹Esman, "Political and Psychological Factors," 54.

¹²²Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 27.

“Turkification,” Armenians maintain, were part of an effort to shift the demographic balance in the region by reducing the size of the Armenian population.¹²³ In a letter to Krushchev requesting transfer of the NKAO to Armenia, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh argued that Azerbaijan’s “underhanded measures...intended to bring about the deterioration in the economy of the Armenian population and eventually to force the latter’s exodus from the region.”¹²⁴ They also claimed that Azerbaijan was repopulating Armenian villages with Azerbaijanis with the ultimate objective being “the expulsion of the Armenian population of Karabagh.”¹²⁵ Finally, the letter concluded that “in the last twenty-five years there is a total lack of increase in the growth rate of the Armenian population of Mountainous Karabagh....[This] decline has made it possible to populate Karabagh with Azerbaijanis.”¹²⁶

According to the population figures for the NKAO, in the twenty-five years specified in the petition to Krushchev, the Armenian population did in fact decrease from 117,000 in 1926 to 110,000 in 1959.¹²⁷ These figures at least support the claim made in 1964 of a “total lack of increase.” In subsequent years, however, the Armenian population increased in absolute terms.

Between 1921 and 1979, the Armenian population of the NKAO decreased from 124,000 to 123,100. In absolute numbers, the Armenian population of the NKAO thus decreased by less than a thousand individuals over a fifty-eight year period. By 1987, when Armenian efforts to transfer the region to Armenia intensified, the Armenian population had increased in absolute terms from 123,100 in 1979 to 133,200 in 1987, an increase of 10,100 for an eight year period. Figures for the entire period of Soviet rule also show an increase in absolute numbers. Between 1921-1987, the number of Armenians in

¹²³Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 27.

¹²⁴“Petition from the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to Prime Minister Nikita Krushchev,” Document 27, Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, 43.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid., 45.

¹²⁷“Population of Nakhijevan and Nagorno-Karabagh, 1914-1979,” Table 11.3 in Dudwick, 274.

the NKAO increased from 124,000 to 133,200.¹²⁸ Although the rate of increase declined

Population of Nagorno-Karabakh, 1914-1987¹²⁹

	1914	1921	1926	1959	1970	1979	1987
Armenians	170,000	124,000	117,000	110,000	121,100	123,100	133,200

during the period of Soviet rule, the claim to a decrease in the absolute size of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh is not supported by the census figures and thus fails to support the argument that Armenians adopted a strategy of ethnic violence based on their demographic decline in absolute numbers (Proposition 3.1).

A second, and potentially more persuasive, factor that leads groups to determine that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened is a decrease in the *relative* size of an ethnic group in relation to ethnic strangers. While the group has not suffered a decrease in absolute terms, its percentage of the population as a whole relative to ethnic strangers has declined, leading the group to conclude that its survival is threatened (Proposition 3.2) and thus prompting the group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense (Proposition 3).

In the decades following the 1921 decision to include Nagorno-Karabakh in the Azerbaijan SSR, the Armenian percentage of the population of the autonomous oblast steadily declined while the absolute and relative size of the Azerbaijani population increased dramatically. This significant ethnodemographic shift became increasingly apparent in the 1970s and 1980s, such that by the late 1980s it was conceivable that the once overwhelming Armenian predominance in Nagorno-Karabakh would disappear in the foreseeable future.

¹²⁸Yamskov, 645.

¹²⁹Table 11.3, "Population of Nakhijevan and Nagorno-Karabagh, 1914-1979" in Dudwick, 274; and Yamskov, 645.

Between 1921 and 1987, the Armenian percentage of the population declined dramatically from 94.4 percent to 74.0 percent, while the Azerbaijani percentage of the

Armenian Percentage of the Population of the NKAO¹³⁰

Year	1921	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1987
% Armenian	94.4%	89.1%	88.1%	84.4%	80.6%	75.9%	74.0%
% Azerbaijani	5.6%	10.9%	11.9%	15.6%	19.4%	24.1%	24.4%

population increased from a mere 5.6 percent to nearly a quarter of the total population of Nagorno-Karabakh. A number of factors are responsible for this dramatic shift in the ethnodemographic balance of Nagorno-Karabakh. This shift is in part due to the higher rate of population growth among Azerbaijanis, one of the highest among the Soviet Muslims,¹³¹ as well as the slower rate of migration of rural Azerbaijanis to the cities.¹³² In addition, high rates of unemployment in Azerbaijan prompted the influx of Azerbaijanis to rural areas of Nagorno-Karabakh where work was available due to the outmigration of Armenians to the cities.¹³³ Armenians claim that this shift was the direct result of policies on the part of the Azerbaijani government to shift the population balance in their favor and ultimately to revoke the region's autonomous status. According to Armenians, "this exodus was not fortuitous and is clearly related to the persistent policies of Baku which has sought the 'Nakhichevanization' of the territory: first cultural de-Armenianization, followed by physical exodus."¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Mutafian, "Karabagh in the Twentieth Century," 142 and Yamskov, 645.

¹³¹ Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 145.

¹³² Yamskov, 647.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Mutafian, "Karabagh in the Twentieth Century," 143.

The significant demographic shift in the NKAO represented a direct threat to the survival of the Armenian nation in a vital region of its historic homeland. By the 1980s the rate of increase on the part of the Azerbaijani population was such that if trends were to have continued for another fifteen to twenty years, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh would have lost their majority status.¹³⁵ Armenians feared their demographic decline would replicate the fate of Nakhichevan, another historically Armenian region where the Armenian population declined from 15 percent in 1926 to 1.4 percent by 1979.¹³⁶ The significant decline in the Armenian population relative to the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh, combined with the belief that the continuation of such rapid growth on the part of the Azerbaijani population would ultimately result in the “Nakhichevanization of Nagorno-Karabakh,” prompted Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to conclude that their survival was indeed threatened (Proposition 3.2).

A third factor that leads groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened is the lack of cultural autonomy. As an autonomous oblast within the Azerbaijan SSR, Armenians in the NKAO were legally guaranteed the right to develop and use their own language and culture and the right to an education in their native language or to study their native language within the framework of the regional school curriculum. Throughout the Soviet period, however, territorial autonomy “has rarely gone beyond form to content.”¹³⁷

While most Soviet Republics outside the Caucasus were subject to demographic and linguistic Russification, the three Transcaucasian republics enjoyed an unusual degree of cultural and political autonomy.¹³⁸ A policy of “nativization” (*korenizatsiia*) first instituted in the 1920s ensured that native cadres were promoted within each republic and that education was conducted in the language of each republic with provisions made for

¹³⁵Yamskov, 645-646.

¹³⁶Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 188.

¹³⁷Yamskov, 642.

¹³⁸Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 7.

ethnic minorities. In the Transcaucasus, this political and cultural autonomy meant that local elites had a limited degree of freedom to formulate policy toward their ethnic minorities. Over time, local elites in Azerbaijan as well as in Armenia developed a corrupt system of patronage that unevenly favored the titular nationality. Thus, while the titular nationalities benefited from measures that ensured education in their national language and encouraged the development of their national cultures, the ethnic minorities, such as the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, experienced “a progressive marginalization and discrimination.”¹³⁹ Over the years, these policies led to the “steady erosion of cultural rights in the oblast,”¹⁴⁰ prompting Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to conclude that, “there is in fact no Autonomous region.”¹⁴¹

Although Armenians in the NKAO were granted the right to primary education in the Armenian language, the content of their courses as well as the training for their instructors were limited by the Azerbaijani authorities. Armenian teachers were trained only in Stepanakert or in Baku and were not allowed to study in Yerevan. Books from Armenia were not permitted in the schools in the NKAO. In addition, NKAO schools were not permitted to teach Armenian history.¹⁴² While students in neighboring Armenia studied a course entitled “The History of the Armenian People,” students in Nagorno-Karabakh studied a course entitled “The History of Azerbaijan.”¹⁴³ In 1987, the limited amount of Armenian history taught in NKAO schools was banned by the Azerbaijani authorities.¹⁴⁴ For Armenians, “the low level of work in the field of education” meant that Armenian students in Karabakh performed poorly in tests “to gain entrance to higher education institutions in the Armenian SSR.”¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 7.

¹⁴⁰Dudwick, 274.

¹⁴¹“Petition from the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to Prime Minister Nikita Krushchev,” 46.

¹⁴²Mutafian, “Karabagh in the Twentieth Century,” 143.

¹⁴³Yamskov, 643.

¹⁴⁴Vaserman and Ginat, 347.

¹⁴⁵“Petition from the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to Prime Minister Nikita Krushchev,” 45.

Restrictions on Armenian cultural autonomy extended beyond the field of education. The only Armenian language television permitted in the NKAO was restricted to programs produced in the NKAO itself.¹⁴⁶ Any other television programs were in Azerbaijani or Russian.¹⁴⁷ Despite repeated requests for the equipment necessary for reception of Armenian television programs from neighboring Armenia, the Azerbaijani authorities failed to provide it until well after clashes between Azerbaijanis and Armenians in the oblast erupted.¹⁴⁸

These restrictions on education and on access to Armenian television programs were part of a broader concern about the Armenian language. "Language remains an emotive issue for Armenians, who consider the Armenian language, an archaic branch of Indo-European, and its unique alphabet, to be one of the factors responsible for their long survival as a distinct ethnic entity."¹⁴⁹ Lack of proper education for Armenian students in Nagorno-Karabakh, the low rate of NKAO Armenian students capable of passing the exams necessary for education at the university level in Armenia, as well as the lack of television programming in the Armenian language for Armenian residents of the NKAO were clear indications that Armenian language use in the NKAO was threatened, and as a result, that the Armenian nation itself was threatened. According to the head of the Armenian Church, Vazken I,

Our language is one of the most important treasures of our culture. It is a genuine creation of the Armenian people. The image of the Armenian nation's spirit is in our mother tongue. *Without the Armenian language it is difficult to remain and survive as Armenians, not to say impossible....* The Armenian language is our existence, it is our dignity, it is our identity and it is the mold of realization of all our expectations. *We cannot live without our mother tongue.*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶Vaserman and Ginat, 347.

¹⁴⁷Mutafian, "Karabagh in the Twentieth Century," 143.

¹⁴⁸Yamakov, 643.

¹⁴⁹Dudwick, 269.

¹⁵⁰"Address of His Holiness Vazken I to the Delegates of the Armenian National Movement," November 9, 1989 at Etchmiadzin, Armenian. Quoted in Vigen Guroian, "Faith, Church and Nationalism in Armenia," *Nationalities Papers* 20 (Spring 1992): 48-49. Italics added.

For Armenians, use of the Armenian language was thus critical to their survival. Because the Armenian language is viewed as an integral part of the nation itself, the threat to Armenian education and language use in Nagorno-Karabakh translated into a direct threat to the Armenian nation, to is “existence,...dignity,... [and] identity.”¹⁵¹ For Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, a lack of cultural autonomy thus prompted them to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened (Proposition 3.3).

A fourth factor that leads groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened is pressure on group lands and resources, what Gurr terms “ecological stress.” This factor is particularly important for ethnonationalists who view these lands as a vital part of their national identity. When a group’s lands and resources are encroached upon by ethnic strangers or by a state controlled by ethnic strangers, then the group may conclude that their survival is threatened (Proposition 3.4).

Pressure on group lands and resources is closely linked in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh to the decrease in the Armenian population relative to Azerbaijanis in the region. Armenians claim that Azerbaijan has kept the region backward to encourage Armenians to emigrate, thereby shifting the population balance in favor of the Azerbaijanis in an attempt to duplicate the dramatic population shift in Nakhichevan. Comparing their standard of living with Armenians in neighboring Armenia, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh argue that this lower standard of living is the result of the deliberate policies of the Azerbaijani government, which controls the development and economy of the region.¹⁵²

Armenians have extensively documented various factors that prove their claim that the region is being purposefully kept backward. In a petition to Krushchev in 1964, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh argued that since its creation,

the rights of the autonomous region were gradually curtailed and presently are almost entirely arrogated. The Armenian population of the Azerbaijani SSR has been subjected to chauvinistic policies creating extremely

¹⁵¹“Address of His Holiness Vazken I to the Delegates of the Armenian National Movement,” in Guroian, 49.

¹⁵²Yamskov, 640.

unfavorable conditions of life. At the inception of the autonomy, certain positive steps were undertaken for the development of industry and agriculture in the region. Subsequently, however, every enterprise has been thwarted, and established institutions have either been inhibited from functioning or have been transferred to regions inhabited by Azerbaijanis....These underhanded measures...were intended to bring about a deterioration in the economy of the Armenian population and eventually to force the latter's exodus from the region.¹⁵³

The document proceeded to list a number of examples of industries that were transferred out of the region or placed under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijanis or Azerbaijani districts outside the autonomous oblast.¹⁵⁴ In one such instance, the best machines were transferred out of the region to Azerbaijani industries and replaced with "useless and antiquated implements and technical systems." Top laborers were "flatly dismissed" and "replaced by Azerbaijanis."¹⁵⁵ In another instance, a large industry was transferred 120 km away, resulting in a reduction of the wage fund and in the wages of Armenian workers.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, "in forty years, not one kilometer of new road has been constructed between villages and the regional center; nor have existing roads been repaired." In addition, "no possibilities have been explored for developing new agriculture in the region. Reservoirs that have been erected in the region benefit "only Azerbaijani villages," and Armenians have not been given the right "to utilize the waters of their own rivers."¹⁵⁷

The transfer of enterprises to regions outside the oblast combined with the neglect of agriculture, industry, roads, water, and energy supplies led Armenians to conclude that their lands and resources were being encroached upon by ethnic strangers, the Azerbaijanis who controlled the region and who were responsible for allocating the resources necessary to ensure an adequate standard of living and level of development in the region. Armenians thus concluded in their petition to Krushchev that

the aims pursued [by the Azerbaijani government] on various occasions and for many years are now coming close to fruition. They consist of the

¹⁵³"Petition from the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to Prime Minister Nikita Krushchev," 43.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 43-45.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

propensity to subordinate the institutions and enterprises of Mountainous Karabagh to corresponding enterprises which are located at a distance of 40-60 km and are integral parts of Azerbaijani regions...; of transferring the institutions and enterprises of the region to the regions of Azerbaijan SSR; of blocking the construction of the industrial concerns and of all other necessary enterprises provided in the plans for the region. As a result of all these, the managerial-administrative functions of the region have all but disintegrated.¹⁵⁸

Many of these same concerns were recognized by Arkady Volsky, the USSR Supreme Soviet's representative in Nagorno-Karabakh, more than a decade later. According to Volsky, the economy of the region was in "an extremely neglected state, especially in the social area, with respect to the satisfaction of the people's priority needs for housing, water and power supply, medicine and food."¹⁵⁹ A year later, he noted that "during my travels throughout the country, I have never been confronted with such a state of abandonment, such scorn for the destiny of people as in Mountainous Karabakh."¹⁶⁰

For the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, this persistent policy of deliberate neglect on the part of Azerbaijanis who controlled the region represented a clear threat to their group lands and resources. "These unilaterally harmful measures have deprived the Armenian population of the region of its livelihood and well-being and forced it to abandon its own ancestral homeland."¹⁶¹ Faced with conditions that were forcing many Armenians to "abandon" their homeland, Armenians concluded that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened by the persistent and deliberate neglect of the region, by the transfer of industry out of the region, and by the failure to develop the region such that Armenian enterprises could continue to function. Together, these policies constituted a clear threat to the lives and livelihoods of Armenians in their homeland. They constituted a clear encroachment upon group lands and resources by ethnic strangers whose intent was to force the Armenian population to abandon their homeland, thus creating the opportunity for Azerbaijan to claim the region for itself.

¹⁵⁸ "Petition from the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to Prime Minister Nikita Krushchev," 45.

¹⁵⁹ Arkady Volsky, quoted in Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 209.

¹⁶⁰ Arkady Volsky, quoted in Claude Mutafian, "Karabagh in the Twentieth Century," 142.

¹⁶¹ "Petition from the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to Prime Minister Nikita Krushchev," 45.

Although Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh were subject to economic discrimination on the part of the Azerbaijani government, it was the threat to the Armenian homeland, to its resources and lands, that prompted Armenians to conclude that their survival was threatened. In defense of Armenian claims of neglect, Azerbaijanis attempted to prove that the oblast in fact enjoyed a level of social and economic development that was somewhat higher than that of the general population of Azerbaijan.¹⁶² While Armenians refute these claims, they are interesting because they in part support the conclusion by writers such as Horowitz, Connor and Gurr that economic considerations alone are not a cause of ethnic conflict. Thus, when Moscow attempted to resolve the conflict by introducing a package of spending measures in 1988, the Armenians did not cease their demands for transfer. Increased spending clearly failed to address the deliberate underdevelopment and discrimination that flowed not from poor levels of investment and spending alone, but from a deliberate attempt on the part of ethnic strangers to force them to abandon their homeland. Economic discrimination was thus one aspect of a much broader policy that directly threatened the continued survival of the Armenian nation in Karabakh.

The decrease in the size of the Armenian population of Karabakh relative to Azerbaijanis and the future loss of the Armenians' majority status in the region, the lack of cultural autonomy, particularly the freedom to use and develop the Armenian language, and the encroachment on group lands and resources by Azerbaijani authorities in the oblast together constituted a clear threat to Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The nature and extent of this threat was one that led Armenians to conclude that their very survival was at stake. Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh thus attempted to secure the transfer of the oblast to Armenia, thereby safeguarding the region from the policies of the Azerbaijani government. When this strategy proved unsuccessful, Armenians, believing that their very

¹⁶² A detailed account of economic indicators used by Azerbaijan to support its claim that the oblast enjoyed a high level of social and economic development can be found in Yamskov, 640 and 658-659n3. See also Elizabeth Fuller and Philip Hanson, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Package," *Radio Liberty Research* 132/88 (March 29, 1988): 103.

survival in the region was at stake, adopted a strategy of violence aimed at removing that threat and safeguarding the region and its resources for the Armenian nation.

Ethnic Group Leadership

The escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from isolated incidents of interethnic violence conducted largely by paramilitary groups to a full scale conventional war between two opposing armies was the direct result of a power struggle between the Azerbaijani Communist Party and the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) between 1989 and 1992. At the root of this power struggle was a battle for control over Azerbaijan's policy toward Nagorno-Karabakh.

As Armenian demands over Karabakh escalated in 1988 and violence erupted in Sumgait and elsewhere in Azerbaijan over the communist government's apparent ineptitude to deal decisively with the Karabakh issue, the power of the Azerbaijani communist leadership began to decline. By 1989, massive demonstrations against the government's failure to resolve the conflict sparked the formation of a number of opposition groups, the most important of which was the APF. From 1989 until communist rule toppled in March 1992, the APF organized strikes and increasingly large demonstrations to mobilize popular support for its hardline position on the Karabakh issue and to force the government to legalize the APF. In a desperate attempt to undermine the APF and maintain its hold on power, the communist leadership was forced to adopt a similarly hardline position. By 1991, the growing power of the APF and the radicalization of the Karabakh issue prompted the Azerbaijani communist leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence that propelled Azerbaijan into a war for which it was not prepared.

Unlike in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, the introduction of glasnost and perestroika did not prompt the formation of national groups in Azerbaijan. While Armenian interests were being pursued by such groups as the Karabakh committee and later the Armenian Pannational Movement, which organized the protests and petitions in late 1987

and early 1988 in support of transferring Karabakh to Armenia, Azerbaijani society had not yet mobilized in support of Azerbaijani interests. When independent political groupings finally organized in Azerbaijan a year and a half later, their emergence was driven almost entirely by the issue of Karabakh. Unlike the Armenian national movement, which was formed out of a number of separate political groups which were brought together by the Karabakh issue, the Azerbaijani Popular Front was an organization comprised of individuals with vastly different interests and goals. United solely on the basis of their opposition to the manner in which the communist government was addressing the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azerbaijani Popular Front found itself increasingly riven internally by competing interests which eventually resulted in its splintering into a number of factions. As Azerbaijani losses mounted, the more radical factions gained control of the organization which began to support an increasingly hardline strategy toward Karabakh.

In November 1988, popular dissatisfaction over the Azerbaijani Communist Party's failure to assert control over the NKAO and abolish the Volsky Commission sparked a two-week long demonstration which virtually paralyzed Azerbaijan. The demonstrations ended with the imposition of "special regulations" and finally, with the arrest of the remaining demonstrators on December 4, 1988.¹⁶³ These demonstrations marked the beginning of Azerbaijan's "national reawakening."¹⁶⁴ In March 1989, after being released from prison, a number of activists, joined by intellectuals from the Baku Academy of Sciences, organized an "initiative group" for an Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF).¹⁶⁵ The group's governing council was composed entirely of middle-level intellectuals, including journalists and researchers at the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, all of whom were ethnic Azerbaijanis. The APF was thus a grouping of diverse individuals rather than an umbrella group for previously existing organizations that had already worked out their own respective programs and concerns regarding political, economic, cultural or

¹⁶³ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 202.

¹⁶⁴ David Nissman, "The National Reawakening of Azerbaijan," *The World & I* (February 1992): 80.

¹⁶⁵ Saroyan, 22.

even environmental issues. The fact that it was comprised of individuals rather than a coalition of organizations meant that the APF had to accommodate varying interests and political orientations. As a coalition of democratic and national-radical forces, “the APF contained within its own internal organizational structure the possibility of sharp political divisions and eventual fragmentation.”¹⁶⁶

At its founding congress on July 16, 1989, the APF denounced the use of force as a means of political expression and declared its commitment to the themes of humanism, democracy, pluralism, internationalism and human rights.¹⁶⁷ The initial APF program pledged to achieve democratization and human and civil rights; gain local control over elections; achieve political, economic, and cultural sovereignty for Azerbaijan within the USSR; end exploitation of natural resources; return all land to the peasants and give full freedom in agricultural policy; guarantee equal treatment of all nationalities and protect all cultural freedoms; and end the barbaric exploitation of Azerbaijan’s natural resources.¹⁶⁸ A central political aim of the APF was the rejection of Armenian claims to self-determination and the maintenance of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.¹⁶⁹ Unlike the popular fronts that emerged in the Baltic republics, however, the APF platform did not assert either near or long term claims for the separation of Azerbaijan from the USSR.¹⁷⁰

In the months following the formation of the initiative group, the APF “remained largely an isolated group of intellectuals that failed to win either the active participation of the Baku-based Azerbaijani intellectual elite or effective support from Azerbaijani society at large.” Even by the summer of 1989, Azerbaijani society remained essentially conservative. Glasnost and perestroika had not mobilized Azerbaijanis as it had Armenians. This conservatism was compounded by the influx of refugees from rural areas in the Armenia

¹⁶⁶Saroyan, 22.

¹⁶⁷Elizabeth Fuller, “The Ongoing Political Power Struggle in Azerbaijan,” *RFE/RL Research Report 1* (May 1, 1992): 11.

¹⁶⁸Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 205.

¹⁶⁹Saroyan, 22-23.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 23.

and Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁷¹ As a result, Azerbaijani society did not share the APF's dedication to the ideals of political and economic reform espoused by Gorbachev.

The APF's failure to mobilize Azerbaijani society in support of its platform was compounded by its failure to secure legalization from the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet. In August and September 1989, the APF organized a number of rallies and strikes to mobilize the Azerbaijani population in support of APF demands, including the convening of a special session of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet to discuss the NKAO and restoration of Azerbaijan's full sovereignty in the NKAO by abolishing the special administration. A primary reason for the demonstrations and strikes, however, was to force the Azerbaijani government to recognize the APF as a legal organization.¹⁷²

Popular participation in the strikes and demonstrations organized by the APF was not an indication of Azerbaijani support for the APF platform. The tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis that joined the demonstrations and strikes were motivated not by the goals of economic and political reform, but by a growing anti-Armenian sentiment and an intense interest in the Karabakh crisis. The most active elements in Azerbaijan, and also the most anti-Armenian, were the refugees, many of whom lived in abject conditions with access to little or no social services. Those whom were lucky, lived with family in crowded apartments in the rural and urban districts of Azerbaijan; others were forced to live on the streets with cardboard boxes providing their only shelter. To mobilize the Azerbaijani population thus required using those issues which would resonate most strongly with the active element of society, the refugees.

The only emotive issue capable of mobilizing a broad segment of the Azerbaijani population was the Karabakh issue. In order to mobilize support among Azerbaijani society, the APF found that it had no alternative but to adopt an increasingly extreme position on the Karabakh issue.¹⁷³ The APF activists thus "faced the unhappy prospect that

¹⁷¹Saroyan, 24.

¹⁷²Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 205-206.

¹⁷³Fuller, "The Ongoing Political Power Struggle in Azerbaijan," 11.

only an anti-Armenian NKAO-oriented platform could bring thousands of Azerbaijani supporters into the streets.”¹⁷⁴ The APF abandoned its broader social and political goals to focus exclusively on Karabakh.

While this shift in strategy succeeded in mobilizing the population in support of the APF, it also provoked internal divisions within the organization and ultimately caused it to splinter. The three main factions that emerged included a moderate faction which advocated a democratic sovereign Azerbaijani state within the USSR; a national democratic faction which proposed secession from the USSR and the unification of Azerbaijan with Iran’s Southern Azerbaijan; and a coalition of radical religious and ultra leftist groups which aligned themselves with the APF for tactical reasons when it suited their purposes.¹⁷⁵ Increasingly, radical forces came to dominate the APF as more moderate forces who sought the democratization of Azerbaijan and who eschewed the use of force were marginalized. The APF’s factionalism and resulting radicalization weakened the organization. Baku’s intellectual mainstream remained aloof. Wary of the radical APF, the mainstream intelligentsia organized an alternative group, the Committee for Aid to Karabakh, and won the official sanction that had thus far eluded the APF.

The continuing strikes organized by the Popular Front as well as the escalating violence in Nagorno-Karabakh mobilized Azerbaijani opposition to the communist authorities. Despite its efforts to pressure the communist leadership, the APF still had not managed to secure legalization. As a result, the APF intensified its efforts and organized a strike by railway workers which managed nearly to isolate Armenia from the remainder of the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁶ The Azerbaijani Communist Party suddenly faced threats from two sides. The continuing strikes were weakening the communist leadership’s hold on power in Azerbaijan while its failure to terminate the blockade of Armenia and the NKAO elicited threats from Moscow. The communist leadership had little choice but to grant a series of

¹⁷⁴Saroyan, 24.

¹⁷⁵Fuller, “The Ongoing Political Power Struggle in Azerbaijan,” 12.

¹⁷⁶Fraser et al., 669.

concession to the APF. In mid-September a special session of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet was held on the issue of the NKAO, and APF activists were permitted to speak. In addition, the Supreme Soviet voted to abolish the Volsky Committee and to begin drafting laws on Azerbaijan's political and economic sovereignty. Strikes continued into October until tense negotiations finally resulted in the legalization of the APF. In exchange, the APF agreed to call off the blockade.

But the APF was unable to uphold its end of the bargain. Weakened by internal divisions, the APF found that it had little control over the popular movement it had sparked. In December 1989, activists claiming to be a part of the APF attacked Party and Ministry of Internal Affairs offices in Lankaran and Jalilabad in Azerbaijan and, by January 1989, attacked posts along the Soviet-Iranian border in Nakhichevan, demanding an opening to Southern Azerbaijan, a region in Iran populated by Azerbaijanis. In mid-January 1990, angry protesters turned on Armenians in Baku in a week long frenzy of violence. Gorbachev dispatched troops to Baku on January 20, 1990, resulting in several hundred deaths and more than 700 wounded.¹⁷⁷ Azerbaijan's First Secretary was ousted and replaced with Ayaz Mutalibov.¹⁷⁸ Simultaneously with the invasion of troops in Baku, a state of emergency was declared in Nagorno-Karabakh and an additional 17,000 troops were dispatched to the region to enforce it.

Faced with a decreasing ability to control the situation in Karabakh, the communist leadership in Azerbaijan adopted a hardline position as its ability to retain power became increasingly desperate. In a clear indication of the APF's power to radicalize the Karabakh issue, the communist government abolished the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh on November 26, 1991.¹⁷⁹ With the Soviet collapse, Moscow withdrew its forces out of Karabakh in December, and the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh voted

¹⁷⁷Vaserman and Ginat, 353.

¹⁷⁸Saroyan, 29.

¹⁷⁹Vaserman and Ginat, 355.

overwhelmingly for independence.¹⁸⁰ In response, the now hardline communist leadership dispatched Azerbaijani paramilitary battalions to the enclave. As Azerbaijani troops began the large scale bombing of Stepanakert in late December, the conflict was transformed into a full scale war.

In response, Armenian forces launched a large offensive that managed by May 1992 to seize control of all of the oblast. Fearing a takeover by the APF, Mutalibov had kept Azerbaijan's best trained and best equipped security forces in Baku. While the Presidential Guard received priority in training and weapons, the Azerbaijani forces in Karabakh were only equipped with machine guns and mortars with blank shells. The Azerbaijan Popular Front blamed President Mutalibov for the series of Azeri losses, forcing him to resign on March 6, 1992. Yakub Mamedov, the speaker of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet, became acting president until national elections could be held in June.

On May 14, however, the Azeri Supreme Soviet voted to cancel the elections and replace Mamedov, the acting president, with ousted former president Mutalibov. The following day, the APF, acting in conjunction with the Azerbaijan armed forces, seized the Baku television station and the presidential palace. Mutalibov fled, and Mamadov resigned. Isa Gamberov, the deputy chairman of the Popular Front, was chosen as acting president and speaker of the Azerbaijani parliament. The elections were rescheduled for June, and the APF, whose popular support had grown drastically following the losses in Nagorno-Karabakh, emerged as the main challenger. In June 1992, the Popular Front candidate, Ebulfaz Elchibey, was elected by more than 60% of the vote. Elchibey declared as his main priority the recovery of Nagorno-Karabakh.

A year later, however, Azerbaijani forces had suffered another series of strategic losses, creating yet another political crisis in Baku. Karabakh Armenian forces overran Azerbaijani positions in Kelbadzhar and Fizuli, thereby widening the Lachin corridor. Elchibey was removed from power in a coup d'état that brought Geider Aliyev to power.

¹⁸⁰ Fuller, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Internal Conflict Becomes International," 1.

For the first time since the outbreak of the war, the Azerbaijani leadership began to formulate a clear strategy for the conduct of the war. Under Aliyev's leadership, Azerbaijan joined the CIS, restored its ties with Moscow, developed contacts with Iran, France, China and Saudi Arabia, and stabilized the situation in Baku by cracking down on opposition forces.¹⁸¹ In 1994, a ceasefire agreement was finally signed and the violence in Nagorno-Karabakh ended.

The escalation from isolated incidents of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh to full scale war can be explained in large part by the struggle for power between the Communist and the APF leadership. Internal divisions within the APF shifted Azerbaijani strategy toward an increasingly intransigent hardline position toward Nagorno-Karabakh that succeeded in prolonging the fighting without securing any Azerbaijani gains. The APF was forced to drop its earlier rejection of violence as a means of resolving the conflict in order to garner the necessary support to push the Azerbaijani government to legalize the organization. As the APF gained support based on its NKAO-focused strategy, the Azerbaijan Communist Party was forced to adopt an increasingly hardline position as well in order to combat the growing popularity of the Azerbaijani Front. The power struggle in Baku weakened the Azerbaijani war effort and created the opportunity for Karabakh Armenian forces to expand their control beyond Karabakh's borders. Ultimately, the communists were forced from power as a result of Azerbaijan's significant losses in the NKAO, a fate that befell the APF government only a year later.

The Azerbaijani leadership, both the communist leadership and the Azerbaijani Popular Front, failed to articulate a clear policy toward the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, develop a strategy based on an assessment of Azerbaijani interests and capabilities, and mobilize and organize the necessary resources and forces to conduct the war in Nagorno-Karabakh against the much smaller and poorly equipped Karabakh Armenian forces. Until the rise of Geider Aliyev in 1993, Azerbaijani strategy was reactive, subject to an

¹⁸¹Joseph A. Kechichian and Theodore W. Karasik, "The Crisis in Azerbaijan: How Clans Influence the Politics of an Emerging Republic," *Middle East Policy* 4 (September 1995): 58-59.

increasing radicalization that undermined any coherent strategy the leadership attempted to formulate. Rather than resulting from the adoption of a well-planned and carefully constructed strategy of violence, the war over Nagorno-Karabakh erupted as armed incidents escalated beyond the control of the Azerbaijani leadership and propelled Azerbaijan into a war for which it was not prepared.

According to Proposition 4, if an able ethnic leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy and if it successfully articulates a group ideology and mobilizes the ethnic group around its source of grievances, then the group will adopt a strategy of interethnic violence. In the Azerbaijani case, the articulation of grievances, mobilization of Azerbaijani society, and adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence were not carried out by a united Azerbaijani leadership. Instead, mobilization was a product of the APF's struggle to assume control over the direction of Azerbaijani policy towards Karabakh. The articulation of grievances over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was similarly a product of the APF's efforts to undermine the communist leadership. Finally, the adoption of a strategy of violence was a product of the APF's radicalization. In a desperate attempt to undermine support for the APF and maintain its hold on power, the communist leadership assumed an increasingly hardline position and ultimately adopted a strategy of violence with the bombing of Stepanakert in December 1991.

Unlike the case of Yugoslavia, where the process of mobilization and the decision to adopt violence were the result of a carefully constructed, well-articulated policy on the part of the Serb leadership, the articulation of group grievances over Nagorno-Karabakh and the mobilization of Azerbaijani society around those grievances were driven by divisions within the Azerbaijani leadership. Rather than an able leadership determining that violence was an optimal strategy, it was the growing power and increased radicalization of the APF leadership and the struggle between that leadership and the Azerbaijani Communist Party that mobilized Azerbaijanis in support of a radical and hardline strategy toward

Karabakh and prompted the communist government, in a desperate attempt to maintain its hold on power, to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

The Weak State

State responses to ethnic group mobilization are crucial in shaping the course and outcome of ethnic conflict. They shape the dynamics of conflict and determine to a large extent whether groups will adopt strategies of violent ethnic conflict over non-violent strategies of ethnic politics. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow's response to Armenian demands for transfer of the region from Azerbaijan, from its initial willingness to consider Armenian demands, to its vacillating and indecisive efforts to halt the spreading violence, and ultimately to its direct intervention with Soviet troops, was in large part responsible for the rapid and uncontrolled escalation from isolated incidents of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh to interethnic war.

In 1920, after the Red Army reconquered the Transcaucasus, Moscow imposed its solution to the Karabakh problem upon the Armenians and Azerbaijanis by including the disputed region in Azerbaijan. Armenian nationalist aspirations were successfully repressed, but the goal of unifying the oblast with Armenia persisted. Despite the desire to rectify what many Armenians viewed as an "historic injustice," the repression of the Stalinist era prevented the Armenians from challenging Moscow's decision to include the oblast in Azerbaijan.

By the 1960s, the repression of the Stalinist era was gradually lifted and a very limited degree of nationalist expression was permitted. Once such expressions transcended official limits, however, they were dealt with severely by the Soviet authorities. In 1974, the National Unity Party, a secret underground Armenian nationalist party that demanded the return of Nakhichevan, Karabakh and Western Armenia to the Armenians and the formation of a united independent state, was uncovered, and its members were tried and imprisoned. The leader, Stephan Zatikian, who was later linked to the bombing of the

Moscow Metro in 1977, was summarily executed.¹⁸² More moderate groups, such as a human rights group that sought to monitor Soviet compliance with the Helsinki Agreement of 1975, were also arrested. The active repression of “dissident nationalisms” on the part of the Soviet authorities ensured that Armenian nationalists were unable to press their demands upon the central government beyond occasional petitions and letters of protest.

Tight control by Moscow and the local communist leaderships ensured that nationalists bent on reunifying the region with Armenia were limited in their choice of measures to pursue their goal of reunification. After an unsuccessful attempt by the First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, Arutiunov, to reverse the decision on Nagorno-Karabakh’s inclusion in Azerbaijan in the fall of 1946, Armenians were prevented from pursuing the issue more openly until Stalin’s death.¹⁸³ By the 1960s, activists in the NKAO and in the Armenian SSR began to agitate for the incorporation of Karabakh into Armenia. In 1963 a petition with 2,500 Armenian signatures requesting transfer of the region to the Armenian SSR was sent to Krushchev. Again in 1967, an appeal on behalf of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, signed by 45,000 people, was sent to Moscow with the same request. Despite numerous petitions and letters, the central Soviet government repeatedly affirmed that the NKAO would remain a part of the Azerbaijan SSR.¹⁸⁴ Neither protests and petitions nor more violent tactics was successful in realizing Armenian demands.

The repressive measures that a strong state can employ to prevent ethnic mobilization will lead groups either to opt for protest over rebellion or to delay plans to rebel until the costs of doing so are less daunting. The Soviet Union, as a strong state, was able to use repressive measures effectively to prevent ethnic mobilization in support of a strategy of ethnic violence. According to Proposition 5.4, the Soviet authorities prevented

¹⁸²Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 185-187.

¹⁸³Vaserman and Ginat, 346.

¹⁸⁴Suny, “Revenge of the Past,” 27.

the Armenians from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence by countering ethnic mobilization with repression.

While repression can be a successful strategy to prevent ethnic mobilization and ethnic violence in the short term, it does not address the source of an ethnic group's grievances in the long term. Repressive measures may in fact add to those grievances "The overall atmosphere of repression and the lack of basic cultural and political rights for both the Armenians and Azerbaijanis and the difficulties in communication between Armenians of NKAO and Armenia proper during the Soviet era were largely responsible for the persistence of these tensions and the upsurge later of nationalist sentiment."¹⁸⁵

While a strong state can prevent the outbreak of ethnic violence, a weak state invariably cannot. It has neither the resources nor the capabilities to reach accommodation with aggrieved ethnic groups. Rarely able to maintain a monopoly of the use of force within their borders, weak states often lack the means to repress group mobilization. While repression on the part of the government of a strong state will lead groups to refrain from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence or to delay employing violence, when a weak state attempts to repress group mobilization and invariably fails, groups will rapidly conclude that they have little stake in the existing system and will attempt to secede.

Following Gorbachev's rise to power in March 1985, the Soviet system began to decay. The introduction of glasnost and perestroika provided the opportunity for latent resentments and aspirations to resurface. It triggered the first massive expressions of popular nationalism that the USSR had known in nearly seventy years.¹⁸⁶ The emergence of newly mobilized mass nationalism in Armenia, and later in Azerbaijan, combined with similar movements in the Baltics and elsewhere, presented a grave problem of governance to the Soviet leadership. The Soviet system gradually began to disintegrate, and as it did,

¹⁸⁵Hunter, 99.

¹⁸⁶Suny, "The Revenge of the Past," 7.

the central government faced a number of crises in the near abroad that it was increasingly unable to control.

The only consistent element in Moscow's position regarding the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh was its fundamental inconsistency. From the beginning, Moscow's political maneuvers and emphasized equidistance between the two sides undermined its authority, failed to appease either side, and led each side to believe at varying times that its efforts would prove successful. Rather than play the role of an impartial arbitrator, Moscow's policies led both sides to accuse it of favoring one side over the other and of deliberately fomenting conflict between the two peoples as a means of retaining its control over the region. Moscow also failed to react quickly when the conflict erupted, and its subsequent efforts to prevent further escalation of tensions "seemed always to be two steps behind the accelerating events."¹⁸⁷

One of Gorbachev's principle failures was his management of the nationalities question, a failure which is most clearly demonstrated in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁸⁸ "Unlike the other nationality struggles in the Soviet Union, particularly in the Baltic states, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was noteworthy at the outset for not having been directed against Moscow, nor against ethnic Russians living among Armenians and Azerbaijanis."¹⁸⁹ Gorbachev's hesitant and inconsistent policies, however, eroded the sympathy and support he had initially enjoyed.

Armenians were some of Gorbachev's strongest supporters in the early phase of the conflict. In demonstrations in February 1988, they flew the flag of Soviet Armenia and carried portraits of Gorbachev. Gorbachev's initial sympathy for Armenian aspirations for unification, followed by his abrupt rejection of their demands, was met with anger, disappointment and incomprehension in Armenia and quickly undermined his support

¹⁸⁷Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 198.

¹⁸⁸Ronald J. Hill, "Managing Ethnic Conflict," *The Journal of Communist Studies* 9 (March 1993): 57.

¹⁸⁹Bill Frelick, *Faultlines of Nationality Conflict: Refugees and Displaced Persons from Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 1994): 13-14.

among Armenians, leading one important Armenian to note that “Gorbachev is the most overrated politician of the twentieth century.”¹⁹⁰ According to Silva Kaputikian, one of the Armenian intellectuals who met with Gorbachev in February 1988, “we went out with slogans of trust in the country of socialism, in the Russian people, in perestroika, with portraits of... Gorbachev. But they [the Party and government organs, the Soviet media, and the perpetrators of Sumgait] opened fire at us.”¹⁹¹ For Kaputikian, this betrayal was a “spiritual Sumgait.”¹⁹² The sense of betrayal and anger among Armenians led many to believe that the massive earthquake that struck Armenia in late 1988 was deliberately caused by the Soviet authorities through an underground nuclear explosion in retaliation for their defiance of Soviet authority.¹⁹³

While Armenian hopes may have been unrealistic, they were not entirely unfounded. According to one writer,

Certainly the Armenians were unrealistic in their hopes for what Soviet reform would have offered them in the late 1980s. They were looking for Soviet recognition of their plight and vindication of their position. This was more than Moscow realistically could have offered, given the greater strategic, demographic, and economic importance of the Soviet Union’s Muslims.¹⁹⁴

Gorbachev’s personal intervention in the crisis and his assurances on numerous occasions that the dispute would be “justly solved,” however, encouraged Armenians to believe that the dispute would be resolved in their favor.

Although Moscow failed to respond to the request in the fall of 1987, Armenians had reason to hope that their demands for justice might still receive a favorable response from the central government. On November 18, 1987, Abel Aganbegyan, Gorbachev’s economic advisor, stated that Moscow was considering giving Nagorno-Karabakh to

¹⁹⁰ Ambassador Robert Shugarian of the Embassy of Armenia in Washington, D.C., in a speech at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Medford, MA on April 16, 1996.

¹⁹¹ quoted in Nahaylo and Swoboda, 289.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Guroian, 38.

¹⁹⁴ Gordon Brown, “Armenian Nationalism in a Socialist Century,” in *Nationalism and the Breakup of an Empire: Russia and Its Periphery*, Miron Rezun, ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992): 105.

Armenia in a speech to Armenian war veterans in Paris that was subsequently published in *L'Humanité*.¹⁹⁵ Aganbegyan stated that,

I expect that in the context of perestroika the question of the annexation of Karabagh and Nakhichevan to Armenia will find its solution....According to my analysis from the economic point of view, Karabagh is closer to Armenia than to Azerbaijan and not the other way around. I have written a letter in this respect to the government and of course this is my counsel as a scientist who does not have a governmental position....but I do believe that this issue will be resolved.¹⁹⁶

Between November and early February 1988, three delegations of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh went to Moscow to lobby the CC and the USSR Supreme Soviet.¹⁹⁷ In meetings with senior party officials in Moscow to discuss the status of the NKAO, the Armenian delegates were reportedly given assurances that a settlement of the NKAO issue was under active consideration in Moscow and told that their demands were “neither anti-Soviet nor nationalistic.”¹⁹⁸

Believing that the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh was now within their grasp, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh began organizing meetings to pass resolutions on the “reunification” of the NKAO with Armenia. These resolutions, accompanied by a stream of telegrams, began to arrive in Moscow.¹⁹⁹ On February 11, strikes and demonstrations erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh protesting the cultural and economic policy of the Azerbaijani authorities in the oblast and calling for the transfer of the oblast to Armenia.²⁰⁰ The next day, senior Azerbaijani officials arrived in Nagorno-Karabakh and announced that there could be no question of changing the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.²⁰¹ On February 18, however, the last of the three delegations from the NKAO returned from Moscow, convinced that their mission had been successful.²⁰² That same day, Gorbachev tried to

¹⁹⁵Vaserman and Ginat, 348.

¹⁹⁶“Statement of Abel Aganbekyan, economist in Paris, on Karabagh,” Document 42, in Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, 70-71.

¹⁹⁷Nahaylo and Swoboda, 284-285.

¹⁹⁸Candidate Politburo member Petr Demichev, quoted in *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁹⁹Fraser et al., 658.

²⁰⁰Vaserman and Ginat, 348.

²⁰¹Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285.

²⁰²*Ibid.*

placate the protesters by offering to hold a special session of the Central Committee of the CPSU to discuss Soviet policy toward the nationalities in general.²⁰³ The following day thousands of Armenians in Yerevan, the capital of the Armenian SSR, began demonstrating in support of Karabakh. Both the meetings with senior officials in Moscow and Gorbachev's offer to examine the nationalities issue were interpreted by Armenians as an indication of support in Moscow for their demands. On February 20, the Armenian-dominated regional NKAO Soviet voted 110 to 17 to intercede with the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for the transfer of Karabakh to Armenia and petitioned the Supreme Soviets of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the USSR Supreme Soviet to allow the oblast to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia.²⁰⁴

As Armenian efforts to transfer the region escalated, however, it became clear that Gorbachev was limited in his ability to make concessions to the Armenians by a power struggle in the Soviet leadership. A right wing group, headed by Central Committee Secretary Yegor Ligachev, supported Azerbaijan's position and resolutely rejected any changes to the existing borders between union republics.²⁰⁵ On February 21, a day after the NKAO Soviet's vote for secession from Azerbaijan, the CPSU CC responded. It rejected the demands for incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia, condemned the "extremist" manifestations that had led to the disturbance of public order, and directed the party organs in Armenia and Azerbaijan to take measures to "normalize the situation."²⁰⁶ A media blackout of the events in the NKAO was imposed, and two Politburo candidate members were sent to the oblast to ensure that the appropriate measures were taken, followed by two additional senior party members two days later.²⁰⁷ In addition, Soviet Army troops were dispatched to Yerevan on February 25.²⁰⁸

²⁰³Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 27.

²⁰⁴Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 198.

²⁰⁵Vaserman and Ginat, 349.

²⁰⁶Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285.

²⁰⁷Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 198.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

Despite the media blackout, reports of the NKAO resolution of February 20 reached Yerevan on the same day that massive demonstrations against the construction of a chemical factory outside Yerevan were taking place. The protesters, upon hearing of the events in Stepanakert, vowed not to disperse until the Armenian authorities expressed support for the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. By February 23, the number of protesters had grown to 100,000, and by February 26, Yerevan was paralyzed by strikes and demonstrations as a reported 700,000 to one million Armenians massed in the city streets and squares of Yerevan.²⁰⁹

Faced with a crisis that was rapidly escalating out of control, Gorbachev appeared on television, appealing for calm and “a reasonable approach” to the issue.²¹⁰ On February 26, he met with two leading Armenian activists, Silva Kaputikian and Zori Balayan, in Moscow. Although he complained to them that the Armenians were “stabbing perestroika in the back,” he reportedly promised them that the situation in the NKAO would be thoroughly examined in the following months and that a “just solution” would be found.²¹¹ According to Kaputikian’s account of the meeting, Gorbachev stated, “Today,...I have a lot of important nationality questions to deal with. I promise you that there will be a new beginning in Karabakh. I am not in a position today to decide on the restitution of this region to Armenia, because the situation is very difficult, but I will keep the problem under my direct personal control.”²¹² Based on these assurances, which the two Armenians conveyed to the organizers upon their return to Yerevan, the demonstrators in Yerevan placed their faith in Gorbachev and agreed to his request to halt the demonstrations for a period of one month to allow the central authorities to examine the issue carefully.²¹³

²⁰⁹Nahaylo and Swoboda, 285-286.

²¹⁰Mikhail Gorbachev, quoted in Nahaylo and Swoboda, 286.

²¹¹quoted in Nahaylo and Swoboda, 286. See also Vaserman and Ginat, 349.

²¹²Silva Kaputikian’s account of her meeting with Gorbachev, quoted in Kevin Devlin, “Armenian Envoys on Crisis Meeting with Gorbachev,” 2.

²¹³Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 198.

On the same day that Gorbachev met with the two Armenians in Moscow, he stated in a televised address that exceptions to existing policy could not be made for Nagorno-Karabakh and that existing territorial administrative borders would not be withdrawn.²¹⁴ In that same address, however, allusions can be found to the possibility of shifting the NKAO to the control of Armenia. Gorbachev stated that a “frank, sincere discussion of various ideas and proposals... must be done calmly, within the framework of democratic process and legality.” Gorbachev noted that “not a few shortcomings and difficulties have accumulated in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. The new leadership of the oblast must adopt urgent measures to remedy the situation.” Finally, he ended with the assurance that “it is intended to devote a special plenum of our party’s Central Committee to the development of national relations. It is planned to discuss a wide range of questions on this most important social sphere and, on the basis of the principled gains of Lenin’s nationalities policy, to mark out the paths for the concrete solution of social, economic, cultural and other problems.”²¹⁵ As a result of these seemingly conflicting statements, Armenians continued to believe that Gorbachev supported their claims, despite the rejection of those claims by the CPSU CC. Believing that the issue could be resolved legally, Armenians refrained from adopting violent tactics.

Three days before the month-long moratorium on demonstrations in Armenia expired, the Central Committee of the CPSU and the USSR Council of Ministers, in a joint session, ruled that the Armenian request for transfer was “inadmissible.”²¹⁶ The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet declared that it was “intolerable” for “self-styled formations” to try to pressure the state into changing internal borders.²¹⁷ While Gorbachev’s statements and personal intervention in the dispute had encouraged the belief among Armenians that he

²¹⁴Vaserman and Ginat, 349.

²¹⁵“Excerpts from a message by Mikhail S. Gorbachev to the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as read in Russian over Yerevan Radio by Politburo member Vladimir I. Dolghikh,” Document 62, in Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, 102-103.

²¹⁶“Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Rejecting the Reunification of Mountainous Karabagh with Armenia, March 23, 1988,” reproduced in full in Chorbajian et al., *The Caucasian Knot*, 182-183.

²¹⁷Nahaylo and Swoboda, 289.

was sympathetic to their plight and that the situation would be resolved in their favor, the ruling on the issue by the Central Committee of the CPSU in March was a clear indication that Gorbachev did not have the power to implement his promises to the Armenians.

Gorbachev's ability to implement his promise of a "just solution" was constrained by a continuing power struggle in the central leadership. In March, while Gorbachev was out of the country, the notorious letter by Nina Andreeva was published in Moscow. Widely interpreted as the "manifesto of anti-perestroika forces,"²¹⁸ it was clear that Gorbachev's policies were firmly opposed by a group of powerful hardliners in the Soviet leadership. Assuming that Gorbachev had in fact intended to fulfill his promises to the Armenians, his ability to implement these promises was severely constrained by forces within the leadership that remained firmly opposed to glasnost and perestroika. The power struggle within the leadership served to undermine and constrain the central government's ability to act decisively in the face of the escalating conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In an effort to resolve the dispute, the Politburo announced the implementation of a broad, conciliatory eight-year aid package designed to improve the cultural, economic, and social conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh.²¹⁹ By offering a concession to the Armenians, Moscow hoped they would drop their demands. Moscow was clearly aware that the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute had the potential, if it continued to escalate, to present a fundamental threat to Soviet power and legitimacy. In addition, Nagorno-Karabakh was not the only territorial dispute in the Soviet Union, and Moscow feared that if it did not act decisively, similar challenges to its authority would arise elsewhere.

The package of spending measures failed to satisfy either side, ignoring the Azerbaijani claim that the NKAO was better off than Azerbaijan itself and falling well short of the Armenian demand for transfer to the Armenian SSR. In protest to the ruling, Armenians in the NKAO organized a general strike that paralyzed Stepanakert for several

²¹⁸Nahaylo and Swoboda, 290.

²¹⁹Ibid., 289.

days. As protests and violent incidents continued, Moscow responded with stronger measures aimed at ending the conflict. A number of Armenian activists were arrested, troops were deployed in Yerevan and the NKAO, and Moscow removed the first secretaries of both the Azerbaijan and the Armenian Communist Parties and replaced them with individuals thought to be more amenable to negotiations and compromise.²²⁰ Moscow's attempt to replace the leadership in both republics with individuals who would remain loyal to Soviet rather than national interests failed. On June 15, the Armenian Supreme Soviet, with the support of the newly appointed First Secretary, voted unanimously in favor of the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian SSR.²²¹ Moscow had again failed to stop the further escalation of demands.

Although a final decision on the status of the NKAO was made in June at the Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference, the situation remained unresolved. Gorbachev again stated that no change in the territorial status of the NKAO would be permitted.²²² The decision followed a heated and at times acrimonious eight-hour debate during which speakers from Armenia and Azerbaijan were repeatedly interrupted and accused of irresponsibility. In a clear indication that Gorbachev was now siding with the hardliners, he characterized the events around Karabakh as "a cunning maneuver on the part of those who want to impede restructuring, a maneuver designed to distract people from the problems that in fact must be resolved in these republics."²²³ Gorbachev charged "anti-perestroika forces" in Armenia and Azerbaijan with manipulating the situation such that "passions are now running out of control."²²⁴

Neither the package of spending measures nor the final ruling by Moscow on the NKAO's transfer prevented the further escalation of violence. Moscow was thus forced to

²²⁰Fraser et al., 659.

²²¹Vaserman and Ginat, 351.

²²²Fraser et al., 660.

²²³quoted in Suny. *Looking Toward Ararat*, 204.

²²⁴quoted in Elizabeth Fuller, "Supreme Soviet Presidium Debates Nagorno-Karabakh," *Radio Liberty Research*, 314/88 (July 20, 1988): 1-2.

adopt more repressive tactics in an effort to end a conflict that was rapidly spiraling out of control. Soviet Ministry of Interior (MVD) troops were dispatched to evict Armenian demonstrators who had occupied Zvartnots Airport in protest to the ruling, resulting in a number of injuries and deaths.²²⁵ In addition, Moscow took the first step toward imposing direct rule in the region. Faced with a growing number of incidents of interethnic violence in the NKAO, Moscow established a “special commission” to “observe” conditions in the NKAO and to “strengthen and develop the autonomy” of the oblast.²²⁶ The head of the commission, Arkady Volsky, acting as the representative of the Presidium and the Central Committee, imposed martial law in September 1988 in Stepanakert and Agdam and deployed troops and armored vehicles in the NKAO to prevent further violence. Through the Volsky Commission and martial law, the NKAO was taken de facto from direct rule by Baku. Volsky and the Armenian First Secretary met with members of the Karabakh Committee to appeal for calm and more time to find a permanent solution. But the postponement of a final decision on the Karabakh issue had the opposite effect: instead of calming tensions, it intensified hostilities between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

Despite martial law and the deployment of troops, the conflict continued to escalate. With previous measures having failed, Moscow decided on a traditional solution: direct rule over the NKAO. On January 12, 1989, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet declared that the NKAO would be temporarily placed under the control of a “special government administration” directly responsible to the central authorities, although it would maintain its status as an autonomous oblast in Azerbaijan. The Armenian-dominated local party and government organizations in the oblast were dissolved and replaced by the Volsky Commission, now the Volsky Committee.²²⁷

²²⁵Elizabeth Fuller, “Recent Developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute,” *Radio Liberty Research* RL 312/88 (July 11, 1988): 2.

²²⁶Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 198.

²²⁷*Ibid.*, 204.

Direct rule stopped neither the clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, nor the clashes between the residents and government authorities. Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh organized unauthorized elections to a National Council, which claimed to be the only legitimate authority in the oblast, and issued a proclamation of independence.²²⁸ Azerbaijanis accused Volsky of siding with the Armenians and demanded that the Volsky Committee be abolished and direct rule be returned to Azerbaijan. The special form of administration undermined Azerbaijan's sovereignty and was interpreted by Azerbaijanis and Armenians alike as a possible step toward territorial transfer. According to Armenians, "this created a precedent for the limitation of Soviet Azerbaijan's political control over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh."²²⁹ Moscow's attempt to stop the violence through a form of direct control served only to heighten tensions and further added to the perception on both sides that Moscow was favoring the other side.

During 1989, the crisis developed into an even bloodier conflict and interethnic tensions reached a critical point. Direct rule over Nagorno-Karabakh had clearly failed. In order to stop the demonstrations in Baku and the APF blockade of Armenia, Moscow agreed to end its direct rule and to restore the authority of the local soviet. By reestablishing Azerbaijani control over the NKAO, "Moscow...returned the region to a virtual status quo ante."²³⁰ To compound its mistake, Moscow decreed that an "organizational committee," appointed by the Presidium of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet and staffed primarily by ethnic Azerbaijani officials, was to take over the day-to-day management of the NKAO until local party and state organs could be restored.²³¹ A Republican Organizational Committee (Orgkom), headed by the Second Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Polyanichko, was thus created. A final critical error involved the reassignment of authority over security functions in the NKAO to the Azerbaijani republic, a particularly dangerous

²²⁸Saroyan, 25.

²²⁹The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, 7.

²³⁰Saroyan, 27.

²³¹Fraser et al., 669.

step given the numerous incidents of interethnic violence in the oblast. Not surprisingly, the Armenian Supreme Soviet and representatives of the NKAO Soviet rejected the change in the NKAO's administration and voted for the unification of the two territories under a single Armenian government on December 1.²³²

Moscow's decision to abolish its direct rule of the NKAO can in part be explained as a desperate attempt to restore authority to the discredited Azerbaijan Communist Party which, unlike the Armenian Communists who had yielded power to the nationalists, remained in power. Moscow's attempt to strengthen the Azerbaijani communists failed. The APF continued to challenge the communist leadership. In January 1990, anti-Armenian pogroms again exploded in Baku. After refraining from direct military intervention for nearly two years, Moscow dispatched troops to Baku nearly a week after the pogroms had ended.²³³ Soviet troops invaded Baku on January 20, 1990, and in the process, targeted APF headquarters, which they destroyed, killing a number of APF leaders in the process. Whether or not the deployment of troops to the region was a response to the pogroms, or whether the pogroms presented a pretense for an invasion that was really aimed at destroying the Popular Front, it was clear that hardliners had gained the upper hand in Moscow and that Moscow found itself forced to use repressive measures in a desperate attempt to halt the conflict. Azerbaijan's First Secretary was ousted and replaced with Ayaz Mutalibov.²³⁴ Simultaneously with the invasion of troops in Baku, a state of emergency was declared in Nagorno-Karabakh and an additional 17,000 troops were dispatched to the region to enforce it. Coordinating their efforts with the Orgkom, Soviet troops in the NKAO conducted widespread searches and disarmed Armenian villages.²³⁵

After two years of tactics ranging from rejecting the petition for transfer on legal grounds, to offering concessions, imposing direct oversight, and then direct rule, Moscow

²³²Vaserman and Ginat, 353.

²³³Suny, "Revenge of the Past," 30.

²³⁴Saroyan, 29.

²³⁵Vaserman and Ginat, 354.

responded with direct military intervention. The gradual adoption of increasingly repressive measures signaled that Moscow was rapidly losing control over the conflict. Paramilitary groups began to form, raiding arsenals and police stations to secure the necessary arms. Buildings were seized in Yerevan, and independent militias operated on the border between the two republics. In July 1990, Gorbachev issued an ultimatum demanding that the militias be disarmed within fifteen days and threatening military intervention if the ruling was not enforced. Despite threats on the part of the central government, events continued to escalate. On August 23, 1990, Armenia declared itself a sovereign and independent state with Karabakh as an integral part of the new Republic of Armenia.

As the conflict continued to escalate out of the control of either the central leadership or the republican leaderships, the Soviet Union itself began to collapse. Moscow withdrew its forces from Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan revoked its autonomous status, prompting Armenians to vote for independence. Azerbaijan responded by sending eighteen Azerbaijani paramilitary battalions toward the enclave. In December, the Soviet Union collapsed and the three-year conflict was transformed into an undeclared war between two independent, post-Soviet republics.

By the time of the August 1991 coup d'état, the Soviet Union had become a weak state. It had lost its monopoly of force within its borders, and repeated efforts to resolve the growing crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, from concessions to direct rule, failed to satisfy either side. According to Proposition 5, if a state is weak and unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively to repress group mobilization, then ethnic groups will resort to violence. The Soviet Union had been unable to do either. Belated concessions were insufficient to meet Armenian demands, and repressive measures, when they were finally adopted nearly a year and a half after the conflict began, were unable to stop the rapidly escalating violence. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the Transcaucasus had escalated to full scale war. Neither concessions nor repression had prevented the outbreak of violence. Instead,

Moscow's fundamentally inconsistent attempts to resolve the conflict were directly responsible for the rapid escalation to full scale war.

International Support

The role of the Soviet leadership in the outbreak of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war was discussed in detail above as a critical source of violence at the state level. In this section, the examination of Moscow's role in the conflict continues, not as the central state power in an internal conflict, but as a third party in an undeclared war between two independent states. Although Moscow's role was fundamentally transformed by the Soviet collapse in December 1991, its influence as a third party did not lessen its impact on the escalation of violence. In fact, Russian Federation involvement in the conflict, under the guise of finding a solution to the ongoing violence, served to widen the war. According to Proposition 8, if a third party becomes involved in conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers, then the stakes of the conflict will be raised, the conflict will be transformed from an internal to an international conflict, and the ethnic group will be more likely to adopt a strategy of violence.

Three years of attempts by the Soviet leadership to resolve the ongoing dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh had failed to resolve the conflict. Finally, in the months prior to the Soviet Union's collapse, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbaev met with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan and successfully negotiated a ceasefire agreement in September 1991 that envisioned a substantial degree of autonomy for Nagorno-Karabakh. Two months later, however, a helicopter carrying Azerbaijani and Russian officials to the enclave for discussions on the implementation of the agreement was downed and the initiative failed.²³⁶ Azerbaijan blamed Armenia and retaliated by abolishing the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh on November 26, 1991. In response, the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh voted overwhelmingly

²³⁶Fuller, "Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus," 32.

for independence in December 1991 amidst heavy artillery fire from eighteen advancing Azeri paramilitary battalions.²³⁷ For the first time since the outbreak of hostilities, the Russian 366th Motor Rifle Division (MRD) in Stepanakert was ordered to “suppress hostile fire,” and authorized to return fire to defend itself.²³⁸

By early 1992, the conflict had been transformed into a full scale war between two independent post-Soviet republics, opening the door to mediation attempts by various states and international organizations. In the first few months after the Soviet collapse, Karabakh Armenian forces began a large scale offensive to seize all of Nagorno-Karabakh. In February, while CSCE talks were being held in Rome on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Russian Federation again attempted to settle the dispute. In a meeting in Moscow between Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev and the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia, an agreement was reached on the need for an immediate ceasefire, the restoration of communications, humanitarian aid, and continuing negotiations on a settlement.²³⁹ Within days of the agreement, however, Karabakh forces attacked the village of Khodzhalı, reportedly with the assistance of Russian troops from the 366th MRD armed with heavy artillery and tanks. Some 1,000 Azerbaijanis were killed in the first massacre conducted by the military in the war.²⁴⁰

The battle over Khodzhalı was in many ways a watershed. It was the first massacre of civilians in the Nagorno-Karabakh war and the first incident of violent ethnic cleansing. It was also a major Armenian military success and signaled the shift from what until this point had been a guerrilla struggle to “a conventional war between armies.”²⁴¹ Khodzhalı was the first of a series of Azerbaijani populated areas in Nagorno-Karabakh seized during the spring offensive of 1992. After successfully capturing Khodzhalı, Karabakh Armenian

²³⁷“Will Nagorno-Karabakh Lead to War?” *The Estimate* 4 (January 3–16, 1993): 3.

²³⁸“Karabakh Escalation Leads to Fear of CIS Involvement; Jitters About Turkish Exercise,” *The Estimate* 4 (February 28–March 12, 1992): 1.

²³⁹Fuller, “Russia’s Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus,” 32.

²⁴⁰Vaserman and Ginat, 355.

²⁴¹Thomas Goltz, “Letter From Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand,” *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1993): 101.

forces captured additional Azerbaijani populated areas in Karabakh and then in May 1992 expanded beyond the borders of the oblast to seize the strategic Lachin corridor, a six mile strip of land separating Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh. The Lachin corridor was particularly critical for the Armenian war effort because it allowed for the circumvention of the Azerbaijani blockade of Karabakh. Subsequently, food, fuel, weaponry, and “volunteers” entered Karabakh from Armenia, providing crucial assistance for the war effort.

The series of military successes that began with the seizure of Khodzhalı also caused a significant shift in international opinion. Prior to the Armenian offensive, international opinion had largely branded Azerbaijan as the aggressor in the conflict. Following Khodzhalı, and particularly after the seizure of Lachin, international opinion shifted in favor of Azerbaijan as details of the massacre and the expansion of the war beyond the NKAO’s borders became known. As a result, the Karabakh Armenians were increasingly isolated internationally, which served further to heighten the importance of the Lachin corridor as a lifeline for the Karabakh Armenians.

Finally, Khodzhalı is important because of the involvement of Russian troops in the battle. Azerbaijan claims that the Russian 366th MRD spearheaded the Armenian attack on Khodzhalı. Apparently, this claim was confirmed by two deserters from the 366th MRD.²⁴² While not denying the charges, the Russian media noted that those who had taken part in the battle had not received orders but acted “through insubordination.” According to eyewitness reports, the Russian troops also spearheaded the ethnic cleansing campaign in which fleeing civilians were cut down and then mutilated in the no-man’s-land between the two sides.²⁴³ Azerbaijan accused Armenian forces of massacre while Armenians claimed that Azerbaijani forces used the fleeing civilians as shields while they retreated. One author offers a third explanation: the massacres were carried out by Russian

²⁴²Goltz, 101.

²⁴³Ibid.

forces “determined to make Khodzhalı a point of no return in the escalation of hatred between the two peoples.”²⁴⁴

There is no evidence to determine conclusively which forces caused the massacre in Khodzhalı. It is not clear whether Russian involvement was in fact the work of rogue elements or whether it was directed by the Russian defense ministry, nor is it clear whether Russian involvement was in fact motivated, as Goltz claims, by a desire to foment hatred and create “a point of no return.” Regardless of the exact circumstances, Russian intervention on the side of the Armenians was more likely the result of Russia’s broader interests in the region. Russian influence in Azerbaijan was clearly threatened by the rising power of the anti-Russian APF, which demanded the withdrawal of all Russian forces from Azerbaijan. Georgia was similarly pursuing an independent course aimed at reducing Russian influence. Armenia, however, was one of Russia’s staunchest supporters in the Caucasus. From the outset of the conflict, Armenia openly aligned itself with Russia and signed an agreement establishing Russia’s right to station troops and control bases in Armenia. Armenia quickly realized that Russia would be an important protector in its conflict with Azerbaijan and agreed to join the CIS as one of its most enthusiastic supporters. Russian intervention may thus have been motivated by a desire to weaken the Azerbaijani government and force it “to abandon its road to independence and sovereignty”²⁴⁵ while supporting the pro-Russian Armenians.

The power vacuum created by the Soviet collapse created an opening for regional powers to compete with Russia for influence in the Caucasus. Since Turkey was viewed as biased by Armenia, and Russia was viewed as biased by Azerbaijan, Iran emerged as an acceptable third party to both sides. Armenians were particularly supportive of Iranian efforts, since they viewed Iran as an important counterweight to Turkey in the region. In late February, Iran attempted to broker a ceasefire, but “before the ink had dried,”

²⁴⁴Goltz, 101.

²⁴⁵Vaserman and Ginat, 358-359.

Armenian forces launched another large offensive. By the end of May, Armenian forces had successfully seized the whole of Nagorno-Karabakh. A second attempt by Iran that same month similarly failed to produce a successful ceasefire. The impressive military successes Armenian forces managed to gain while Iranian mediation efforts were underway made Iran's neutrality suspect and prompted Azerbaijan to view Iran as a biased party.²⁴⁶ Viewed with suspicion by Moscow and Azerbaijan, Iran's role in the region was subsequently marginalized. With Russia and Iran effectively precluded from the mediation process, the CSCE Minsk Group became the primary outside party involved in mediation efforts. By mid-September, 1992, however, its efforts were indefinitely suspended by Azerbaijan's refusal to recognize the Karabakh Armenian leadership as a party to the negotiations.²⁴⁷

The resignation of the pro-Russian Mutalibov government in May 1992 and the subsequent election of the "rabidly anti-Russian, pro-Turkish"²⁴⁸ Azerbaijan Popular Front in June 1992 fundamentally shifted the influence of various regional powers and international organizations vying for a role in the region. The election of the Popular Front candidate, Ebulfaz Elchibey, signaled a major victory for Turkish influence in Azerbaijan. Upon coming to power, Elchibey revoked Azerbaijan's membership in the CIS and declared as his main priority the recovery of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Elchibey's pro-Turkish policies elevated Turkey's role in the region. Encouraged by the West, particularly the United States, to assert its influence in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, Turkey became Azerbaijan's closest regional ally. With the CSCE initiative stymied by Azerbaijan's refusal to negotiate directly with the Karabakh Armenians, Turkey assumed the role of mediator and proposed a bilateral Turkish-Russian mediation effort. The initiative foundered, however, upon new Armenian advances. Karabakh Armenian forces seized the Kelbadzhar region in April 1993, and Azerbaijan and Turkey accused

²⁴⁶Vaserman and Ginat, 360.

²⁴⁷Fuller, "Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus," 32.

²⁴⁸Ibid.

Russia of intervening. Again Russian intervention was most likely motivated by a desire to weaken the APF government, strengthen Armenia, and undermine Turkish influence.

As Turkey's influence expanded, Russia's interests increasingly coincided with those of Armenia and the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. When the 366th MRD withdrew in late February 1992, most of its equipment was transferred to the Karabakh forces. In addition, Russian forces repeatedly intervened on the side of the Karabakh Self Defense Forces. The most publicized case of Russian involvement stems from the Azerbaijani arrest of six special forces soldiers, all Russian nationals, in September 1992. The subsequent investigation uncovered that they had been recruited by a Russian officer attached to the 366th MRD and that they were paid 75,000 rubles each by the Armenian Ministry of Defense. The captured Russian forces had been previously assigned to the Russian 7th Army in Armenia, but were not listed as deserters until they were sentenced to death by the Azerbaijani courts, at which time Russia requested their extradition to stand trial for desertion in Moscow.²⁴⁹ In another case, Russian troops from the 128th regiment of the Russian 7th Army in Armenia reportedly assisted the Karabakh Armenian attack on Kelbadzhar in April 1993. Retreating Azerbaijani forces apparently intercepted military radio transmissions, conducted in colloquial Russian, about coordinates for artillery fire along mountain roads and directives to supply trucks coming from Armenia.²⁵⁰

The seizure of Kelbadzhar sparked strong reactions internationally. On April 30, 1993, the UN Security Council condemned the incursion in Resolution 822, which called for the withdrawal of "foreign and local Armenian forces, whether regular or irregular" from occupied territory, a halt to hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, and a resumption of the peace negotiations.²⁵¹ Three days later, Resolution 822 became the basis for an ambitious tripartite US-Turkish-Russian peace plan. Having suffered severe losses

²⁴⁹Based on the Azerbaijani capture of six Spetsnaz forces on September 11, 1992. See Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 63n225. For full details of the capture and subsequent trial, see Goltz, 98-100.

²⁵⁰Goltz, 103-104. See also Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 8.

²⁵¹Fuller, "Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus," 33.

to the Armenian offensives, Azerbaijan endorsed the plan, as did Armenia.²⁵² President Elchibey declared a unilateral ceasefire in Karabakh to facilitate the implementation of the plan. However, the Committee for Defense, the governing body in Nagorno-Karabakh, rejected the plan on the grounds that it did not provide guarantees for the safety of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, nor did it stipulate an end to the Azerbaijani economic blockade.²⁵³ Under international pressure, Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan pressured the Karabakh leadership to accept the plan. It was subsequently modified, and on June 14, 1993, the Karabakh leadership signed the agreement.

The tripartite peace plan, however, fell victim to a coup d'état in Azerbaijan in June 1993 that toppled the Elchibey government. The series of Armenian offensives, with Russian intervention, had fundamentally weakened the APF government. Increasingly it had become apparent that the Elchibey government was either unwilling or unable to make substantial progress toward its goal of quickly ending the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The coup began in early June, and by the end of the month, Elchibey had been replaced by pro-Russian leader, Geider Aliyev, a former First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, KGB General, and Politburo member.

There is strong evidence supporting the claim that the coup was masterminded, or at least encouraged, by Moscow. The perpetrator of the coup, Surat Huseinov, a merchant who amassed a considerable fortune as director of a state wool factory and who subsequently claims to have spent a considerable part of his personal fortune building up the Azerbaijani Army, became an important middleman between the Russian defense establishment and Elchibey's government following Elchibey's rise to power, procuring essential arms and spare parts as well as Russian officers to train Azerbaijani forces. Unlike Armenia, which openly advertised for Russian specialists to help develop its armed forces

²⁵²Elizabeth Fuller, "Yeltsin, Ter-Petrosian Discuss Bilateral Relations, Karabakh," *RFE/RL News Brief* (May 26, 1993).

²⁵³Elizabeth Fuller, "Armenia, Azerbaijan Accept Tripartite Peace Plan," *RFE/RL News Brief* (May 27, 1993).

and reportedly hired Russian and Ukrainian mercenaries to fight the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azerbaijani Popular Front government under Elchibey could not be seen openly requesting Russian assistance. Huseinov thus assumed an important role as a link between the Russian defensive establishment and the APF government.

In his role as a procurement agent for Azerbaijan, Huseinov amassed a remarkable amount of weaponry from former Soviet stockpiles, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, anti-aircraft guns, and other heavy equipment. None of the weaponry Huseinov controlled was registered as belonging to the national army of Azerbaijan.²⁵⁴ As a middleman, Huseinov charged a commission, which he then used to fund his private militia. Apparently soldiers in his private army were being paid salaries at five times the rate of regular Azerbaijani soldiers in the national army.²⁵⁵ With the influx of Russian weaponry, Huseinov's forces were able to make substantial progress in regaining territory lost to the Armenian offensives.

In October 1992, however, the Azerbaijani Popular Front government voted officially to reject membership in the CIS, which in retrospect marked a critical turning point in the war. Suddenly the Azerbaijani offensive became bogged down in a bloody stalemate, resulting in an increasingly high death toll. "Spare parts were not to be had at any price."²⁵⁶ Air attacks against Azerbaijani cities near the Karabakh border, reportedly conducted by Russian forces stationed in Armenia, further signaled a dangerous shift in Russian involvement in the war against the Azerbaijani side. By early February 1993, with losses mounting significantly on the Azerbaijani side, Elchibey stripped Huseinov of his command and ordered him back to Baku. Huseinov refused. Within days, Karabakh Armenian forces launched a massive offensive, resulting in the loss of all of Azerbaijan's gains won over the previous nine months. Whole units began to desert to join Huseinov's

²⁵⁴Goltz, 111.

²⁵⁵Ibid.

²⁵⁶Ibid., 113-114.

rogue regiment in Ganja. By April 1993, a substantially weakened Azerbaijani army lost Kelbadzhar to advancing Karabakh Armenian forces.²⁵⁷

Although Russia cut off the important pipeline of weaponry and parts for the Azerbaijani national army following Azerbaijan's rejection of CIS membership, Russian forces maintained a close relationship with Huseinov's rogue units, stationed in the barracks of the Russian 104th Airborne Infantry Division in Ganja. By the time of the coup in June 1993, Huseinov had dozens of armored vehicles in the Russian garrison, over which he assumed control when the 104th Airborne Division, the last Russian unit in Azerbaijan, pulled out of Azerbaijan on May 28, 1993, a full year ahead of schedule. "The precipitous removal of Russian protection around Huseinov—as well as the prospect of considerable weapons stocks falling into his hands" served as "bait in a well-planned trap for the Elchibey government."²⁵⁸

The Elchibey government attempted forcibly to disarm Huseinov's unit in Ganja on June 4, which resulted in bloody clashes between the Azerbaijani army and Huseinov's units, the first instance of Azerbaijanis fighting Azerbaijanis since the outbreak of the war. The clashes forced Elchibey to order his troops to fall back in order to prevent further bloodshed. Huseinov's men marched on toward Baku, demanding Elchibey's resignation. Elchibey called on Geider Aliyev to intervene. Aliyev, with Elchibey's sponsorship, was elected as chairman of the parliament. With Elchibey refusing to resign, Huseinov continued his advance on Baku, and on June 18, with Huseinov's forces poised outside the city, Elchibey fled Baku. On June 24, the Azerbaijan National Assembly reconvened and voted to strip Elchibey of all his powers. Three days later, Huseinov announced the end of the revolt, pledging his loyalty to Aliyev, who appointed him to the vacant post of prime minister.

²⁵⁷Goltz, 113-114.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 114.

The manner in which Russia skillfully managed to bring down the Elchibey government by supplying and then cutting off those supplies in order to weaken the Azerbaijani government, withdrawing its forces well ahead of schedule, and then by protecting and supplying Huseinov's units with the necessary weaponry, supports the argument that Russia had a strong role in toppling the Elchibey government. It also clearly illustrates that Russia was not supporting either side exclusively in the war. While Russia's 7th Army in Armenia was reportedly involved in the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh in order to weaken the Elchibey government through losses on the battlefield, Russia was also supplying the Azerbaijani army, and then suddenly cutting off that supply, to weaken the Azerbaijani government from within, and thereby preventing Elchibey from realizing his declared goal of bringing a swift end to the Karabakh war on the battlefield. The Armenian offensive, which resumed conveniently three days after Azerbaijani army units clashed with Huseinov's forces, clearly served Russian interests by further undermining the APF government.

Russia's involvement on both sides also served to demonstrate to Azerbaijan that it could not ignore Russian influence in the region. Russia skillfully demonstrated that Azerbaijan's choice of Turkey over Russia as its closest ally involved more costs than benefits. Even though Russia's role as a mediator declined during APF rule in Azerbaijan, Russia remained the most important regional player in the conflict. Motivated by its broader regional interests, Moscow supported both sides at various stages, and often simultaneously, in order to prevent either side from defeating the other until Russia's influence in both Azerbaijan and Armenia was firmly reestablished.

The power vacuum created by the chaos in Azerbaijan in June 1993 created an opportunity for Karabakh forces to launch another offensive. In July, Karabakh forces captured Agdam, an Azerbaijani region six kilometers from the Karabakh border from where Azerbaijani forces had been staging attacks against the NKAO.²⁵⁹ The attack on

²⁵⁹Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 19-20.

Agdam spurred a new round of negotiations. The UN Security Council passed resolution 853 on July 29 which condemned the seizure of Agdam, called on all parties to cease supplying weapons to the conflict, and called on Armenia to use its influence with the Karabakh leadership to bring about their compliance with all UN resolutions and Minsk group initiatives. The Karabakh leadership rejected the resolution, which it claimed was biased, based on a report by the former OSCE Minsk Group chairman Mario Rafaelli, who the Armenians claimed favored Azerbaijan in the conflict.²⁶⁰ While Karabakh Armenians accused the Minsk group of unilaterally branding Karabakh the aggressor while ignoring Azerbaijani transgressions, Azerbaijan welcomed the resolution. Rather than deal directly with the Karabakh Armenians, which Azerbaijan had begun to consider following the losses to Armenia on the battlefield, UN Resolution 853 encouraged Azerbaijan to believe that the international community would stop the Armenian offensive and resolve the dispute in Azerbaijan's favor.

With further negotiations halted by Azerbaijan's refusal to negotiate with the Karabakh leadership and the Karabakh leadership refusing to adhere to the settlements negotiated by the various mediation efforts which they viewed as inherently biased against them, a new offensive by Karabakh forces expanded Armenian control over Azerbaijani territory, effectively creating a buffer zone between Karabakh and Azerbaijan.²⁶¹ Again a peace initiative had failed to bring a resolution to the now five-year-old conflict. The attack on Agdam signaled that the Karabakh Armenians, having secured their western flank, were willing to seize Azerbaijani territory in lieu of a peace plan in an attempt to force Azerbaijan to deal directly with the Karabakh Armenian leadership.²⁶²

Upon assuming power, Aliyev undertook a fundamental shift in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Recognizing that only Moscow could bring an end to the war, Aliyev immediately sought to repair Azerbaijan's relationship with Russia. On September 5, 1993,

²⁶⁰Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 28.

²⁶¹Joseph Masih, "Military Strategy in Nagorno-Karabakh," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (April 1994): 162.

²⁶²*Ibid.*, 162.

Aliyev met with Russian officials in Moscow to correct what he termed "serious errors" made by the Elchibey regime, including Azerbaijan's withdrawal from the CIS.²⁶³ In a meeting with Yeltsin and Grachev, Aliyev requested that Russia use "the full authority of the Russian Army, the Defense Ministry and personal relations with the Armenian leadership "to seek a resolution to the conflict."²⁶⁴

Aliyev's return to power in Baku also signaled the end of Azerbaijan's close relationship with Turkey. Aliyev extended Azerbaijan's visa requirement to Turks, who were previously exempt, and then rounded up and deported all Turkish citizens in Baku who did not possess the necessary documentation.²⁶⁵ Some 1,600 Turkish military experts and volunteers serving in Azerbaijan were dismissed, and many of the agreements between Elchibey and Ankara were reversed.²⁶⁶ As its relations with Turkey cooled, Azerbaijan's relations with Iran improved markedly. Azerbaijan hired a force of more than one thousand Afghan Mujaheddin, through Iranian auspices, to strengthen the Azerbaijani army in August 1993.²⁶⁷ Despite Aliyev's efforts, Azerbaijan continued to sustain losses on the battlefield, a clear indication that Iran's intervention was not welcomed by Moscow.²⁶⁸ By the first week of September, Karabakh forces had seized control of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory.

The coup in Azerbaijan presented Moscow with the opportunity to assume a much higher profile in the mediation process and marginalize the CSCE and other regional actors. In July 1993, Yeltsin dispatched a special envoy, Vladimir Kazimirov, to Baku for talks with the new Azerbaijani leadership. His subsequent pronouncements reflected a shift in Russia's position. Kazimirov repeatedly stressed that Russia considered the OSCE effort to be of limited effectiveness because it lack the means, unlike Russia, to enforce an eventual

²⁶³Elizabeth Fuller, "Aliev in Moscow," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 176 (September 6, 1993).

²⁶⁴Elizabeth Fuller, "Yeltsin, Aliev Meet," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 171 (September 7, 1993).

²⁶⁵Elizabeth Fuller, "The Transcaucasus: War, Turmoil, Economic Collapse," *RFE/RL Research Report 3* (January 7, 1994): 54.

²⁶⁶Kechichian and Karasik, 64.

²⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 63.

²⁶⁸*Ibid.*

ceasefire.²⁶⁹ Aliyev echoed this argument and began to distance himself from both the CSCE and the US-Turkish-Russian mediation process, claiming that they had achieved nothing.²⁷⁰ At a CSCE Foreign Minister's Meeting in Rome in November 1993, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister, Hasan Hasanov, delivered a bitter attack on the Minsk Group's involvement in the conflict. He accused the CSCE of siding with Armenia and tacitly condoning Armenian ethnic cleansing, while at the same time pressuring Azerbaijan to make "unacceptable decisions."²⁷¹

In a fundamental policy shift, Aliyev agreed to hold direct talks with the Karabakh leadership following a meeting with Yeltsin in early September. On September 13, for the first time, bilateral Azerbaijani-Karabakh talks were held in Moscow under the aegis of the Russian Foreign Ministry, producing a ceasefire agreement for Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite Russia's heightened involvement in the negotiations, peace was short-lived. In October, Karabakh Armenian forces launched another offensive. By the end of the month, Karabakh forces had seized the Zangelan province, essentially all of the remaining Azerbaijani territory between Karabakh and the Araks river, the border between Azerbaijan and Iran, thereby controlling 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory.²⁷² The fighting resulted in another wave of refugees, who were forced to cross the Araks river into Iran to escape Armenian forces.²⁷³

The UNSC passed Resolution 874, condemning the fighting and calling on both sides to accept the OSCE Minsk Group's timetable for resolving the conflict. Azerbaijan rejected the proposal, claiming that it was being treated like the "defeated side."²⁷⁴ At the request of the Azerbaijani government, Iran, who had become increasingly pro-Azerbaijani

²⁶⁹ Fuller, "The Transcaucasus: War, Turmoil, Economic Collapse," 54.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Elizabeth Fuller, "Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the Karabakh Mediation Process," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3 (February 25, 1993): 32.

²⁷² Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 44.

²⁷³ Tamara Dragadze, "Conflict in the Transcaucasus and the Value of Inventory Control," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (February 1994): 71.

²⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 39.

during the recent attacks, agreed to establish a refugee camp within Azerbaijan's territory, for Azerbaijani civilians displaced by the ongoing Armenian offensive. In addition, in an effort to place pressure on Armenia, Iran initiated a large scale exercise near its frontier with Armenia. With the specter of a growing Iranian role in the conflict, Turkey warned that it "would not remain a distant onlooker" in the event of a clash.²⁷⁵ Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller warned advancing Armenia forces that "if one spot of Nakhichevan is touched, I will go to the Parliament and obtain authorization for war."²⁷⁶ Turkey posted four battalions along the border with Armenia and placed them on heightened alert.

There is some evidence that the Armenian offensive was supported by Russia in retaliation for Azerbaijan's refusal to agree to a Russian proposal on jurisdiction over parts of the Caspian Sea and its rich oil deposits, or alternatively, to agree to stationing Russian troops in Azerbaijan.²⁷⁷ During the Russian sponsored peace talks in September, Russia apparently offered to deploy Russian troops to monitor the ceasefire agreement. In return, Aliyev was presented with a Russian demand for the return of Russian troops to Azerbaijan and for the deployment of Russian border guards along the Azerbaijani-Iranian frontier. Aliyev refused. As a result, Karabakh Armenian forces launched their offensive into the Zangelan province. While both Iran and Turkey called on the UN Security Council to condemn the aggression, which it did in UNSC Resolution 874, "there was a deafening silence from Russia."²⁷⁸

In mid-November, Aliyev may have been offered an alternative deal. In exchange for Russian peacekeepers, Azerbaijan was to grant Russia a share in Azerbaijan's oil. Subsequently, Azerbaijan announced that the independent Russian oil company, Lukoil, would receive a part of Azerbaijan's 30 percent share of the consortium that is to exploit

²⁷⁵Margaret Shapiro, "Russian Mediation Urged in Caucasus," *The Washington Post* (September 9, 1993): A6.

²⁷⁶Shapiro, A6.

²⁷⁷Dragadze, 71.

²⁷⁸Fuller, "Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the Karabakh Mediation Process," 33.

Azerbaijan's Shiraq and Azeri fields.²⁷⁹ Clearly the announcement met Russian demands. In December, Azerbaijan launched a major offensive to reclaim Armenian-controlled territories. With the assistance of Mujaheddin forces, which first arrived in the fall of 1993, and Russian and Ukrainian mercenaries, Azerbaijan forced the Armenians to retreat. As a result, Armenian forces from Armenia became involved in the conflict, and by mid-February, most of Azerbaijan's advances had been pushed back. The fighting finally came to a halt in February 1994, when Russian mediation efforts produced a protocol on troop withdrawal and the creation of mutual security zones.²⁸⁰

Throughout the winter of 1993-1994, the OSCE Minsk group mediation process was essentially eclipsed by Kazimirov's shuttle diplomacy between the various capitals.²⁸¹ The marginalization of parallel OSCE efforts led to mounting criticism of Russia's efforts to monopolize the mediation process, prompting Kazimirov to complain in November that "we feel very little support from other governments for our efforts....There is a jealous attitude: why is Russia doing it and not the Minsk group?"²⁸² According to John Maresca, the former U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE,

At first, Russia fully supported the Minsk Group, but in 1993 Russia reacted its earlier independent mediation effort....The reason was clear: Russia wished to reestablish its dominance in the region and to exclude outsiders, namely the US and Turkey. Russia wants to dominate Armenia and Azerbaijan for a number of reasons. Most obviously, Moscow would like to reestablish control of the former Soviet frontier with Turkey and Iran, and to share in Azerbaijan's oil riches. To accomplish these aims, Russia has been pressuring Azerbaijan to accept the reentry of Russian troops as a separation force and as border guards, as to give Russia a share of the oil concessions being developed by western companies. For leverage, the Russians have used an implicit but dramatic threat: if Azerbaijan does not comply, Russia will step up its backing for Armenia...with disastrous military results for the Azeris.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Fuller, "Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the Karabakh Mediation Process," 33.

²⁸⁰ Roy Allison, *Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States*, Chaillot Paper 18 (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, November 1994), 8.

²⁸¹ Elizabeth Fuller, "The Karabakh Mediation Process: Grachev versus the CSCE?" *RFE/RL Research Report* 3 (June 10, 1994): 15.

²⁸² quoted in Fuller, "Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the Karabakh Mediation Process," 33.

²⁸³ quoted in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 83.

Kazimirov responded by arguing that “the former representative of the USA in the Minsk Group, who at the time played the ‘first violin’ within the group, very openly wrote in his notes and article about how it was necessary to ‘restrain Russia in its neoimperialist ambitions.’”²⁸⁴ Kazimirov further claimed that Maresca “did not make an exception even for a ceasefire.”²⁸⁵ According to Kazimirov, “it was Russia that presented the most realistic mechanism for ensuring steady peace in the region—the use [of] the power of disunion as a guarantor of observation for the ceasefire and cessation of military acts.”²⁸⁶ Kazimirov rejected charges that Russia was guilty of “imperial ambitions,” claiming that such accusations were prompted by parties who wished to forestall a Russian brokered peace settlement in order to prevent Russia’s regional prestige from being enhanced.²⁸⁷

Despite criticism by OSCE members of Russia’s monopolization of the peace process, Russian efforts produced a lasting ceasefire in May 1994. In a clear indication of Russia’s success in marginalizing the OSCE, the negotiations were conducted at the same time as an OSCE visit to the region. However, no OSCE Minsk group representative attended the meeting, in spite of Azerbaijan’s requests. Developed by Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, the plan called for only Russian officers to head the forty-nine observer posts and for 1,800 “CIS troops,” under a Russian General, to separate the hostile forces and protect the observers.²⁸⁸

The Grachev plan was a marked departure from parallel OSCE proposals which envisioned a mixed OSCE force, with no country contributing more than 30 percent of the troops. Russia’s power to force an agreement is reflected in Grachev’s warning to the two combatants during the negotiations:

If you want me to continue to be your mediator, by all means, but if there are other opinions about Russian peacekeepers—keep killing yourselves further, we won’t waste our time or money.... What I suggest will be agreed

²⁸⁴V. Kazimirov, “A History of the Karabakh Conflict,” *International Affairs* (Moscow) 42 (1996): 191.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*

²⁸⁶*Ibid.*

²⁸⁷Fuller, “The Karabakh Mediation Process: Grachev versus the CSCE?” 15.

²⁸⁸Allison, 8.

on, and without any ulterior motives.... You can be sure, if I deploy our troops there, there will be a second step, and a third, and all the rest.²⁸⁹

As a result of Russia's mediation efforts, the violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis ended on May 12, 1994.²⁹⁰ "The agreement mark[ed] the culmination of a single-minded Russian effort to wrest the initiative in the Karabakh mediation process away from the CSCE."²⁹¹ Moscow successfully brought Azerbaijan back within its sphere of influence and marginalized competing mediation efforts through the alternating use of force and negotiation. Azerbaijan was faced with little alternative but to acquiesce to the reestablishment of Russian influence in the region, for to fail to do so would have risked more extensive territorial losses to the Karabakh Armenians.

According to Proposition 8, international support on the part of the various regional powers and international organizations, but especially on the part of the Russian Federation, raised the stakes of conflict and transformed the war from an internal to an international conflict. Russian involvement, from its initial efforts to end the conflict, to its direct intervention on the Karabakh Armenian side and at times simultaneous assistance to the Azerbaijani side, served to escalate the violence. It was clearly in Russia's interest at various points in the conflict for the war to escalate in order to force the Azerbaijani side to acquiesce to Russian demands. "Aliyev and Azerbaijan were the victims of Russia's military and economic spigot. Moscow controlled the pace of developments on the battlefield, assisting the Nagorno-Karabakh forces when Baku was winning battles, reversing its aid when Armenian forces achieved new victories. Russia strove for a stalemate, and both Armenia and Azerbaijan were its victims."²⁹²

Violence also escalated as a result of competing international mediation efforts. According to the Armenian position, "at one or another time, Turkey, Russia and Iran each have undertaken unilateral mediation motivated in large part by their own regional interests.

²⁸⁹Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, quoted in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 84n300.

²⁹⁰Kazimirov, 182.

²⁹¹Fuller, "The Karabakh Mediation Process: Grachev versus the CSCE?" 14.

²⁹²Kechichian and Karasik, 63.

In each instance, the bilateral problems between Azerbaijan and Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh were further exacerbated.²⁹³ Parallel mediation efforts also provided the parties to the conflict with the opportunity to “shop around” for the most advantageous terms, leading one or both parties to escalate the conflict further in order to prompt a more favorable settlement. Finally, the existence of competing mediation efforts provided the Karabakh Armenians with the opportunity to pursue their strategy in the war: seize as much Azerbaijani territory as possible to give the Karabakh Armenians leverage in the negotiations, create a buffer zone around Karabakh, and force Azerbaijan to negotiate directly with the Karabakh Armenians. As a result, the five years of international mediation efforts by different forces only hampered the process toward peace.²⁹⁴ Peace only became possible when the main third party to the conflict, Russia, had realized its broader interests in the region.

Arms and Financial Resources

A final critical source of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war is the access to arms and financial resources. Without such access, interethnic violence on the scale witnessed in the Nagorno-Karabakh war cannot be sustained. As in the war in the former Yugoslavia where JNA stockpiles provided the main sources of weaponry, the vast resources of the Soviet military meant that neither of the combatants had to look far for the necessary resources to embark on a course of interethnic war. While regional powers such as Turkey and Iran supplied weapons, instructors, and even forces, the primary source of weaponry in the war was the Soviet Union, and after 1991, Russia. According to Proposition 9, if the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or from the military

²⁹³The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, 19.

²⁹⁴Ambassador Robert Shugarian of the Embassy of Armenia in Washington, D.C., in a speech at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Medford, MA on April 16, 1996.

itself, then there is a strong tendency for ethnic groups with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of interethnic warfare.

Soviet military stocks, and after December 1991, the Russian defense establishment served as the primary supply of weaponry for both the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians. At first, when violence was still limited to isolated incidents in Nagorno-Karabakh, the combatants were limited to such weapons as hunting rifles, shotguns, knives, and an occasional grenade or Molotov cocktail.²⁹⁵ By the end of 1991, however, both sides had acquired a large stock of weaponry from the disintegrating Soviet Armed forces. Some of the weaponry was purchased from local Soviet commanders, but most of it was seized from Soviet barracks and weapons stockpiles. Heavy artillery, rocket-propelled grenades, rocket launchers, tanks, and armored personnel carriers were either sold to, "loaned" to, or seized by both sides.²⁹⁶ The bulk of Soviet weaponry, however, was acquired by agreements on the allocation of former Soviet weaponry between Russia and the newly independent republics.

Until 1992, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh were fighting a losing battle against the far better equipped Azerbaijani forces. On October 10, 1991, following the decree creating the Azerbaijan Armed Forces, the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet voted to "nationalize" all property of the Soviet 4th Army currently located in Azerbaijan. The 140,000 Azerbaijani conscripts serving in the USSR were recalled to serve in the newly formed Azerbaijan Armed Forces. The Azerbaijani Army was equipped with some 300 tanks, 800 armored personnel carriers, 330 artillery pieces and rocket launchers, and some 45 combat aircraft, most of which was illegally acquired from Soviet military barracks prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union.²⁹⁷ Having acquired the necessary weaponry, Azerbaijan was able to launch the first attack in the Nagorno-Karabakh war in December 1991.

²⁹⁵Masih, 160.

²⁹⁶Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 4.

²⁹⁷Masih, 160.

In the Spring of 1992, the balance in military forces shifted. The 366th MRD in Stepanakert withdrew, leaving its weaponry to the Karabakh forces. On May 15, 1992, the Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia signed the Tashkent Agreement on the partition and transfer of former Soviet military equipment of the Transcaucasus Military District among the three Transcaucasian states. This massive infusion of military equipment into an already escalating conflict transformed the conflict to a full scale war. In the Spring of 1992, the Karabakh Armenian forces launched an offensive, seizing all of Karabakh and the strategic Lachin corridor, linking Karabakh with Armenia proper. This important corridor became a major conduit for supplying the Armenian forces in Karabakh with crucial supplies, including weaponry, food, fuel, and "volunteers." Despite the fact that the Azerbaijani forces were better equipped than the Karabakh Armenian forces, the Azerbaijani Army was from the outset poorly led and politically divided, with certain units owing loyalty to individual warlords, such as Surat Huseinov, rather than to the state itself. As a result, Azerbaijan failed to create an effective army. The critical influx of weaponry in 1992 thus gave the Karabakh Armenian forces the necessary supplies with which to launch their spring offensives and to defeat the better equipped Azerbaijani Army.

After the allocation of Soviet weapons stockpiles through the Tashkent Agreement, Russia remained the principle weapons supplier to both sides. Weapons reached both sides of the conflict in three ways: through seizure from Russian stockpiles, capture in battle, and purchases from the Russian defense establishment. Former Soviet Arms depots provided an important source of ammunition and weaponry for both sides. During 1992, there were mysterious fires and explosions at former Soviet Army ammunition dumps outside Baku and Agdam in Azerbaijan and near Yerevan, Armenia.²⁹⁸ Indeed, "there have been too many successful raids on Soviet Arms depots in the Caucasus...to write off as accidents."²⁹⁹ Many of these seizures may have been authorized by local military

²⁹⁸Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 86-87n310.

²⁹⁹Goltz, 111.

commanders for personal gain, and then covered up by “remarkably destructive explosions..., totally incinerating all inventory.”³⁰⁰ According to Philip Remler, a political officer in the U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan, these explosions were part of a cover-up to “destroy the evidence of what is not because you have already stolen and sold the lot.”³⁰¹ A second important source of weaponry, particularly for the Karabakh forces, was the capture of weapons from the Azerbaijani army. The Karabakh Armenian forces acquired a large number of tanks and armored personnel carriers from the Azerbaijani Army through capture on the battlefield, including Soviet T-72 tanks refitted with Turkish communications equipment.³⁰²

The third and most important means by which former Soviet and Russian weaponry reached both sides after 1992 was through direct arms purchases, reportedly on easy credit terms.³⁰³ The advantage of Soviet equipment was that anyone who served in the Soviet Army was familiar with it and ammunition was easy to obtain. In Azerbaijan, while the APF was in power, these sales were accomplished through middlemen such as Surat Huseinov, who procured essential weaponry, spare parts and ammunition for the Azerbaijani Army and for his own units. In Armenia, weapons purchases were negotiated directly, and in peak periods, some forty Russian transport planes landed in Yerevan’s airport daily.

As the primary weapons supplier, Moscow was able to influence to a great extent the course of the conflict. Both sides were dependent on Moscow for equipment, which Moscow could then use as leverage against both sides to influence the conflict according to its own regional interests. In addition, by controlling the type of weapons systems available to both sides, Moscow could also determine the strengths and weakness of both forces, ensuring the advantage or disadvantage to either side, or alternatively ensuring a regional

³⁰⁰Goltz, 111.

³⁰¹quoted in Ibid.

³⁰²Felix Corley, “Nagorno-Karabakh—An Eyewitness Account,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (April 1994): 164.

³⁰³Corley, 165.

stalemate. Neither Armenia nor Karabakh was able to purchase fixed wing aircraft, but both were able to acquire anti-aircraft systems to shoot down enemy aircraft. Azerbaijan was able to acquire fixed wing aircraft, including Su-25s and MiG-29s which were used on bombing raids over Stepanakert, but was unable to purchase anti-aircraft systems.³⁰⁴ By controlling the timing, amounts and types of supplies each side was buying, Moscow could award or punish either side, influence the scale and extent of the battles, and determine to a great extent the success or failure of either side on the battlefield.

As the primary weapons supplier, Moscow was also able to control the impact of other regional suppliers of financial and military resources. Azerbaijan was able to purchase weapons from Israel, China, and Turkey,³⁰⁵ and able to secure a Saudi aid package worth \$100 million, in the form of a loan from the Islamic Development Bank.³⁰⁶ The primary outside supplier for the Karabakh Armenians was Armenia itself, who purchased its supplies primarily from Russia, either on easy credit or with funds supplied by the powerful Armenian Diaspora.

As the primary supplier of weapons, however, Moscow could limit the impact of such outside assistance by increasing the supply of military equipment to the other side, thus ensuring that it remained the dominant source of arms and financial assistance. As the primary supplier, Moscow thus controlled the course of the conflict. It determined the extent and scale of advances on the battlefield, thereby making both sides fully dependent on Moscow for their continued survival during the war. The ready supply of weaponry on easy credit terms ensured the escalation of violence and the transformation of the conflict to a full scale war that would last until May 1994, when Russian interests shifted in favor of a ceasefire. To force both sides to acquiesce to Russian terms, Moscow supplied weapons to the Armenian side, resulting in substantial losses to Azerbaijan, forcing it to agree to

³⁰⁴Corley, 165.

³⁰⁵Ibid.

³⁰⁶Kechichian and Karasik, 65.

Grachev's terms. Ultimately, the extent of Russia's control over the actual conduct of the war ensured that its role as supplier determined the extent and scale of interethnic violence.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh war in this chapter, six of the ten propositions about the sources of ethnic violence developed in Section I are relevant to understanding what caused the outbreak of violent interethnic conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. These six propositions identify the critical triggers of interethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh case.

Ethnonationalism presents one of the most important sources of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. At its root, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a war over territory, a tiny enclave in the mountains of Azerbaijan that Armenians view as the cradle of their culture, their refuge during centuries of invasions, and their one remaining historical territory not yet lost to ethnic strangers. Armenian ethnonationalists claim that Karabakh belongs exclusively to them. This claim is based on three arguments. First, Armenians have maintained a continuous presence in Karabakh for millennia. As a result, Armenians are the true indigenous people in Karabakh and, by virtue of their indigenesness, have the exclusive right both to possess and rule the region, a right that transcends any claims by ethnic strangers, the Azerbaijanis who have attempted to wrest this historic homeland from the Armenian nation. Second, the loss of Karabakh was the last in a long series of historical injustices suffered by the Armenian nation. Armenians claim that their right to self determination, repeatedly denied them by their enemies, the Turks and the Azerbaijanis, must finally be realized for the Armenian population of Karabakh. Finally, Karabakh's initial inclusion in Azerbaijan was illegal. As a result, the "reunification" of Karabakh with Armenia is both morally and legally justified. Because Karabakh represents the essence of the Armenian ethnic identity, that which makes the Armenian nation unique in a most vital way, and since the failure to reclaim Karabakh would leave the Armenian nation

incomplete, Armenian ethnonationalists shifted from a strategy of non-violent protest to one of interethnic violence and full scale war to reclaim “orphaned Karabakh.”

A second important source of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war is the belief, shared by Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened by the policies and actions of ethnic strangers, the Azerbaijanis who controlled the oblast. Although Gurr argues that ethnonationalists are motivated by past histories of autonomy and desires for revenge and rarely by grievances and inequalities, Armenian ethnonationalists were motivated by both. In fact, Armenian grievances over Azerbaijani rule of the oblast were extensive. Violence was sparked not by these grievances alone, however, but by the dire threat these grievances together presented to the Armenian nation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Three factors led Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened: the decrease in the size of the Armenian population of the oblast relative to the Azerbaijanis such that Armenians would soon lose their majority status (Proposition 3.2), the lack of cultural autonomy with respect to education and language use such that the “existence, dignity and identity” of the Armenian nation were directly threatened (Proposition 3.3), and pressure on group lands and resources such that the lives and livelihoods of the Armenian nation were at stake (Proposition 3.4). A fourth factor, the decrease in the absolute size of the Armenian population (Proposition 3.1) did not apply in the Karabakh case since the Armenian population actually increased. Having concluded that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened, the Armenians adopted a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense (Proposition 3).

The decision on the part of the Azerbaijani leadership to adopt a strategy of interethnic war is a third critical source of ethnic violence at the group level (Proposition 4). This decision was not a result of a carefully constructed and well-planned strategy based on an assessment of Azerbaijan’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to its interests. Rather, the decision to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence was driven by a fundamental struggle for

power between the ruling Azerbaijani communists and the Azerbaijan Popular Front. In order to mobilize support for the Popular Front, the APF leadership adopted an increasingly radical position toward the Karabakh conflict that forced the communist leadership to adopt a similarly hardline approach. The competition between the two leaderships drove Azerbaijani strategy toward the conflict in an increasingly radical direction and ultimately propelled the Azerbaijani leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in a desperate attempt to maintain its hold on power.

The sole source of ethnic violence at the state level was the vacillating and contradictory policies of the Soviet Union's leadership in Moscow. Until the introduction of glasnost and perestroika in 1985, the Soviet Union could be defined as a strong state, capable of repressing ethnic mobilization and thus preventing the outbreak of ethnic violence (Proposition 5.4). Following Gorbachev's rise to power, however, the Soviet Union began to decay as latent resentments and aspirations resurfaced. Beginning in 1987 with the Armenian petition for transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, Moscow's political maneuvers and emphasized equidistance between the two sides undermined its authority. After two years of tactics ranging from rejecting the petition for transfer on legal grounds, to offering concessions, imposing direct oversight, and then direct rule, Moscow responded with direct military intervention. By 1991, Moscow had become a weak state. It had lost its monopoly of force within its own borders, and repeated efforts to resolve the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, from concessions to direct rule, failed to satisfy either side. Unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively to repress group mobilization, Moscow's fundamentally inconsistent attempts to resolve the conflict were directly responsible for the rapid escalation to full scale war (Proposition 5).

International support on the part of various regional powers and international organizations, but especially on the part of the Russian federation, is a fifth critical source of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moscow's role was fundamentally transformed. No longer the central power in an internal

conflict, the Russian Federation became the most influential third party in an undeclared war between two post-Soviet republics. Driven by its broader regional interests, Moscow intervened on both sides of the conflict, often simultaneously, in an effort to keep Armenia firmly within and bring Azerbaijan back within its traditional sphere of influence. In addition, Moscow used its ability to control events on the battlefield to undermine and marginalize the efforts of international organizations, such as the CSCE, and competing regional powers, such as Iran and Turkey. Only when these goals had been achieved did Russia assume the lead in the mediation process and impose a solution upon the two sides. With the Soviet collapse, intervention on the part of regional actors and international organizations served to transform the war from an internal to an international conflict and to raise the stakes of conflict, resulting in the escalation and expansion of the war well beyond the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh (Proposition 8).

The sixth and final source of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war is the access to arms and financial resources, particularly the military stockpiles of the Soviet military, and after 1991, of the Russian Federation. The ready and cheap supply of weaponry to both the Armenians and Azerbaijanis ensured the escalation of the conflict and its transformation from isolated incidents of ethnic violence to a full-scale war fought between two opposing armies (Proposition 9).

Each of these six propositions presents a clear source of ethnic violence in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. The four remaining propositions developed in Section I were not directly relevant to explaining the violence in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. The reasons for their exclusion will be discussed briefly below.

First, ethnic chauvinism was not a source of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war (Proposition 2). Neither the Armenians nor the Azerbaijanis adopted chauvinist policies based on their alleged superiority as the Serbs did in the Yugoslav case. Instead, both the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis claimed to be the victims of the ethnic “other,” those deemed responsible for the group’s loss. The Armenians claimed to be the

victims of Stalin, the Azerbaijanis and, by extension, the Turks, while the Azerbaijanis claimed to be victims of the Armenians, Gorbachev, and even the international community. The extreme forms of exclusivism, intolerance and hatred that characterized the war in Yugoslavia did not prompt interethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Finally, neither side adopted an offensive strategy of ethnic violence. Claiming to be the victim of the ethnic other, both sides adopted a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense: the Armenians fought to safeguard their homeland and ensure their continued survival, and the Azerbaijanis fought to prevent the dismemberment of their national homeland. While interethnic hatred and ethnic cleansing were certainly a part of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, ethnic chauvinism did not prompt either side to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence.

A second proposition that fails to identify a source of violence in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh is an ethnic group's exclusion or threatened exclusion from a polity which prompts the adoption of ethnic violence (Proposition 6), and where the group is regionally concentrated, secession (Proposition 6.2). Although the Armenians were excluded from the Azerbaijani polity, and although they were to a large extent regionally concentrated (despite the sizable Armenian population in Baku), the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Armenian SSR were not bidding for a share of power in the Azerbaijani state when they first launched their effort to transfer the region from Azerbaijan to Armenia. In fact, the Armenians were intent upon securing their complete exclusion from the Azerbaijani state. From the earliest stage of the conflict, the Armenians were motivated by the desire to transfer the region out of Azerbaijan to Armenia.

In addition, when the Armenian request for transfer was denied, the Armenians did not mobilize and adopt a strategy of ethnic violence against the Soviet authorities who had denied their request. In fact, Armenians did not embark upon ethnic violence for another two years. It was not until the end of 1991, when Azerbaijan revoked the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh and began bombing the oblast's capital that Armenians

embarked upon a large scale strategy of ethnic violence. It was the failure to secure the transfer of the oblast by non-violent means followed by the Azerbaijani bombing of Stepanakert and not the seemingly perpetual exclusion of Armenians from the Azerbaijani polity (Proposition 6.1) that prompted the Armenians to adopt a strategy of violence. Armenians sought inclusion, not in Azerbaijan, but in neighboring Armenia.

Although a case can be made that the Nagorno-Karabakh war, the first violent challenge to Soviet rule in nearly seventy years, inspired mobilized ethnic groups elsewhere in the Soviet Union to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence, the contagion and diffusion of ethnic conflict had no bearing on the outbreak of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh case (Proposition 7). Neither the Armenians nor the Azerbaijanis were inspired by ethnic kindred and transnational groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

Finally, no sudden “triggering event” ignited communal tensions to spark interethnic war (Proposition 10). The introduction of glasnost and perestroika certainly unleashed a series of challenges to the Soviet system and it certainly revived the Armenian effort to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh. But the time lag between its introduction in 1985 and the first petition for transfer in 1987 and the first incidence of violence in 1988 does not allow for a “sudden ignition” of communal violence. Although a number of critical decisions and important battles had an impact on the escalation of violence, there is no one, sudden “triggering event” that caused the outbreak of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Rather, the escalation of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh case was much more gradual, beginning with isolated incidents in 1988 to full scale war four years later in 1992.

Six of the ten propositions developed in Section I are relevant for identifying what caused the outbreak of ethnic violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh: ethnonationalism, ethnic group survival, ethnic leadership, the weak state, international support, and access to financial resources and arms. The remaining four propositions were not directly relevant to the Nagorno-Karabakh case: ethnic chauvinism,

exclusion and denial, contagion and diffusion, and a “triggering” event. Together, the six relevant propositions explain the sources of violence in one of the most prolonged and deadly disputes between two former Soviet Socialist Republics and subsequently, two independent, post-Soviet states.

Chapter Seven

KURDISTAN

Introduction

In the first part of this century, unsuccessful Kurdish insurrections took place in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran for goals ranging from national recognition to independence. After 1945 with the collapse of the Mahabad Republic in Iran, the locus of Kurdish resistance shifted to Iraq, where it has remained to the present day. Indeed, “from 1946 until the late 1970’s and early 1980’s...it was only in Iraqi Kurdistan that the Kurds developed...into an armed secessionist movement coming to the verge of meaningful autonomy or even independence.”¹ Although large Kurdish populations can be found in Turkey and Iran and smaller populations in Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, it was the Kurds in Iraq who adopted a strategy of ethnic violence and waged a nearly continuous battle against a succession of Arab regimes since Iraq’s creation. To understand the sources of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan, it is thus necessary to examine the Kurdish conflict in Iraqi Kurdistan, where the scale, duration, and incidence of violence have been the greatest.

The most common explanation for the nearly continuous war between the Kurds and Iraq’s Arab rulers is that a “feudal,” “tribal,” and “reactionary” Kurdish leadership willfully undermined a series of negotiated settlements to normalize Kurdistan in favor of continued war. According to this explanation, the Kurdish leadership, fearing that the end of war would lead to the erosion of its power and prestige, placed its own interests above those of the Kurdish people as a whole.² The result has been a nearly continuous state of

¹Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 132.

²Martin Short and Anthony McDermott, *The Kurds*, rev. ed. (London: Minority Rights Group, June 1975), 12.

war in Iraqi Kurdistan. A second explanation, which has become increasingly popular since Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, views the Kurds as victims rather than opportunistic aggressors. According to this explanation, the Kurds have been repeatedly victimized by an Iraqi regime that never intended to share power and only offered the promise of autonomy long enough to prepare for another war. A more extreme version of this argument claims that Baghdad has sought, since Iraq's creation, to destroy the Kurds. A final explanation is founded on a version of the ancient ethnic hatreds thesis commonly used to explain the violence in Yugoslavia and Nagorno-Karabakh. According to this explanation, the Kurds' conflict with Baghdad, and for that matter with Istanbul and Tehran, is the continuation of a centuries-old struggle between the Kurds and their Persian, Turkish, and Arab overlords.

None of these arguments offers a complete explanation for the sources of violence in Kurdistan. The first explanation is one that the Iraqi government favors and one that Kurdish opposition groups have at times employed to justify their collaboration with Baghdad. Although tribal loyalties remain strong in Kurdistan, placing the blame for the continued violence on the Kurdish leadership offers only a partial explanation. Although the Kurdish leadership can be faulted for substantial errors of judgment, Baghdad's repressive measures and its repeated exclusion of the Kurds from the Iraqi polity are two critical sources of violence that such an explanation conveniently ignores. At the same time, an explanation that focuses solely on Baghdad ignores important sources of violence at the group level.

The ancient ethnic hatreds thesis, while more convincing in the case of Kurdistan than in the Yugoslav and Nagorno-Karabakh cases, similarly fails to offer a complete explanation for the persistent violence in Kurdistan. Although the Kurds have been fighting the Persians, Turks, and Arabs for centuries, this conflict has been a function more of Kurdistan's geopolitical location at a major crossroads in the Middle East than of any deep-seated ethnic hatreds. Indeed, although the Kurds have fought against the Persians, Turks

and Arabs, there are equally numerous instances where the Kurds fought for one or more of these powers, a practice which has continued to this day.

To understand the sources of ethnic violence in the case of the Kurds requires a careful examination of the nearly continuous war between the Kurds and Iraq's Arab rulers. As in the case of Yugoslavia and Nagorno-Karabakh, an understanding of the sources of ethnic violence begins with an historical overview of Kurdish resistance in Iraq and an examination of the reasons why the Kurds persisted in their choice of a strategy of ethnic violence.

A Brief History of the Kurds

Kurdistan, "the land of the Kurds," sits astride a major geopolitical crossroads in the Middle East, straddling the political boundaries of six states, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It is estimated that the Kurdish population numbers approximately sixteen to seventeen million, making the Kurds the fourth largest people of the Middle East, after the Persians, the Turks, and the Arabs.³ The Kurds are a deeply divided people. Separated by the political boundaries established after the fall of the Ottoman empire, the Kurds share neither a standard written or spoken language, nor a single alphabet. Although the Kurds converted to Islam beginning in the seventh century, a quarter of the Kurds are Shi`a while the remaining 75 percent are Sunni. These differences have been compounded by the geographic isolation of the mountainous and often inaccessible Kurdish regions and by the persistence of a tribal social system which, while giving the Kurds their distinctive way of life, has prevented the unification of all the Kurds of Kurdistan.⁴

³Estimates range from twelve to as high as twenty million, although most figures are in the 16-17 million range. Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 131.

⁴Michael Collins Dunn, "The Kurdish 'Question': Is There an Answer? A Historical Overview," *Middle East Policy* 4 (September 1995): 75; Nader Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," *Third World Quarterly* 11 (October 1989): 86-87; and David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 9-11.

The Kurds trace their origin to the Medes, an Indo-European tribe that descended from Central Asia into the Iranian plateau and ruled the area from 614 BC until 550 BC,⁵ although modern scholarship links the Kurds to Iranicized tribes who settled in the heart of Kurdistan by the seventh century BC.⁶ By the time of the Arab conquests in the mid-seventh century AD, the term “Kurd” was used to refer to the Iranicized inhabitants of the Zagros mountains and the eastern extension of the Taurus.⁷ The term “Kurdistan” was first applied to this region by a Seljuk sultan in the twelfth century when he created a large province by that name. In the fifteenth century, this province shrank, and the term Kurdistan was subsequently applied to only a small part of the total area in which the Kurds predominated.⁸

The history of the Kurds and of Kurdistan is one of nearly continuous domination by successive conquerors, punctuated by brief periods when external control weakened enough to create favorable conditions for the emergence of a number of Kurdish principalities. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, a number of petty dynasties arose in the region, seizing as much territory as possible while the power of the Abbasid Caliphate declined. After 1258, when the last Abbasid Caliph was defeated by the Seljuks, the principalities were eliminated one by one, and central authority over the region was reestablished.⁹ This pattern would characterize Kurdish relations with their rulers and with each other until the present day. “When the foreign government was weak, the Kurdish princes and chieftains rejoiced in their independent action. When the empire was strong, those Kurds who enjoyed its favor gladly fought those Kurds who did not.”¹⁰

⁵See Robert Olson, “The Kurdish Question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War: Geopolitical and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East,” *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1992): 475.

⁶Basile Nikitine quoted in Derk Kinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 21.

⁷C.J. Edmonds, “Kurdish Nationalism,” *The Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 1 (1971): 87.

⁸Kinnane, 21.

⁹McDowall, 23.

¹⁰Kinnane, 22.

Following the rise of the Safavid empire in Iran in 1501, Kurdistan became the battlefield for more than a century of struggle between the competing Ottoman and Persian Empires.¹¹ Their rivalry created a favorable environment for the establishment of semi-independent Kurdish principalities in the region, a few of which survived into the first half of the nineteenth century.¹² Modern Kurdish nationalists look back at the mosaic of Kurdish principalities that emerged as the golden age of Kurdish independence.¹³ These were not national entities, however, but small tribal principalities who enjoyed a degree of relative independence in return for certain services, namely maintaining order, defending border regions, providing mounted and armed troops to the Sultan, and most important, acknowledging Ottoman suzerainty.¹⁴

In 1639 the frontier between the Safavid and Ottoman empires was stabilized, and Kurdistan was formally divided between the Turks and the Persians.¹⁵ As a result, the history of the Persian and the Ottoman Kurds diverged. The Kurds of Iran have remained under Persian control and are thus to some extent Iranicized, while the Kurds of Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, under Ottoman control until 1918, were to have a separate national experience.¹⁶ This border, with periodic variations, has continued to divide the Kurds for over three hundred years.

The struggle to overcome the many faultlines of Kurdish society and to develop a Kurdish national identity occurred late for the Kurds in comparison to other national groups in the Ottoman empire such as the Armenians and the Greeks. Indeed, there is “virtually no evidence that any Kurds thought in terms of a whole Kurdish people until the later years of the nineteenth century.”¹⁷ Nationalist ideas first gained currency among the Kurdish elite of

¹¹ Charles G. MacDonald, “The Kurds,” in *The Ethnic Dimension in International Relations*, Bernard Schechterman and Martin Slann, 123-140 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 125.

¹² Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1992), 3, and Edmonds, 88.

¹³ McDowall, 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵ Edmonds, 87, and MacDonald, 125.

¹⁶ Dunn, 76.

¹⁷ McDowall, 1.

the Ottoman empire who began publishing Kurdish histories and a Kurdish newspaper. The first major Kurdish uprising against the Ottomans that was national, rather than tribal in nature, was led by Shaikh Abdullah in 1880.¹⁸ Despite these early manifestations, Kurdish nationalism did not command a substantial following until the end of the First World War.¹⁹

The dissolution of the Ottoman empire in the aftermath of World War I presented the Kurds with the first real opportunity for independence and a state of their own. Articles 62 and 64 of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres envisaged local autonomy in Kurdish areas and the possible creation of a Kurdish state, as well as a national state for the Arabs and the Armenians, other non-Turkish minorities of the defeated Ottoman Empire. However, British oil interests in Iraq and the rise of Kemal Ataturk in the new Turkey led to a revision of the treaty. By 1923, it had been replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which made no mention of the Kurds.²⁰ Ottoman Kurdistan was partitioned between Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Together with the older divide between former Ottoman and Persian lands, the Kurds were now spread across five states. From this point on, the history of the Kurdish struggle became the history of three separate Kurdish conflicts in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq.²¹

During World War I, Britain had seized the Ottoman *vilayets* (provinces) of Baghdad and Basra, and in 1918, the vilayet of Mosul, all of which were combined to form the new state of Iraq. Although Britain appointed local leaders to administer the areas, its policies provoked rebellion. The most serious revolt occurred in Sulaymaniya in May 1919 and was led by Shaikh Mahmoud of the Barzinji tribe, who had been appointed by the British in December 1918 to administer the Sulaymaniya region. The British authorities in Baghdad defeated Mahmoud's rebellion by mid-June and exiled Mahmoud to Kuwait. But

¹⁸Nader Entessar, "The Kurds in Post-revolutionary Iran and Iraq," *Third World Quarterly* 6 (October 1984): 915; and Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1991), 30.

¹⁹Edmonds, 89.

²⁰Dunn, 76-77; Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 83; and Robert Olson, "The Creation of a Kurdish State in the 1990's?" *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (Summer 1992): 2-4.

²¹Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 37.

Kurdish resistance did not end. Numerous uprisings, many fueled by the Turks who sought the return of Mosul, continued to plague the British.²² In 1922, Shaikh Mahmoud was pardoned and recalled in a British attempt “to co-opt the growing sense of Kurdish nationalism as a bulwark against Turkish propaganda.”²³ The Kurds in Sulaymaniya, again under Shaikh Mahmoud’s leadership, revolted, and only after fierce and bloody engagements did the British manage to defeat the Kurds in July 1924.²⁴ Mahmoud fled to the mountains, where he continued to lead raids against the British until 1927.²⁵

On May 1, 1920 Britain was granted mandatory power over Iraq. The British installed a new Hashemite monarchy in Iraq on August 21, 1921 and proclaimed Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, as its King.²⁶ From its inception in 1921, Iraq was confronted with intellectual, tribal, ethnic, and sectarian differences.²⁷ These divisions have continued to plague Iraq to the present day, undermining the right of the Sunni Arabs to rule over Sunni Kurds, Sh`ia Arabs, Turkomens, Assyrians, Christians, and Jews and arraying conservative monarchists, Arab nationalists, Communists, Kurdish political groupings, and the Iraqi Baath against each other in an increasingly violent battle for power.

In 1930, Britain negotiated a treaty with Baghdad whereby Iraq would be granted independence in 1932. The treaty did not mention the special position of the Kurds, as stipulated by the League of Nations, and relations between Baghdad and the Kurds began to deteriorate again. Strikes and demonstrations also erupted in Sulaymaniya in September 1930. A month later, Shaikh Mahmoud crossed the border into Iraq and began to raise tribes for a third revolt. Again he was defeated by massive bombing by the British RAF and sent to internal exile in southern Iraq.²⁸

²²McDowall, 155-159.

²³Ibid., 159.

²⁴Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 50.

²⁵McDowall, 163.

²⁶Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 29.

²⁷Ibid., 2.

²⁸McDowall, 176.

Kurdish historians view this uprising, particularly the demonstrations and strikes in Sulaymaniya, as a turning point in the Kurdish nationalist movement.²⁹ For the first time, the national consciousness of the first generation of secular educated and urban Kurds was awakened. Thereafter, Kurds began forming political clubs and intellectual societies, many of them clandestine, and in the absence of a Kurdish political party, joined the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP).³⁰

Another center of resistance emerged among the Barzani tribe in the wake of Iraq's independence. Anticipating the end of mandatory control, Baghdad began to extend its power over Kurdistan, prompting Shaikh Ahmad Barzani and his younger brother, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, to revolt in 1932.³¹ The rebellion was defeated, and the Barzani family was transferred to Sulaymaniya and kept under close scrutiny.³² In 1943, Mulla Mustafa escaped from Sulaymaniya and returned to Barzan to assume leadership of the tribe. Mulla Mustafa would become the most celebrated and enduring Kurdish ethnonationalist and a symbol of Kurdish resistance not only in Iraq, but for Kurds throughout the Middle East.

By the end of 1943 Mulla Mustafa's forces were large enough to keep the Iraqi forces at bay. But the tide of the battle soon turned as more and more Kurdish tribes began to fight alongside the government forces, and Mulla Mustafa was forced onto the defensive. In 1945 he fled to Iran, vowing to exact his revenge on those tribes who had betrayed the Kurdish cause.³³ With the absence of Mulla Mustafa, the Kurdish region of northern Iraq remained relatively quiet during the final decade of the Iraqi monarchy.³⁴

The locus of Kurdish resistance now shifted briefly to Iran where the Kurds proclaimed, with Soviet support, a Kurdish Democratic Republic of Mahabad on January

²⁹Ghareeb, 30-31.

³⁰McDowall, 288-289.

³¹Edmonds, 95.

³²Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 54-55.

³³McDowall, 293.

³⁴George S. Harris, "The Kurdish Conflict in Iraq," in *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, Astri Subrke and Lela Garner Noble, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1977), 71.

22, 1945.³⁵ Mulla Mustafa joined the rebellion and assumed the leadership of the republic's forces. But Kurdish independence was to be fleeting. On December 16, 1946 the republic was overrun by the Shah's forces and its leaders were hanged. Mulla Mustafa, however, managed to escape.³⁶ His now legendary "Retreat of Five Hundred" into the Soviet Union marked the beginning of his twelve years of exile and the end of Kurdish resistance until 1958.

On July 14, 1958, Abd al-Karim Qasim and fellow leaders of a military group called the Free Officers staged a coup d'état against the monarchy and proclaimed the establishment of a new republican political system in Iraq.³⁷ For the first time since the end of WWI, the prospect of some form of the autonomy for the Kurds in Iraq seemed possible.³⁸ Mulla Mustafa was invited back to Iraq by Qasim, who gave him a lavish residence in Baghdad, a car, and a generous monthly stipend.³⁹ Although it suited Mulla Mustafa to cooperate with Qasim, he remained an independent force in Iraq. He controlled the core of the Kurds' forces, the *Peshmergas*, literally "those who face death," and unlike any other Kurdish leader, had a charismatic standing among the Kurdish people.⁴⁰ During the two year grace period that followed his return, Mulla Mustafa began building up his forces in Kurdistan and dealing with his tribal enemies. By 1961, Mulla Mustafa's hold on Kurdistan was undisputed.⁴¹

In 1960, Qasim began to back away from his cultural and political concessions to the Kurds and revoked all of Mulla Mustafa's privileges. Qasim had become increasingly wary of Mulla Mustafa's growing power in the north, and began to encourage traditional enemies of the Barzani tribe, the Baradusti and Zibari tribes, to burn crops, seize animals

³⁵Dunn, 78.

³⁶Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 132.

³⁷Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 58.

³⁸Ghareeb, 38.

³⁹McDowall, 303.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 304.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 307.

and grazing land, and raid Barzani villages.⁴² In 1961 when Qasim appeared ready to deal with the Kurds militarily, the Kurds were well-prepared for war. That summer, government forces began bombing Kurdish strongholds in the north. The Kurds were soon embroiled in a full scale war, which would continue, punctuated by ceasefires and negotiations, until 1975 and would contribute to the collapse of four Iraqi governments.

Qasim's regime was overthrown in a violent coup d'état on February 8, 1963 that brought the Baath Party to power. The stalemate in the war against the Kurds had irritated powerful factions in the army and contributed to some degree to Qasim's overthrow.⁴³ Although the Baath regime offered Mulla Mustafa a compromise of limited autonomy in only one of the three major Kurdish provinces, "the Baath apparently from the first intended to try to crush the insurrection by force."⁴⁴ After only nine months in power the Baath regime followed Qasim in a coup d'état that brought Abd al-Salam Arif to power in November 1963.

The new regime immediately called for peace with the Kurds. Motivated possibly by the promise of government support against his enemies, Mulla Mustafa signed an agreement that omitted any mention of self-determination let alone Kurdish autonomy, the main goal for which the Kurds had been fighting.⁴⁵ The agreement, signed without the knowledge of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP),⁴⁶ led to a major schism in the Kurdish leadership with the KDP intelligentsia led by Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad arrayed against Mulla Mustafa and conservative tribal and religious leaders.⁴⁷ By the end of 1964 Mulla Mustafa had driven Ahmad and Talabani out of Kurdistan, defeated rival Kurdish tribes, and consolidated his power over Kurdistan. He was now prepared to raise his demands and, if necessary, renew the war against Baghdad.

⁴²Harris, 72.

⁴³Ibid., 119.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵McDowall, 315-316.

⁴⁶Harris, 77-78.

⁴⁷McDowall, 316.

The war resumed in April 1965 and continued until the following April when the sudden death of Arif brought his brother, Abd al-Rahman Arif, to power. Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz, the Iraqi Prime Minister, quickly took the initiative and began negotiating an agreement to end the stalemate in Kurdistan. In June 1966 the government broadcast a comprehensive, twelve-point peace plan which fulfilled nearly all the Kurdish demands. It was immediately accepted.⁴⁸ However, the compromise was given little chance to succeed: Bazzaz was forced to resign, his successors showed no inclination to implement the agreement, and in the aftermath of the Arab defeat against Israel in 1967, the Arif government collapsed.⁴⁹

The Iraqi Baath party staged a successful coup d'état on July 17, 1968 and came to power committed to solving the Kurdish problem once and for all. Faced with the specter of growing Iranian support for the Kurds in Iraq, the Baath leadership launched a major military campaign in August 1969 to end Mulla Mustafa's independence in the north. But like its predecessors, the attempt quickly reached a stalemate. Resolved not to let the Kurdish conflict undermine its power again, the Baath regime began negotiations with Mulla Mustafa which led to the far-reaching March Manifesto of March 11, 1970. The March 1970 Accord was not only the best autonomy scheme the Kurds had been offered, but it also remained the Kurds' favored foundation for future relations with the rest of Iraq.⁵⁰

The March 1970 Accord "marked the highwater of Kurdish gains."⁵¹ Thereafter, the Baath Party solved its internal divisions, ended Iraq's isolation in the Middle East, and strengthened Iraq's ties with Moscow. The regime no longer needed to concede autonomy to the Kurds. By 1971 it had become apparent that the agreement was not being implemented. While the Baath leadership accused the Kurds of negotiating in bad faith, the

⁴⁸McDowall, 318.

⁴⁹Harris, 120.

⁵⁰McDowall, 327.

⁵¹Harris, 120.

Kurds in turn claimed that contested regions in Kurdistan were being subjected to Arabization policies to shift the demographic balance. Finally, the Kurds charged the Baath with two attempts on Mulla Mustafa's life as well as one on his son, Idris. By 1973, armed with promises from the Shah for support, Mulla Mustafa was ready to resume the war against Baghdad.

Faced with a protracted war it could not win, Baghdad offered a new plan for Kurdish autonomy in December 1973, but the proposed plan fell short of Kurdish expectations. Finally in 1974 the Baath government concluded that further negotiations would not resolve the ongoing Kurdish conflict. Baghdad unilaterally amended the plan and presented the Kurds with an ultimatum. The exclusion of Kirkuk remained a major stumbling block and the Kurds rejected the plan, although the decision led to yet another split among the Kurdish leadership.⁵² On March 11, 1974, Baghdad unilaterally promulgated the new plan for Kurdish autonomy. The resulting autonomous region encompassed only the three provinces of Dohuk, Irbil and Sulaymaniya. Its capital was Irbil, not Kirkuk, and it provided little meaningful autonomy to the Kurds.⁵³

At the end of March, fighting broke out again. Mulla Mustafa's force of some 50,000 Peshmergas faced 90,000 Iraqi troops. By the fall, the Iraqi government controlled more of Iraq than at any time since the outbreak of the first Kurdish war in 1961.⁵⁴ Iran suddenly found itself overtly supporting the Kurdish forces against the Iraqi army. It could not save the Kurds from eventual defeat unless it intervened directly in a full-scale war against Baghdad. Unwilling to do so, it reacted favorably to an Iraqi offer, first made in December 1974, to cede the Shatt al-Arab demarcation in exchange for its cessation of aid to the Iraqi Peshmergas. The agreement was reached in Algiers between the Iranian Shah and Iraqi vice president Saddam Hussein on March 6 and made public on March 15, 1975.

⁵²Ghareeb, 154-155.

⁵³Gurr and Harff, 42.

⁵⁴According to Mulla Mustafa's own estimate. See interview in Ghareeb, 164.

The March 1975 Algiers Agreement was the worst defeat the Kurds had suffered. Within hours of the agreement Iran began withdrawing its forces from Iraq, and all aid was immediately cut off.⁵⁵ Mulla Mustafa and the KDP were shattered by their unexpected abandonment. A few days later they agreed to end the struggle, and more than 100,000 Kurdish Peshmergas, their families, and the Kurdish leadership crossed into Iran.⁵⁶ Mulla Mustafa went into exile in Iran and then to the United States where he died in 1979.

In the aftermath of the Kurdish collapse, the Baath government rapidly began implementing the autonomy law and a program of intense economic and social development.⁵⁷ At the same time, Baghdad moved quickly to establish its firm control over the region. It established a buffer zone along its northern borders with Turkey and Iran and imported Arab settlers into areas with Kurdish majorities in an effort to shift the demographic balance in Kurdistan.⁵⁸ In the process some fifty villages were destroyed and their inhabitants resettled elsewhere. Estimates of the number of Kurds resettled in the aftermath of 1975 vary widely, from 40,000 to 300,000 people.⁵⁹

The KDP broke into several factions reflecting the schisms within the Kurdish leadership that had emerged with Mulla Mustafa's return in 1958. The Kurdish movement in Iraq would never regain the unity it had attained under Mulla Mustafa. Henceforth, the Kurds would devote considerable efforts to defeating Kurdish enemies at the cost of the Kurdish struggle with Baghdad.

Despite the massive defeat of 1975, Kurdish resistance did not end. In 1976, Peshmergas returned to Iraqi Kurdistan and Kurdish resistance continued, on a small scale, until the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980. From the outset of the Iran-Iraq war, the KDP supported Iran, often acting as an advance unit for the Iranian forces. Both the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani, formed mutually hostile

⁵⁵Ghareeb, 173.

⁵⁶McDowall, 338.

⁵⁷Ibid., 339.

⁵⁸Gurr and Harff, 41.

⁵⁹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 77.

fronts with smaller Kurdish parties such that by 1981 the KDP-PUK relationship had degenerated into open conflict.⁶⁰ In 1983, in a major turnaround, the PUK accepted a ceasefire with the Iraqi regime and began negotiations to strengthen the autonomous region. Talks continued into 1984 but failed to produce any meaningful concessions.⁶¹ Finally the PUK began to reconcile with the KDP and in 1985 resumed the war against Iraq. In 1987 the two rival groups joined to form the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF).⁶² Its goals were threefold: overthrow of the Baathist government of Saddam Hussein, its replacement with a genuinely democratic government in Iraq, and the realization of a true federal status for Kurdistan.⁶³

By 1987, Baghdad faced both a Kurdish war and an Iranian war. That same year, Iraq began using chemical weapons against the Kurds. However, it was not until the July 18, 1988 ceasefire that Baghdad could devote all of its resources to a major clean-up operation in Kurdistan, targeting villages that had opposed Baghdad during the war. The operation began on August 25, and by September 1 more than 50,000 Kurdish refugees had fled to Turkey from Iraq.⁶⁴ The total campaign against the Kurds produced hundreds of thousands of refugees both in Iran and Turkey.⁶⁵

With the 1988 ceasefire ending the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurds lost their critical external support and faced defeat once again. Iraq's use of chemical weapons attacks, mass executions, detention and torture completely demoralized Kurdish resistance. The Kurdish leadership vowed to continue resistance, for there was little left for Kurdish leaders to lose. However, the strategy adopted after 1988 was wholly different. Kurdish Peshmergas returned to a traditional guerrilla strategy, relying on lightning raids and ambushes without holding any territory at all. Kurdish resistance provoked little response from Baghdad,

⁶⁰Michael M. Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq," *The Middle East Journal* 50 (Spring 1996): 230.

⁶¹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 132-133.

⁶²Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 93 and Dunn, 81.

⁶³Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 231.

⁶⁴Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 136-137.

⁶⁵Dunn, 82.

which “only needed to worry about the Kurdistan Front if some other major threat to the regime were to materialize.”⁶⁶

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent defeat of Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition in 1991 presented the Kurds with the greatest opportunity for independence since the collapse of the Ottoman empire at the end of World War I. The Kurds rose in revolt against Baghdad and soon controlled all of Kurdistan. But the Kurds’ success was short-lived. Saddam Hussein immediately turned his forces northward, rapidly defeating the Kurds and sparking yet another massive refugee flow. Turkey’s refusal to admit the refugees inadvertently forced the international community to respond. It established a “safe haven” north of the 36th parallel and a “no fly zone” to protect it.

The Kurds suddenly faced an historic opportunity to exercise an unprecedented degree of self rule, if not de facto independence. In October 1992 the Kurds proclaimed the creation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) which was to form a federated state in a future, post-Saddam Hussein democratic Iraq. However, in 1994 the outbreak of a violent civil war among the various Kurdish factions threatened to undermine the very autonomy the Kurds had sought since Iraq’s creation, and for which they had been fighting, almost uninterrupted, since 1961.

The brief synopsis of the ongoing conflict in Kurdistan clearly indicates that no single factor was responsible for the outbreak of interethnic violence. Based on this brief review, seven of the ten propositions developed in Section I are potentially useful for explaining the sources of violence in Kurdistan. At the group level, ethnic group survival and ethnic leadership are two potential sources of ethnic violence in Kurdistan. At the state level, Baghdad’s escalating measures to repress the Kurds and the persistent exclusion of the Kurds from the Iraqi polity present two additional sources of ethnic violence. At the interstate level, international support on the part of Iran, Israel, the United States, Syria, and most recently, Turkey, combined with a ready supply of weaponry and financial

⁶⁶McDowall, 369.

resources necessary to launch a full scale war against Baghdad, present two additional sources of ethnic violence in Kurdistan. Finally, the emergence of a sudden “triggering event,” namely the defeat of Iraqi forces in the Gulf War, sparked a sudden, massive and seemingly spontaneous revolt in Kurdistan and set a series of events in motion leading to international intervention in Iraq in an effort to protect the Kurds. Each of these propositions will be examined in greater detail below.

Ethnic Group Survival

The first source of ethnic violence at the group level is the belief, shared by Kurds, that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened by the policies of ethnic strangers, the Arab rulers in Baghdad. The history of the Kurdish experience in Iraq since its creation in 1921 is one of escalating violence by a succession of regimes in a persistent effort to undermine, subvert, co-opt, and finally completely destroy a separate Kurdish national identity in Iraq. As Baghdad’s choice of measures to combat the Kurds became increasingly violent, the threat to the Kurds’ survival increased proportionately.

The Kurds have suffered two distinct threats to their survival in Iraq: first, a threat to their way of life and as a result, a threat to their survival as a distinct ethnic group, and second, a threat to their continued physical survival on a scale witnessed neither in the Yugoslav nor the Nagorno-Karabakh case studies examined above. According to Proposition 3, when a group experiences a “serious and manifest threat to [its] vital interests or established expectations..., to its political position, cultural rights, livelihood or neighborhoods”⁶⁷ to the extent that group members conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is imperiled, groups will mobilize and adopt a strategy of interethnic violence against the ethnic strangers deemed responsible for the group’s precarious position.

Two factors that lead ethnic groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened are the decrease in either the *absolute* size of the ethnic group or

⁶⁷Esman, “Political and Psychological Factors,” 54.

the *relative* size of an ethnic group in relation to ethnic strangers, or both, in the same region or state. Baghdad's policies of Arabization, resettlement, deportation, and massacre presented a clear threat to the survival of the Kurds, both in terms of their survival as a distinct ethnic group and in terms of their physical survival.

The choice method on the part of the Iraqi regime for shifting the balance of the Kurdish population in Kurdistan has been through a policy of Arabization. In the Iraqi context, Arabization has not meant forced or induced *assimilation*, as it has in other areas of the Middle East such as the Sudan, but forced *population transfers* aimed at shifting the ethnic balance in disputed regions of Kurdistan with historically large Kurdish populations.⁶⁸ At the root of these policies is the dispute over which regions of Kurdish-inhabited Iraq are to be included in an autonomous Kurdistan. The inclusion of the three provinces of Dohuk, Irbil, and Sulaymaniya, which constitute less than half of the territory in which Kurds form at least a majority, is not disputed, but the oil rich regions of Kurdistan, namely the provinces of Kirkuk and Mosul and the districts of Mandali and Khaniqin, are fiercely contested by the Kurds and Baghdad.⁶⁹ Measures aimed at shifting the ethnic balance in Kurdistan have thus focused on these contested regions.

Arabization dates back to the mandate period and constituted a source of grievance between the Kurds and Baghdad even prior to the emergence of the second Baathist regime in 1968. After the Baathists seized power, however, Arabization measures intensified as Baghdad sought to resolve the Kurdish threat once and for all. One Kurdish demand in the negotiations leading to the 1970 Manifesto was the cessation of Arabization in Kurdistan. The Kurds were successful in the negotiations with Baghdad, and their demand was incorporated into the final agreement. According to Article 8, "the inhabitants of Arab and Kurdish villages shall be repatriated to their places of habitation."⁷⁰ The Manifesto

⁶⁸Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 233n10.

⁶⁹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 75.

⁷⁰The March 1970 Manifesto, reproduced in Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq: Tragedy and Hope* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 15.

established a four year period during which the Iraqi regime would implement the agreement, including an official census (Article 14) which would be used to determine the boundaries of the Kurdish autonomous region.⁷¹

During the four-year implementation period, however, Baghdad escalated its Arabization policy.⁷² Whole Kurdish villages in the disputed regions of Kirkuk, Aqra, Shaykhan, and Khaniqin were forcibly evacuated.⁷³ In their place, Arab and even Egyptian settlers were imported,⁷⁴ prompting the Kurds to conclude that the Iraqi regime intended “to depopulate Kurdistan of its native, historical inhabitants.”⁷⁵ In the aftermath of the 1975 collapse, Baghdad increased its efforts to shift the demographic balance in the disputed oil-rich regions and undermine the Kurdish claim to the inclusion of these regions in an autonomous Kurdistan. According to Kurdish sources, one million residents were removed from Khaniqin, Kirkuk, Mandali, Shaykhan, Zakhu, and Sinjar.⁷⁶ In September 1971, in what Mulla Mustafa viewed as another attempt to decimate the Kurdish population, Baghdad expelled 40,000-50,000 Faili Kurds on the grounds that these Kurds were Iranians, even though these Shi`a Kurds had settled in Khaniqin and Baghdad during the Ottoman period.⁷⁷

Although Kurdish figures are much higher, it has been estimated that some 500,000 Kurds were resettled between 1975-1989, and of that total, 250,000-300,000 were resettled in 1988 alone.⁷⁸ If the estimated population of Kurds in Iraq is 3 million, then an astounding 17 percent of Iraq’s total Kurdish population was forcibly resettled between 1975-1989. According to Nader Entessar, “it is probably safe to assert that without population transfers, the Kurds would have constituted a slim majority in Mosul and

⁷¹March 1970 Manifesto, reproduced in Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 16.

⁷²Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 123.

⁷³McDowall, 332.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 340.

⁷⁵quoted in Nisan, 36-37.

⁷⁶McDowall, 339-340.

⁷⁷Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 17 and Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 123.

⁷⁸Olson, “The Kurdish Question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War,” 477.

Kirkuk and would have had a strong presence further south in the two districts of Khaniqin and Mandali.”⁷⁹

Baghdad’s resettlement policies were not aimed solely at shifting the ethnic balance in the disputed oil-rich districts of Kurdistan. Resettlement was also used to create a *cordon sanitaire* along Iraq’s border with Turkey and Iran in the aftermath of the Algiers Agreement of 1975 and on a much larger scale in 1987-1988 when Baghdad found itself fighting a dual war against Iran and the Kurds. In 1975, at least fifty Kurdish villages were destroyed in the border regions, and 50,000-350,000 Kurds were transferred to the south or deported.⁸⁰ In 1987 when the policy was again resumed, an estimated 3,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed and half a million Kurds were deported to detention camps.⁸¹

Not content with shifting ethnic balances simply through resettlement and deportation, the Baath regime implemented a campaign of chemical warfare, accompanied by mass arrests, torture, and execution of both Kurdish combatants and non-combatants which the Kurds and outside sources alike have termed genocide.⁸² “To use the language of the Genocide Convention, the regime’s aim had been to *destroy the group* (Iraqi Kurds) *in part*, and it had done so. Intent and act had been combined, resulting in the consummated crime of genocide.”⁸³ Known as the “Anfal,” these campaigns began during the final year of the Iran-Iraq war and continued after Iran accepted the UN ceasefire on July 1988.⁸⁴ In the most well known and deadly incident, Iraq used chemical weapons on the Kurdish town of Halabja, killing 5,000-6,000 inhabitants in March 1988. Similar attacks were aimed at other Kurdish villages suspected of aiding the Peshmergas or of supporting Iran during the war. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds were arrested, nearly all of whom subsequently disappeared, presumably executed and buried in mass graves in southern

⁷⁹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 74.

⁸⁰Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 127 and Gurr and Harff, 28.

⁸¹Gurr and Harff, 28 and Dunn, 81.

⁸²For extensive documentation of the Anfal campaigns see Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq’s Crime of Genocide: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁸³Italics in original. Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq’s Crime of Genocide*, 15.

⁸⁴Entessar, “The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord,” 97.

Iraq. In other cases, mutilated and tortured bodies were returned to the next of kin. Known as the “lost ones of the Anfal,” they included not only men, but women and children as well. Estimates on the number of Kurds who perished vary widely, from 150,000 to 200,000, excluding the massacre at Halabja.⁸⁵ By July 1989, a month before the final Anfal operation took place, 45,000 out of 75,000 square miles of Kurdistan had been cleared of its Kurdish inhabitants.⁸⁶

Together, the policies of Arabization, forced resettlement, deportation, and genocide presented a clear threat to the continued survival of the Kurds in Kurdistan. While there are no figures available to determine with any degree of accuracy the exact figure, or even a reliable estimate, of the number of Kurds that were resettled, deported or killed, it is reasonable to assume that the cumulative impact of these three policies on the demographic balance in Kurdistan was significant. Clearly the total Kurdish population in Kurdistan suffered a loss in absolute terms (Proposition 3.1). Given the obvious intent of the Iraqi authorities to shift the ethnic balance and the policy of importing Arab settlers, it is also likely that the Kurdish population suffered a loss in relative terms (Proposition 3.2). Regardless of whether the Kurdish population suffered a decline in absolute or relative terms, the nature of that decline was dire enough to prompt the Kurds to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened (Propositions 3.1 and 3.2).

A second factor that leads ethnic groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened is the lack of cultural autonomy. Despite numerous autonomy agreements and subsequent promises to implement those agreements, in practice the Kurds have not benefited from any of them. This lack of cultural autonomy is particularly critical for the Kurds since their sense of ethnic identity and of Kurdish distinctiveness is derived not so much from a shared religion, language, race, or other attributes commonly shared by members of an ethnic group, but from “a common cultural means of expression and way of

⁸⁵Gurr and Harff, 43; McDowall, 352-353 and 357-360.

⁸⁶McDowall, 360.

life [that] has, more than any other single factor, kept the flames of Kurdish nationalism alive.”⁸⁷

This sense of Kurdish distinctiveness and the Kurdish way of life are intimately linked to an almost mystical view of “the Mountain,” which, for a Kurd, represents “no less than the embodiment of the deity: mountain is mother, his refuge, his protector, his home, his farm, his market, his mate—and his only friend.... Whenever one hears the word Kurd, the word mountain soon follows—they seem part of a whole.”⁸⁸ The various myths that tell the story of the origins of the Kurds are also closely linked to the mystical mountain. In one myth, the Kurds are descendants of children hidden in the mountains to escape Zahak, a child-eating giant. Another myth links the Kurds to children of the slave girls of King Solomon, sired by the demon Jasad, and driven by the angry king into the mountains.⁸⁹ In each of these myths it is the mountain that protects and shelters the Kurds. For the Kurds, this link with the mountain has given them their distinctive way of life and protected their culture from assimilation since time immemorial.⁹⁰

The Kurds’ close link with the mountain and their distinctive culture have been directly targeted by the Baath’s Arabization policy, which has sought to destroy not only the Kurdish means of resistance, but also the Kurdish way of life. Kurdish villages along the mountainous border zone with Turkey and Iran and in the disputed areas of Kirkuk and Khaniqin were destroyed, and their Kurdish inhabitants were forced to leave the mountain fastness of Kurdistan for the desert south of Iraq, where they were distributed among Arab villages in Nasiriyeh, Diwaniya, al-Mothanna, and al-Ramadi.⁹¹ Those Kurds who attempted to return were summarily shot. Accustomed to a mountainous terrain and

⁸⁷Entessar, “The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord,” 87.

⁸⁸S. Siaband, “Mountains, my home; an analysis of the Kurdish Psychological Landscape,” quoted in Entessar, “The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord,” 87.

⁸⁹McDowall, 4.

⁹⁰Joyce Blau, “The Poetry of Kurdistan: Language Embodies Kurdish National Unity,” *The World & I* (August 1991): 624; Merhdad Izady in Nisan, 27-28.

⁹¹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 74.

homogeneous culture, the resettled Kurds found themselves isolated in flat desert country among Arab speakers.⁹²

Other Kurds were resettled in newly built “cluster villages.” According to the Kurds, these compact modern homes were built in a manner that facilitated easy monitoring of their inhabitants’ activities and served to seal off their inhabitants and prevent contact with the Kurdish Peshmergas.⁹³ In both instances, forced resettlement aimed at the destruction of Kurdish culture. Indeed, “it is difficult to believe that the regime did not intend to shatter the communities it transferred, and to strip them of their independence and dignity.”⁹⁴

The attempt to destroy the source of the Kurds’ distinctiveness has not been limited to forced resettlement policies under the Baathist regime, but also includes more traditional methods, many of which pre-date the Baath. Education and the right to use and teach in the Kurdish language in Kurdistan have been enduring grievances since the creation of Iraq in 1921. Intent upon creating a strong, unified state, Iraqi authorities instituted a new educational curriculum that sought to infuse “a sense of Arab nationalism into the minds and hearts of school children.”⁹⁵ Kurdish students were barred from studying the Kurdish language and culture. Instead, the government-run educational system emphasized the study of Arab culture.

Kurdish books were not made available to primary schools in Kurdistan, let alone secondary schools or higher education, until 1957. The neglected state of education in Kurdistan helped spark the 1943 uprising, and remained a primary grievance in subsequent decades until the 1966 Bazzaz agreement and the March Manifesto of 1970 briefly resolved the issue. Although both agreements included extensive provisions for meeting Kurdish

⁹²Olson, “The Kurdish Question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War,” 476-477.

⁹³*Pesh Merga* (March and June 1978), quoted in Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 8.

⁹⁴McDowall, 339.

⁹⁵Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 73.

educational needs, they were never implemented, and Kurdistan failed to benefit from any meaningful educational reform.⁹⁶

While the Kurds possessed extensive rights on paper, they enjoyed little, if any, cultural autonomy in practice. After the 1974 autonomy agreement was unilaterally imposed, the Iraqi government began to implement an educational program aimed at advancing “a feeling of national identity and awareness of Arab cultural heritage.”⁹⁷ Textbooks were quickly reprinted to remove any mention of “Kurdistan,” replacing it instead with the preferred term, “autonomous area.” In addition, Kurdish towns were renamed, financial rewards were offered to Arabs who married Kurdish women, Kurdish cultural institutions were abolished, and Kurdish civil servants, administrators, soldiers and police, and Kurdish staff members and faculty at Sulaymaniya University were transferred to non-Kurdish areas. Subsequently, Baghdad increased the number of non-Kurdish students at the University in Sulaymaniya, thereby limiting Kurdish access to higher education.⁹⁸ The extensive repression of Kurdish culture, the persistent failure to implement a series of agreements granting the Kurds an ever increasing degree of autonomy, beginning with Qasim’s concessions to the Kurds in 1958 to the unfulfilled promises of the current Baathist government, and finally, the destruction of the Kurdish way of life through forced resettlement prompted the Kurds to conclude repeatedly that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened (Proposition 3.2).

A final factor that leads groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened is the pressure on group lands and resources. According to Proposition 3.4, when a group’s lands and resources are encroached upon by a state controlled by ethnic strangers, then the group may conclude that its survival is threatened. The Kurds have suffered a clear threat to their group lands and resources since the inclusion of Mosul in the Iraqi state at the end of World War I. They have watched the destruction of their

⁹⁶Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 74.

⁹⁷Abdul A. al-Rubaiy, quoted in Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 8.

⁹⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 8-9; McDowall, 339-340.

villages by the Iraqi forces, both along the borders with Turkey and Iraq and in the oil-rich regions in the heart of Kurdistan. They have repeatedly been denied any of the revenues from the oil fields, which they view as a part of Kurdistan. In the disputed region of Kirkuk, Khaniqin, and Sinjar, Kurds have been barred from purchasing property or obtaining title to new land.⁹⁹ Under the guise of implementing land reform, the Iraqi authorities confiscated land from Kurdish landowners and then offered Arab peasants favorable loans and credits, which were unavailable to Kurdish peasants, to purchase the confiscated property.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Iraqi regime redrew the boundaries of the autonomous region so that areas with a heavy Kurdish majority were excluded. As a result, many Kurdish villages were located outside the Kurdish autonomous region.¹⁰¹

The Kurds have also charged that Kurdistan has been deliberately neglected relative to the rest of Iraq. Although there are no figures to compare the level of modernization and industrialization in Kurdistan with the rest of Iraq, it has been estimated that only 7-10 percent of the total Iraqi budget is allocated for the Kurdish region. Kurdistan has thus experienced less modernization and industrialization than the rest of Iraq. When industrial projects have been introduced, they are located in Kurdish cities that lie outside the officially designated autonomous region.¹⁰² Finally, the Kurds contend that extensive road-building projects, the most common projects in Kurdistan, were intended “to facilitate the quick movement and dispatch of large Iraqi land forces into and within the region in case of unrest.”¹⁰³

The denial of the Kurds’ basic land ownership rights, the exclusion of Kurdish villages by through new administrative boundaries, the persistent neglect of Kurdistan, and the lack of industrialization and modernization projects beyond the building of roads together presented a clear threat to the lives and livelihoods of the Kurds in their homeland.

⁹⁹McDowall, 340.

¹⁰⁰Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 75.

¹⁰¹McDowall, 340.

¹⁰²Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 6-8.

¹⁰³*Pesh Merga* (March and June 1978), quoted in Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 8.

Together they constituted a clear encroachment upon group lands and resources by ethnic strangers intent upon undermining the Kurdish claim to their homeland and excluding the critical provinces of Mosul and Kirkuk from the Kurdish autonomous region. As a result, the Kurds were again prompted to conclude that their survival was indeed threatened by the pressure on group land and resources by the Iraqi state (Proposition 3.4).

The nature of the threat to the survival of the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group in Iraqi Kurdistan is more extensive, violent, and unabashedly vengeful than in either of the two case studies examined above. The Kurds have faced not just a threat to their survival as an ethnic group by assimilationist policies aimed at undermining their sense of Kurdishness and their ability to impart their distinct identity to future generations. They have also faced a direct threat to their physical survival. In 1972, long before the onset of the Anfal campaign, the KDP warned that “a campaign of Baathization and Arabization...is considered to be an undeclared war against the Kurdish people.”¹⁰⁴ By 1982, Jalal Talabani formally accused the Iraqi regime of genocide¹⁰⁵

According to the Kurds, “one of the long term strategic policy objectives of the...Iraqi regime is the destruction of the national identity of the Kurdish people in Iraq.”¹⁰⁶ The demographic shift caused by forced resettlement policies and the horrors of the Anfal campaign, the denial of any measure of cultural autonomy as well as the determined effort to destroy Kurdish culture, and the pressure on group lands and resources in the disputed regions of Kurdistan together presented a clear and unmistakably dire threat to the continued survival of the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group, prompting both the adoption of and continued reliance on a strategy of violence in self-defense.

¹⁰⁴Memorandum of the KDP Politburo (November 28, 1972), quoted in Ghareeb, 121.

¹⁰⁵McDowall, 357.

¹⁰⁶Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (KPDP) statement, quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 46.

Ethnic Group Leadership

One of the most important sources of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan is found in an examination of the role of the Kurdish leadership. According to Proposition 4, if an able ethnic leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy for the realization of an ethnic group's goals, then that group will adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. In the case of Yugoslavia, the Serb leadership very effectively articulated and mobilized Serbs in support of a strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the realization of Greater Serbia. In Nagorno-Karabakh, however, the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence was the result of a power struggle within the Azerbaijani leadership that propelled the Communist leadership and later the Azerbaijani Popular Front to adopt increasingly violent measures in a desperate attempt to maintain their hold on power. In the case of the Kurds, the decision to adopt a strategy of violence has been determined as much by a desire to realize a genuine degree of autonomy for the Kurds in Kurdistan as by persistent, debilitating, and counterproductive power struggles within the deeply fragmented Kurdish ethnic leadership.

The Kurds have never in their history united in common cause. Despite growing urbanization, Kurdish society continues to be dominated by tribal affiliations and loyalties. As a result, Kurdish ethnic leaders have faced a profoundly difficult challenge. To mobilize Kurdish society, Kurdish leaders have had two choices; first, to employ the traditional method of uniting the Kurds through tribal warfare and alliance-building in support of Kurdish autonomy, or second, to undermine the semi-feudal tribal system through measures such as land reform in order to build a broad base of support among Kurds for the realization of Kurdish autonomy in a democratic Iraq. These two choices reflect the deep divide in Kurdish society and in the ethnic leadership, and it has been the competition for hegemony between these two factions as much as the struggle with Baghdad that has prompted the outbreak of ethnic violence in Kurdistan.

Any discussion of the Kurdish ethnic leadership must begin with the greatest national leader of the Kurds in the twentieth century, Mulla Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979), a leading member of the Barzani tribe in northern Iraq who achieved legendary fame for his heroic exploits during the brief independence of the Mahabad Republic in 1946 in Iran. Mulla Mustafa became the symbol of the Kurdish resistance in his lifetime and managed, for brief periods, to unite all Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan against a succession of regimes in Baghdad.

Mulla Mustafa rose to prominence in the Kurdish tribal rebellions beginning in the late 1920s. In 1943, after a period of internal exile in Sulaymaniya following a failed revolt in 1932, Mulla Mustafa escaped and returned to Barzan to assume leadership of the tribe. By the end of 1943, Mulla Mustafa's forces were large enough to keep the Iraqi forces at bay. In a turn of events characteristic of the sudden shifts in loyalty that plague the Kurdish movement to this day, the Baradusti tribe, traditional enemies of the Barzanis, joined the government forces. Mulla Mustafa's forces, which had been poised to defeat the Iraqi offensive, were suddenly forced on the defensive. Shaikh Rashid of Lawlan and Raghib Agha of the Surchi tribe soon followed. In September 1945, the Zibari tribe joined the government forces, and a month later the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq collapsed. Mulla Mustafa and Shaikh Ahmad fled to Iran, where Mulla Mustafa vowed to exact revenge on those tribes who had betrayed the Kurdish cause.¹⁰⁷

In 1946, following Mulla Mustafa's suggestion, a group of Iraqi Kurdish intellectuals founded the Kurdish Democratic Party, which would become the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1960.¹⁰⁸ Mulla Mustafa was elected president (in exile) and Hamza Abdallah its Secretary General. Two tribal landlords, Shaikh Latif Barzinji, the son of Shaikh Mahmoud Barzinji of Sulaymaniya, and Shaikh Ziyad Agha, were chosen as vice-presidents.¹⁰⁹ The KDP would become the preeminent Kurdish party in Iraq. Under

¹⁰⁷ McDowall, 293 and Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 91.

¹⁰⁹ Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 226.

Mulla Mustafa Barzani's charismatic leadership, the KDP developed a potent, well-organized and well-armed guerrilla force. "Barzani was the only Kurdish leader capable of providing an effective guerrilla force and bridging the gap between the largely rural, 'tribal' Kurds and the 'detrribalized' townsmen and intelligentsia."¹¹⁰ Before Mulla Mustafa could bridge this gap to become the undisputed leader of the Kurds, he had to assassinate rival tribal leaders, undermine support for rival factions within the KDP leadership among the Kurds, and drive potential competitors within that leadership over the border into Iran.

From its formation, the KDP was beset by the endemic factionalism characteristic of Kurdish society. After the collapse of the Mahabad Republic, Ibrahim Ahmad joined the party and began to rally support for the KDP among leftist intellectuals in Kurdistan. In 1951 he was elected Secretary General of the KDP. Ahmad's activities sparked an intra-party struggle between his supporters and Barzani's that developed into a serious rift between the conservative and traditional tribal wing of the party associated with Barzani, and the intellectual Marxist wing, the so-called KDP Politburo, led by Ahmad and his son-in-law Jalal Talabani, Nuri Taha, and Omar Mustafa.¹¹¹ Sparked by differences over tactics and tensions resulting from Barzani's authoritarian leadership style in contrast to the collective decision-making approach of the Politburo, the deep rift within the KDP leadership was reflective of ideological as well as ethno-linguistic differences.¹¹² The leftist intellectuals were representative of the modern, urban, secular, and more cultured Sorani-speaking Kurds of the Southeast while the Barzani wing was associated with the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds of the Northwest who remained loyal to the semi-feudal social system dominated by the local aghas and religious shaikhs.¹¹³

While Barzani remained in the Soviet Union, the KDP fell under the control of Ahmad and the Politburo faction and as a result, failed to win the support of the majority of

¹¹⁰Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 136.

¹¹¹Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 227 and Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 92.

¹¹²Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 136.

¹¹³Dunn, 75 and Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 228.

conservative Kurds. With Qasim's overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958, however, Barzani returned to Iraq and began to challenge the Politburo for control of the party. Barzani did not need the support of the Politburo since he personally controlled the core of the KDP's fighting force and was widely viewed as a hero by the Kurdish people. In addition, he was temporarily allied with Qasim who had publicly confirmed him as the leader of the Kurds.¹¹⁴ In January 1959, having secured allies within the KDP without much difficulty, he ousted Ahmad and replaced him with Abdallah.¹¹⁵ Abdallah began to forge close ties between the KDP and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) which Mulla Mustafa, sensing that Qasim would soon turn against the ICP, sought to end. In the fall of 1959 Mulla Mustafa dispatched a group of his supporters who stormed the KDP headquarters and physically ousted Abdallah, and in October 1960 he engineered the reelection of Ahmad as Secretary General and the reinstatement of Talabani.¹¹⁶

With his control over the KDP almost complete, Mulla Mustafa turned to consolidating his power over rival Kurdish tribes and settling old scores, particularly against those tribal leaders who had helped government forces drive the Barzanis out of Iraq in 1945 and those who had been exploiting confiscated Barzani lands awarded to them for services rendered. Qasim had returned these lands and began arming Mulla Mustafa's forces in Kurdistan, prompting a few tribal leaders who were especially apprehensive of Mulla Mustafa's wrath to flee to Iran.¹¹⁷ When the Baradusti and Pizhar tribes revolted against Qasim, Mulla Mustafa's forces had little difficulty driving them into Turkey or Iran. A few months later, Mulla Mustafa had Ahmad Muhammad Agha, chief of the Zibaris, assassinated, and Barzani forces burned Zibari villages and crops. Then Mulla Mustafa attacked the Harki, Surchi, and Baradusti tribes. By 1960, Mulla Mustafa's power over Kurdistan was undisputed.

¹¹⁴ McDowall, 304.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 61.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 62.

While Mulla Mustafa consolidated his power over the KDP and over rival tribes in Kurdistan, his relations with Qasim deteriorated. Qasim became increasingly concerned over Mulla Mustafa's growing power and began to distance himself from his former ally while building relations with Barzani enemies, the Harkis and the Surchis. By the fall of 1960 Qasim was arming Mulla Mustafa's enemies, and fierce fighting broke out between the Barzani and the Harki and Zibari tribes. Intertribal warfare between pro-Qasim and pro-Barzani forces escalated and spread. Baghdad soon lost its authority over Kurdistan, and Mulla Mustafa used the opportunity to attack the tribes armed by Qasim, knowing that Qasim's forces could not protect them. By mid-1961, Mulla Mustafa had an even firmer grip on northern Kurdistan, and he had now become a very serious threat to Qasim.

In the summer of 1960, the KDP presented Qasim with a series of demands, including the introduction of Kurdish as an official language, return of Kurdish officials from Arab areas, and agricultural reform and industrial development.¹¹⁸ In July 1961, the KDP demanded a substantial measure of autonomy for Kurdistan, which Qasim rejected. The KDP's objectives were still very different from Mulla Mustafa's aims. His primary concern, one he had in common with the other conservative tribal leaders, was the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law, which threatened to strip him of his tribal lands. "It seems that, rather than Mulla Mustafa choosing nationalism, the nationalist chose him."¹¹⁹ Indeed, Mulla Mustafa's demands were seldom nationalist ones. "Mulla Mustafa's aims, at most, were some form of self-administration for the Kurds in Northern Iraq."¹²⁰ He was not after broad autonomy nor did he seek to overthrow Qasim. In fact, the 1961 Kurdish war began as a traditional move to resist the expansion of the central government's power in Kurdistan and to defend tribal rights.

By September 1961, Mulla Mustafa's forces controlled Zakho, well outside his traditional sphere of influence. When, on September 11, 1961, the forces of another

¹¹⁸McDowall, 308.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 93.

¹²⁰Harris, 118.

Kurdish tribe attacked a government convoy, Qasim ordered the widespread bombing of northern Kurdistan, including Barzan, bringing most of the other Kurdish tribes into the war and thereby achieving what Mulla Mustafa had not yet succeeded in doing. "Qasim had, in effect, brought together two distinct Kurdish tribal groups, the old reactionary chiefs out essentially to protect their landed interests and Mulla Mustafa whose agenda was a blend of tribalism and nationalism."¹²¹ To complete Mulla Mustafa's task for him, Qasim ordered the closure of the KDP on September 24, 1961, thereby driving KDP members to join the rebellion as well. The KDP had been building up its own forces in southern Kurdistan, and in December 1961, it commenced operations against Qasim as an ally of Mulla Mustafa, who restricted its area of operations south of his traditional sphere of influence.¹²²

The war continued until January 1963, when Qasim agreed to a ceasefire. A month later he was overthrown in a violent coup that brought the Baath party to power. Mulla Mustafa immediately offered the Baath a truce. Negotiations commenced less than two weeks later, but problems developed over the question of autonomy. As the negotiations proceeded, Mulla Mustafa and the KDP became concerned over the news of a proposed federation between Iraq and Syria, and thus increased their demands.¹²³ The ruling National Council of Revolutionary Command (NCRC), the Baath junta, refused, and Mulla Mustafa and the KDP decided to resume the war.

Again tribal rivalries would undermine the Kurdish effort to secure Baghdad's agreement for a limited degree of autonomy. By October 1963, anti-Barzani Kurdish tribes recruited by the NCRC, namely the Sharafi, Zibari, Baradusti, Berati, and Harki tribes, had organized several hundred fighters to support government forces in Kurdistan. Mulla Mustafa's forces proved to be superior, inflicting heavy casualties on the government forces. In November the Baath government was overthrown, and Abd al-Salam Arif

¹²¹McDowall, 310.

¹²²Ibid., 311.

¹²³Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 65-66.

assumed power in Baghdad.¹²⁴ Mulla Mustafa immediately requested a ceasefire, which became effective on February 10, 1964. President Arif announced Baghdad's intention to resume negotiations with the Kurds in order to grant them "special rights" in Iraq, and more importantly, to disband the anti-Barzani Kurdish forces.¹²⁵

Suddenly the tensions between Mulla Mustafa and the KDP Politburo came to a head. Mulla Mustafa had signed the ceasefire agreement without the knowledge and approval of the Politburo, which denounced Barzani as an opportunist, condemning him for placing his own personal fortune and tribal interests above the goal of Kurdish autonomy.¹²⁶ Indeed, Barzani had signed an agreement which omitted any mention of Kurdish autonomy, the goal for which they had been fighting, and used the favored Arab nationalist euphemism, "the northern region," for Kurdistan without even informing the KDP. The KDP leadership, possibly motivated by a desire to undermine Mulla Mustafa's leadership and gain the allegiance of the movement as a whole, accused Barzani of being a traitor for having failed to seize the opportunity to defeat the weakened and disorganized Iraqi armed forces once and for all.¹²⁷

Most of the KDP leadership defected, including Ahmad, Talabani, Nuri Ahmad Taha, and Omar Mustafa, and forces supporting the KDP clashed with forces loyal to Mulla Mustafa. As the KDP formally rejected Mulla Mustafa's leadership, he began receiving arms from Arif and assistance from government forces in the field, prompting many Kurds to desert the KDP and join Mulla Mustafa's forces.¹²⁸ By mid-1964, Mulla Mustafa had larger forces than the Politburo and controlled major areas of Iraqi Kurdistan.¹²⁹ His forces had clearly gained the upper hand. In July, he sent his son Idris and a large force to drive Ahmad, Talabani, and some 4,000 forces loyal to the KDP into

¹²⁴Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 66.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 92.

¹²⁷Harris, 78.

¹²⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 66-67.

¹²⁹Ghareeb, 41.

Iran. Mulla Mustafa had finally succeeded in seizing complete control of the KDP. From 1964 until the collapse of the Kurdish war in 1975, Barzani's authority was paramount. He had become the undisputed leader of all the Kurds.¹³⁰

Having secured his complete control of the Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, Mulla Mustafa could now turn his attention to realizing the very goals the KDP leadership had accused him of betraying. In October 1964, Mulla Mustafa demanded autonomy for Kurdistan, including Kirkuk and Khaniqin, the use of Kurdish as the official language in Kurdistan, and a fair share of the oil revenue. Baghdad refused, and Mulla Mustafa began to prepare for war. Most of the Kurds supported Mulla Mustafa, and in 1965 Talabani and Ahmad, as well as many of the KDP dissenters, were allowed back into Kurdistan to support the war.¹³¹

Cooperation between the two factions was brief, however. The KDP dissenters, motivated by the desire to undermine Mulla Mustafa, began to negotiate with Arif and to support the pro-government tribes, otherwise known derisively as the *jash* ("little donkeys"), against Mulla Mustafa. In 1966, when Iraqi Prime Minister Bazzaz offered the Kurds a twelve-point peace plan, Mulla Mustafa accepted it, despite misgivings, in an effort to undermine Talabani, who was trying to negotiate a separate peace agreement with Arif's successors. With the failure of the Bazzaz agreement only a month later, Mulla Mustafa's relations with Ahmad and Talabani dissolved into a bitter feud. In January 1966 they broke away again, accusing Barzani of being "tribal", "feudal" and "reactionary,"¹³² and began fighting Mulla Mustafa's forces, alongside the despised *jash*, armed and financed by the government. In the fall of 1966 the war came to a standstill, and Mulla Mustafa used the respite to consolidate his position in Kurdistan, to build up his forces, and to attack his rivals.

¹³⁰Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 136.

¹³¹McDowall, 317.

¹³²Jalal Talabani, quoted in Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 228.

After the July 1968 Baathist coup, however, the war quickly resumed. Talabani and Ahmad welcomed the new regime and began negotiations with them, hoping to discredit Mulla Mustafa by reaching an agreement without his involvement.¹³³ In order to undermine Ahmad and Talabani, Mulla Mustafa refused to cooperate with the new government unless they ceased cooperating with the Politburo. The Baathists refused. To prove to the Baath that his cooperation was essential for any agreement, Mulla Mustafa began attacking Politburo forces in the fall and shelling Kirkuk's oil installations, which embarrassed the Baath internationally.¹³⁴

Mulla Mustafa had secured Iranian support and his Peshmerga forces were both large and well-equipped. In a series of clashes in the fall of 1968 and the spring of 1969, Mulla Mustafa quickly demonstrated that his forces were both larger and better skilled than those of the Ahmad-Talabani faction. The Baathists abandoned Talabani to negotiate with Barzani, and both Ahmad and Talabani contritely returned to the KDP.¹³⁵ As a condition for the negotiations that began in December 1969, Mulla Mustafa demanded that the Baath sever its relations with Ahmad and Talabani and disband the jash. The Baath agreed.¹³⁶ Mulla Mustafa had triumphed again. He successfully demonstrated that he was the undisputed leader of the Kurds and that any agreement would have to be negotiated with him directly.

Although Mulla Mustafa questioned the sincerity of the Baath's intention to negotiate an agreement with the Kurds and viewed their extensive concessions with caution, he was willing to accept the 1970 agreement in order to gain a necessary respite for his forces who had been engaged in nearly continuous warfare since 1961. In an interview before his death, Mulla Mustafa explained his motives: "at first, they came to us and said, 'We will grant you self-rule.' I said that was a ruse. I knew it even before I signed the

¹³³Ghareeb, 76-77.

¹³⁴McDowall, 326.

¹³⁵Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 228-229.

¹³⁶McDowall, 327.

agreement. But (our) people asked me, how can you refuse self-rule for the Kurdish people?"¹³⁷ In addition, Mulla Mustafa feared that without a peace accord, the Ahmad-Talabani faction, armed by the Baathists, would present a real threat to his authority in Kurdistan and his position as the undisputed leader of the Kurds.¹³⁸

Before the end of the year, however, Mulla Mustafa's son Idris had narrowly escaped an assassination attempt linked to the Baath. The following year, two attempts were made on Mulla Mustafa himself. Combined with the dispute over the census, heightened Arabization policies in the disputed areas, and the deportation of the Faili Kurds, Mulla Mustafa's suspicions were rapidly proving to have been well-founded. As a result, he demanded additional concessions from Baghdad while preparing for war. In July 1972 the KDP released a statement that clearly reflected the Kurds' heightened demands:

The central objective of our KDP and the liberation movement of our Kurdish people at the present phase is the realization and practice of self-rule....Self-rule is not a substitute for the Kurdish people's right to self-determination....But the objective realities necessitate raising the self-rule slogan so as to enforce the common struggle against the two nationalities.¹³⁹

In April 1972, Mulla Mustafa secured the external support he had been seeking and began receiving weapons, ammunition, and funds from the Shah, the United States, and Israel.¹⁴⁰

According to analyses prepared by Kurdish organizations after the 1975 defeat, the escalating crisis reached a critical turning point in mid-1973.¹⁴¹ Saddam Hussein called on Mulla Mustafa to send his son Masoud to Baghdad for further negotiations to clear up differences between them. Mulla Mustafa ignored the request. Saddam Hussein sent a second message urging Mulla Mustafa not to force Baghdad to make border concessions to solve the Kurdish problem.¹⁴² Saddam warned Mulla Mustafa that *in extremis* Iraq would

¹³⁷ Interview with Mulla Mustafa Barzani (September 28, 1976), quoted in Ghareeb, 89.

¹³⁸ Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 71.

¹³⁹ Kurdistan Democratic Party statement (July 1972), quoted in McDowall, 331-332.

¹⁴⁰ McDowall, 330.

¹⁴¹ Ghareeb, 147.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

abrogate the agreement regarding the Shatt al-Arab waterway in exchange for Iran's abandonment of the Kurds. Barzani kept his communication with Saddam a secret. According to the KDP Preparatory Committee's report on the causes of the Kurds' demise in 1975, Mulla Mustafa's failure to respond to the message constituted a "cardinal error of judgment."¹⁴³

As relations between Baghdad and the Kurds deteriorated to the point of armed clashes, Baghdad offered the Kurds a new plan for autonomy in December 1973. The plan fell far short of Mulla Mustafa's demands, and the resulting deadlock led to further polarization within the Kurdish leadership, prompting some members to split from Mulla Mustafa and the KDP.¹⁴⁴ Finally in 1974 the Baathist government concluded that further negotiations with Mulla Mustafa were futile. Baghdad unilaterally amended the plan and presented the Kurds with an ultimatum. Mulla Mustafa's son Idris was summoned to Baghdad and informed that the Kurds had two weeks either to accept the amended agreement or forfeit any chance of gaining self-rule in the future.¹⁴⁵

At yet another critical turning point, Mulla Mustafa took a crucial step that would later be the subject of a bitter assessment of his decision making abilities and charges of betrayal. Mulla Mustafa decided formally to reject the autonomy law, "stak[ing] everything on support promised him by the United States and Iran."¹⁴⁶ While shrewd and tough in his dealings in Iraq, Mulla Mustafa "was naive and weak when it came to trusting the U.S."¹⁴⁷ In a critical error of judgment, Mulla Mustafa assumed that his external supporters were committed to Kurdish autonomy in Iraq. Although he did not trust the Shah's motives, he gravely miscalculated U.S. intentions and naively believed in the U.S. guarantee.

At the end of March 1974 the war broke out again. Mulla Mustafa and the Kurdish leadership had made yet another critical error of judgment. They had failed to realize that

¹⁴³ McDowall, 333.

¹⁴⁴ Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 73.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴⁶ McDowall, 336.

¹⁴⁷ Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 29.

the Iraqi Army was now strong enough to defeat them in the field. Combined with this intelligence failure, they also made a serious error in their choice of strategy for this latest phase of the war. Instead of relying on the guerrilla tactics which had proved so successful in the past, Mulla Mustafa adopted a conventional strategy, encouraged by Iranian and Israeli advisors and his expanded arsenal of weapons. By the fall, the Iraqi government controlled more of Baghdad than at any time since the outbreak of the first Kurdish war in 1961.¹⁴⁸ Despite the overt support of Iranian forces in the field, the Kurds suffered serious losses.

In a fundamental intelligence failure, the Kurds did not anticipate that Baghdad might reach an agreement with Iran and that the Shah would be willing to abandon them. Even Mulla Mustafa, who had been clearly warned of the possibility of such a scenario by Saddam Hussein himself, failed to prepare for the event when Saddam might be forced to make the necessary territorial concessions. With the direct intervention of Iranian forces in the war in Kurdistan, Saddam was sufficiently threatened to make the necessary concessions in exchange for Kurdish defeat. On March 15 the agreement was made public, and within hours Iran began withdrawing its forces.¹⁴⁹

With the Mulla Mustafa's defeat, the KDP splintered into several factions, reflecting the split in the Kurdish leadership that had first emerged upon Mulla Mustafa's return to Kurdistan in 1958. A new party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the heir to the old KDP Politburo, was formed in Damascus by Jalal Talabani in June 1975. It was an umbrella organization for two Iraqi groups, a clandestine Marxist group and the Socialist Movement of Kurdistan (KSM) led by Ali Askari.¹⁵⁰ In 1976 the PUK was the first Kurdish group to deploy Peshmergas in Iraqi Kurdistan and to begin operations against the Iraqi regime, and in 1977 the PUK moved its headquarters back to Kurdistan. The true heirs of Mulla Mustafa's KDP were his two sons, Idris and Masoud, who together with a

¹⁴⁸ According to Mulla Mustafa's own estimate. See interview in Ghareeb, 164.

¹⁴⁹ Ghareeb, 173.

¹⁵⁰ McDowall, 343.

former associate of their father, Muhammad Abd al-Rahman, formed the KDP-Provisional Command in November 1975 in Iran. In 1979 the party resumed its old name. Within a short period of time both the KDP-PL and the PUK had several hundred highly mobile fighters mounting raids.¹⁵¹

Despite nearly two decades of warfare against Baghdad for the shared goal of Kurdish autonomy, the Kurdish movement remained deeply divided. The feud between Talabani and the Barzanis quickly reemerged and resulted in violent clashes that further divided the movement just at a time when it was in the interest of the Kurds to overcome past differences and unite against Saddam Hussein. Instead, the various Kurdish factions began fighting one another, and the deep divisions and hatreds that resulted severely weakened Kurdish resistance well into the Iran-Iraq war, just at a time when the Kurds had the greatest opportunity to exploit Baghdad's vulnerability for their own aims.

Mulla Mustafa's departure had left a void in the Kurdish leadership which Talabani hoped to fill. In order for supplies to reach PUK forces from Damascus, they had to be transported from Syria, through Turkey, and then through KDP-controlled territory in northern Kurdistan to the south where PUK forces operated. Motivated by his deep hostility toward the Barzanis and the apparent opportunity to seize control of the Kurdish movement, Talabani, who was still in Damascus, issued general instructions for PUK forces in Kurdistan to hit KDP forces. The KDP leadership was aware of these instructions, and had intelligence on PUK movements from Kurdish tribes in Turkey. In July 1976, and in January and February 1977, KDP groups ambushed and killed PUK fighters.¹⁵²

The crisis between the PUK and the KDP came to a head in April 1978. Talabani ordered Askari and his deputy Khalid Said, to head an 800-man force to collect a major quantity of weapons that had been shipped from Syria to Kurdish villages just over the

¹⁵¹Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 229.

¹⁵²McDowall, 344.

border in Turkey. Talabani gave them written instructions to destroy the KDP-PL bases inside Turkey en route.¹⁵³ But Askari, who had developed a working relationship with the KDP, intended to ignore the instructions. A copy of the order reached Sami via his Kurdish informers in Turkey. As a result, Sami decided to attack and destroy the PUK forces. When Askari and Said marched into Turkey, their forces were ambushed by some 7,000-8,000 KDP and allied tribal forces. The PUK suffered heavy losses, and both Askari and Said were executed on Sami's orders.¹⁵⁴ The rift between the Kurdish leadership was now so deep that it appeared unbridgeable. Talabani's judgment was called into question as a result of the debacle, and in March 1979, the bulk of Askari's KSM marched out of Talabani's camp and allied themselves with another faction of the former KDP led by Mahmud Uthman. In August 1979, the two groups founded a new party, the Kurdistan Socialist Party. In 1981, as a result of tensions between Sami and the conservative Idris, Sami and fellow dissidents left the KDP to create a new party, the Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (KPDP).¹⁵⁵

By September 1980, with the outbreak of the Iran-Iran War, the Kurds remained deeply divided. In fact, the divisions among the Kurdish leadership were so severe that Saddam Hussein could boast that the "Kurdish organizations would never be able to achieve anything."¹⁵⁶ Although the various Kurdish groups shared a loathing for Saddam and a desire to see his government overthrown, their hostility toward each other was greater, preventing any unity of action against Baghdad in the early part of the Iran-Iraq war. Indeed, "the effectiveness of the Kurdish resistance against Iraq was weakened by the absence of a unified Kurdish front in the first two years of the Iran-Iraq war."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³The KDP-PL had three bases in Turkey which Turkish security forces ignored in an effort to foster intra-Kurdish tensions. See McDowall, 344.

¹⁵⁴McDowall, 344-345.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 345-346.

¹⁵⁶quoted in McDowall, 347.

¹⁵⁷Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 130.

The KDP supported Iran from the outset, and by 1983, the combined Iranian-KDP offensives forced the PUK out of its sanctuary near the Iranian frontier. As the war escalated, Baghdad began looking for an agreement with the Kurds. The KDP refused, but Talabani, hoping for another opportunity to displace the Barzanis as the undisputed leader of the Kurds, agreed to a ceasefire with Baghdad. Immediately some 3,000 PUK fighters defected to the KDP. In November 1983, Talabani began negotiations with Baghdad and by early December a ceasefire agreement had been reached. The immediate beneficiary of the agreement was Saddam, who could now concentrate on fighting the Iranian-KDP offensives in the north.¹⁵⁸ By 1984 the talks had failed to produce a meaningful agreement, and in 1985 Talabani resumed the war against Baghdad.¹⁵⁹ In the meantime, his efforts had given Baghdad a two year respite during which Saddam could concentrate on defeating Iran and the KDP. Again, factionalism and competition among the Kurdish leadership had undermined the common interests of the Kurds.

The PUK returned to the battlefield profoundly isolated. It had lost its support from both Syria and Libya as a result of its ceasefire with Baghdad, and relations with the KDP remained hostile. Beginning in 1983, intellectuals in both parties had begun making attempts to reconcile the PUK and the KDP. In 1987 these efforts bore fruit and the two groups formed an alliance. In 1988, with the addition of the KSP, KPDP, Pasok, The Toiler's Party, the ICP, and the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) was founded,¹⁶⁰ and Talabani and Masoud Barzani became its co-presidents.¹⁶¹ Its goals were threefold: overthrow of the Baathist government of Saddam Hussein, its replacement with a genuinely democratic government in Iraq, and the realization of a true federal status for Kurdistan.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 132.

¹⁵⁹Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 231.

¹⁶⁰McDowall, 352.

¹⁶¹Idris died in 1987, apparently of a sudden heart attack, and Masoud Barzani became the sole leader of the KDP.

¹⁶²Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 231.

The defeat of 1988 was even more devastating than the defeat of 1975. Demoralized by Baghdad's chemical weapons attacks, mass executions, detention, and torture, the Kurdish leadership, now united, determined to continue fighting. The Kurds returned to their traditional strategy of guerrilla warfare, relying on lightning raids and ambushes without holding any territory at all.¹⁶³ Violence continued against Baghdad despite the fact that the Kurdish leadership expected to achieve little in response. It was not until Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 that the Kurdish leadership faced the greatest opportunity since the collapse of the Ottoman empire to achieve Kurdish autonomy, if not independence.

Fearful of a renewal of Saddam's chemical weapons attacks, the Kurdish leadership refrained from attacking Baghdad during the 1991 Gulf War and only joined the rebellion after spontaneous demonstrations erupted in the South of Iraq and then in Kurdistan. Despite initial successes, the Kurds were rapidly defeated by the Iraqi forces and it was not until the international community reacted to the large numbers of refugees and declared a No-Fly Zone over Kurdistan that the hope of an autonomous Kurdistan became a possibility.

In May 1992, the IKF held elections, and in June formed a parliament and a functioning government, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). In October, the KRG declared its intention of becoming a federal state within a future democratic Iraq.¹⁶⁴ Despite these apparent successes, the endemic divisions within the Kurdish movement quickly reemerged, and by 1994 the Kurdish government was threatened by a violent civil war between the PUK and the KDP. From the outset, the KRG was weakened by Talabani and Barzani's decisions not to participate. In a comment on the reasons for Barzani's refusal to join the government, the KDP stated that "we shall not allow the sacredness and greatness of Leader Barzani to be disgraced...[by]... the questioning, innuendoes and daily abuse" inherent in the parliamentary process and in democratic governance.¹⁶⁵ Combined

¹⁶³McDowall, 368.

¹⁶⁴Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 226.

¹⁶⁵quoted in Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 240.

with the partisanship sparked by the decision to split all positions in the government equally between the two parties, the KRG was soon paralyzed.

In the summer of 1993, in a critical move that the KDP claims sparked the civil war, the Kurdistan Unity Party, a new party led by Sami and comprised of three smaller parties that had previously been individual members of the IKF, joined the KDP. The carefully orchestrated balance of power between the two parties was upset, prompting the PUK to stage a military coup. Fighting began in December 1993 when a socialist group attacked a KDP base.¹⁶⁶ Days later, a more serious clash occurred between the PUK and the pro-Iranian IMK. The government member responsible for Peshmerga affairs, who represented the PUK, against the orders of his KDP superior, launched attacks against the IMK.

The incident led to an open break between the KDP and the PUK. In May 1994 a local dispute over territory between a KDP official and PUK tenants escalated into a major engagement between the PUK and KDP, with both sides executing their prisoners.¹⁶⁷ The war escalated rapidly and threatened to destroy Kurdistan's self-government. By the end of 1994, the divisions that had plagued the Kurdish movement since its earliest efforts to win autonomy for Kurdistan, had reemerged. Kurdistan was again rent by schism, and not only the achievements of the KRG, but Kurdistan's very autonomy and the willingness of the external powers to protect it were threatened.

In a moving and accurate comment on the severity of the threat presented by the deep factionalism within the Kurdish leadership and the recent fighting, a preamble to an agreement signed during a brief lull in the fighting in November 1994 stated that,

The experience of our people, and the latest sad events, has [sic] provided an important fact, which should be comprehended and learned...that the fighting between the PUK and the KDP is a suicide act for both parties and the annihilation of the Kurdistan liberation movement as well as a waste of

¹⁶⁶Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 232.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 233.

our people's achievement. It discredits the reputation of the two parties and the Kurdish movement regionally and internationally.¹⁶⁸

Despite such warnings, the violence did not end. Increasingly it became clear that neither party was content with accepting the de facto division of Kurdistan into spheres of influence, as had been the practice between the KDP and the PUK since 1975 and between Mulla Mustafa and the Politburo faction before then. Instead, according to Masoud Barzani, it had become an intra-Kurdish battle for "hegemony"¹⁶⁹ that directly threatened Kurdish interests and undermined Kurdish achievements.

Neither Mulla Mustafa Barzani nor his successors managed a lasting unification of the Kurds. As a result, the Kurdish leadership has been plagued by persistent, debilitating, and counterproductive power struggles. Each of the decisions to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence on the part of the Kurdish ethnic leadership was prompted not only by a desire to realize a genuine degree of autonomy for the Kurds in Kurdistan, but also to undermine challengers and defeat rival factions within the Kurdish leadership. The violence in Kurdistan can thus be clearly linked to the crucial role played by the ethnic leadership. But the decision on the part of that leadership to adopt a strategy of interethnic war was not solely motivated by an assessment of the costs and benefits of such a strategy in relation to the Kurdish goals of autonomy. It was influenced equally by the desire of rival factions to defeat potential challengers and assume the role of undisputed leader of the Kurds.

The Weak State

State responses to ethnic group mobilization shape the dynamics of conflict and determine to a large extent whether groups will adopt strategies of ethnic conflict over non-violent strategies of ethnic politics. In the case of Kurdistan, Baghdad's response to Kurdish mobilization shifted between repression and accommodation, a shift that reflected more the degree to which the regime in Baghdad had managed to consolidate its power than

¹⁶⁸Strategic Agreement (November 21, 1994), quoted in Gunter, 'The KDP-PUK Conflict,' 235.

¹⁶⁹Masoud Barzani, quoted in Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 240.

the conditions on the ground in Kurdistan. The only time that the Kurds could drive Baghdad's response was when they had sufficient external support to threaten the Iraqi regime. While external support is a source of violence at the international level, and will thus be examined separately below, the state itself plays a critical role in the outbreak of violence. Indeed, the state is the primary arena of ethnic conflict. Its responses not only shape the course of ethnic conflict, but also determine, to a large extent, its outcome.

Iraq is a twentieth century creation. Formed by the British in 1921 out of three provinces that had been part of the Ottoman empire for centuries, its boundaries were a source of dispute until 1926 when the Anglo-Iraq and Turkey Treaty established the boundary between the new Turkish state and the former vilayet of Mosul, now part of the Iraqi state.¹⁷⁰ A Hashemite monarchy was installed by the British to rule Iraq, and Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein from Mecca, chosen as its first king. As a result, neither the concept of an Iraqi state nor the monarchy in Baghdad had any degree of legitimacy. Iraq lacked not only an effective state apparatus, but also the military forces necessary to deal with the threats that emerged soon after the state was formed.

From the outset, the Kurds were satisfied neither with Mosul's inclusion in Iraq nor with the imposition of the Hashemite monarchy by the British. The Kurds rebelled in a series of tribal rebellions, led by Shaikh Mahmoud and later by the Barzanis. The Iraqi monarchy, supported by the British, responded with force and managed to put down the various rebellions, but peace in Kurdistan was only short-lived. Indeed, repression only temporarily suppressed Kurdish grievances. The newly formed Iraqi state was too weak to offer meaningful concessions to the Kurds, having barely managed to consolidate its power over the two Arab provinces, let alone the Kurdish province of Mosul. At the same time, the Iraqi monarchy lacked the military force necessary to suppress rebellion in Kurdistan on more than a temporary basis. As a result, a pattern of rebellion followed by repression and then the resurgence of rebellion marked Iraq throughout the period of the Iraqi monarchy.

¹⁷⁰Olson, "The Creation of a Kurdish State in the 1990's?" 4.

In 1958 the monarchy was overthrown in a coup d'état that brought Qasim and the Free Officers to power. The Kurds were recognized for the first time as partners in the Iraqi Republic and were granted an unprecedented degree of cultural freedom. Despite these significant improvements, Iraq was beset by power struggles among the competing Arab nationalists who sought Iraq's union with the UAR, the now legalized KDP, the ICP who hoped to play a major role in the formation of the Iraqi republic, and the Kurdish aghas who viewed the coup d'état and the potential for major land reform as a catastrophe.¹⁷¹ Since Qasim had no party structure on which to rely, he was forced to neutralize potential challengers through shifting alliances among the various groups.

Beginning in 1958, Qasim allied himself with Mulla Mustafa. Qasim viewed Mulla Mustafa as a potentially powerful counterweight to the Arab nationalists.¹⁷² "The Kurds were arguably the single greatest obstacle to unity with the UAR and Qasim wanted to keep this pretext up his sleeve," for he "had no intention of playing second fiddle to Nasser in an enlarged UAR."¹⁷³

Between 1958 and 1961, Mulla Mustafa proved invaluable to Qasim, helping to defeat the Arab nationalists, the Baath, the Communists, and rebel Kurdish tribes. In March and July 1959, Mulla Mustafa's forces quelled major revolts in Mosul and Kirkuk, defeating Arab nationalists and Baathists in fighting that left between 200 and possibly as many as 2,500 dead.¹⁷⁴ Qasim used the March revolt to purge nationalists and Baathists from the armed forces and the government, and the July revolt to purge the Communists. In April and May 1959 the Baradusti and then the Pizhar tribes rose in revolt against Baghdad. Barzani tribesmen again proved invaluable, driving the rebels into Turkey or Iran.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹McDowall, 303.

¹⁷²Ghareeb, 38.

¹⁷³McDowall, 303.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 304.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 306-307.

Qasim became increasingly concerned over Mulla Mustafa's growing power in Kurdistan and began to arm Barzani enemies, resulting in heightened conflict between pro-Qasim and pro-Barzani tribes. The growing violence presented a clear threat to Qasim, who still had not managed to consolidate his power in Baghdad. He desperately need his troops in Baghdad to guard his position, and could ill afford a war in Kurdistan. But Baghdad's control over Kurdistan continued to erode, and Mulla Mustafa used the opportunity to extend his power. By mid-1961 his hold over Kurdistan was undisputed.

In September 1961 Qasim ordered massive airstrikes over a wide area of Kurdistan, including Barzan, thereby sparking a massive rebellion. Qasim's weak regime had attempted to repress the Kurds and failed, sparking instead the outbreak of a violent Kurdish war against the regime. The war continued until 1963, despite two attempts by Qasim to negotiate with the Kurdish rebels in 1961 and 1962.¹⁷⁶ The Iraqi regime was too weak to offer sufficient concessions, and the Kurds continued their rebellion until Qasim was overthrown in a violent coup d'état.

The Baath government that took power in February 1963 viewed the Kurdish question as a side issue to its goal of Arab unity. The Kurds were seen as a "Trojan horse" for regional governments seeking to overthrow the regime, and the new leadership was united in its view that the Kurdish threat had to be resolved. The armed forces favored a military solution, but the civilian Baath leaders opted instead to weaken the Kurds by encouraging divisions within the Kurdish movement.

A delegation was sent to begin negotiations with Mulla Mustafa in Kurdistan, but the Kurds' demands went far beyond what the Baathists were willing to accept. The Iraqi regime was unwilling to make significant concessions to the Kurds while it was still trying to consolidate its own hold on power. Internal power struggles between the civilian Baath leadership, which continued to favor negotiations until the regime was strong enough to deal with the Kurds decisively, and the military, which sought to deal decisively with the

¹⁷⁶McDowall, 311-312.

Kurdish threat, further constrained the regime's efforts to deal with the Kurds. The stalemate finally prompted Mulla Mustafa to warn Baghdad that the Kurds would resume fighting if the regime did not meet their demands.

The Baathist leadership, fearing renewed war with the Kurds while its regime remained weak, opted for repression. On June 5, 1963, Iraqi forces surrounded Sulaymaniya, imposed a curfew, and began rounding up wanted men. After three days, when martial law was finally lifted, the streets of Sulaymaniya were littered with bodies.¹⁷⁷ That same day, Baghdad launched a large offensive in Kurdistan.

The Baath soon found itself engaged in a major war in Kurdistan which served further to undermine the regime and resulted in its overthrow after only nine months in power. In a report by the Eighth Party Congress in Damascus in 1965, the Baath acknowledged that their regime had been too weak to withstand the Kurdish threat, which had diverted the party's attention away from implementing its economic and social programs.¹⁷⁸ Again, a weak Iraqi regime had attempted to resolve the Kurdish question through negotiations meant to grant the regime time to consolidate its hold on power. The lack of substantive negotiations, followed by repression, resulted yet again in the outbreak of war in Kurdistan and in another coup d'état in Baghdad.

The cycle of accommodation and repression continued after the coup d'état in February 1963. Arif immediately called for peace with the Kurds, and Mulla Mustafa agreed, prompted more by his desire to consolidate his power in Kurdistan than by the expectation of any real concessions on the part of Baghdad. The agreement reached during the ceasefire again failed to meet Kurdish demands. In April 1965, having failed to resolve the Kurdish question by accommodation, Iraqi government forces resumed the war against the Kurds in the hope of defeating the Kurds on the battlefield. The Iraqi Army was unable to subdue the Kurds by force, and the war quickly reached a stalemate. In April 1966

¹⁷⁷McDowall, 314-315.

¹⁷⁸See Ghareeb, 68-69.

Bazzaz seized the opportunity created by Arif's sudden death to begin negotiations in an effort to end the conflict which was increasingly threatening to undermine the regime.

The resulting twelve-point autonomy agreement represented the first genuine attempt to resolve the Kurdish conflict by accommodation. The agreement fulfilled nearly all of the Kurdish demands and was immediately accepted.¹⁷⁹ For the first time since 1961 it seemed that the Kurdish war might finally end. But the second Arif regime proved too weak to withstand pressure from the Iraqi military and Arab nationalists who continued to oppose any solution but a military one. Bazzaz was forced to resign, and the war gradually resumed. By 1967 the Iraqi army and the government were too weak to be much of a threat to Mulla Mustafa. Baghdad could not defeat the Kurds unless it could deny them access to their sources of external support.¹⁸⁰ "In the end, the government's weakness destroyed it."¹⁸¹ Again, a weak regime in Baghdad had been unable to implement the concessions it had promised. Repressive measures had similarly failed to end the conflict, sparking instead a resumption of the war and ultimately leading to the regime's collapse.

In July 1968, the Baath returned to power in a coup d'état, committed to neutralizing the threats from both the Kurds and the Communists. The Baath was resolved not to let the Kurdish issue undermine its regime as it had in 1963. Support for Mulla Mustafa, the biggest potential threat, had to be neutralized. The Baath leadership thus proclaimed its commitment to the Bazzaz declaration, instituted provisions dealing with the Kurdish language and education, recognized the Kurds' right to preserve their nationality, and declared an amnesty for Kurds who had fought in the war.¹⁸² In a further effort to undermine Mulla Mustafa and weaken the Kurdish movement, the Baath began negotiations, choosing to deal only with the Ahmad-Talabani faction, which shared the Baathist's leftist orientation and, unlike Mulla Mustafa, did not have close ties to Iran.

¹⁷⁹ McDowall, 318.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 320.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 325-326.

However, these attempts quickly backfired as Mulla Mustafa's forces began attacking government troops, a clear demonstration that Mulla Mustafa was indispensable to any peace in Kurdistan.¹⁸³

The Baath responded by launching a major military campaign in Kurdistan in August 1969 to end Mulla Mustafa's independence in the north. But like its predecessors, the attempt quickly reached a stalemate. Soon Baghdad found itself engaged in a war with Iran by proxy as the Ahmad-Talabani faction, armed by Baghdad, fought against Mulla Mustafa's forces, armed by the Shah, Israel, and the United States.¹⁸⁴

The regime could ill afford a serious war in Kurdistan. It did not have full control over the armed forces which had overthrown the Baath in 1963. A number of conservative army officers remained in key military positions.¹⁸⁵ In addition, it could not proceed with its economic and social program until the Kurdish problem was resolved.¹⁸⁶ Fearing that the Kurdish issue would undermine the regime again, the Baathists abandoned Talabani and began formal negotiations with Mulla Mustafa in December 1969.

The comprehensive March Manifesto went further in granting Kurdish demands than any previous agreement and represented the best autonomy scheme the Kurds had been offered by an Iraqi regime. The comprehensive nature of the agreement clearly reflected the continuing weakness of the Baath regime and its vulnerability to a renewed Kurdish war in the North. The agreement temporarily ended the Kurdish threat, giving the Baath leadership a necessary respite from the conflict in the north to deal with continued internal divisions.

During the agreement's four-year implementation period, the Baath regime steadily resolved divisions within the leadership and began to take steps to end its isolation in the Middle East and internationally, signing a treaty with Moscow in 1972. Combined with the

¹⁸³Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 228.

¹⁸⁴McDowall, 326.

¹⁸⁵Ghareeb, 84.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 82.

nationalization of the Iraqi oil industry in June 1972, these efforts increased the possibility of creating the economic, social, and political framework for a stable regime in Iraq.¹⁸⁷

As the regime consolidated its power, the Kurdish question began to present less of a threat. The agreement had served its purpose. Subsequently, Baghdad backed away from implementing the extensive concessions it had granted the Kurds in 1970. Through Arabization, forced resettlement measures, and by expelling the Faili Kurds, Baghdad sought to shift the population balance and thus the results of any future census to determine the exact extent of the Kurdish autonomous region. In September 1971 the Baath attempted to assassinate Mulla Mustafa, followed by a second failed attempt in July 1972. By 1973 it was clear that the Baath were unwilling to share control. Both accommodation and repression had failed yet again.

The failure to uphold the agreement prompted the outbreak of hostilities in Kurdistan, thereby raising the specter of another Kurdish war that frightened the regime enough to prompt it to offer negotiations to resolve the differences between them, and then to offer a new autonomy scheme in December 1973.¹⁸⁸ The new scheme fell short of Kurdish demands, and the violence escalated. Finally in 1974 the Baathist government unilaterally amended the plan, giving the Kurds fifteen days to accept it or forfeit any chance of gaining self-rule in the future.¹⁸⁹

Baghdad had clearly retained the power to strip the autonomous region of any real self-control, and the Kurds deemed the new arrangement unacceptable. The cycle of repression and accommodation had led the Kurdish leadership to conclude that they had little hope of achieving real autonomy in a Baathist Iraq. Armed with the necessary resources to engage in a major war against the Iraqi army, the Kurds decided to reject the sham autonomy agreement.

¹⁸⁷Ghareeb, 132.

¹⁸⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 75.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 76.

A series of weak Iraqi regimes stretching from the Iraqi monarchy, the Qasim regime, and the Arif regimes, to the two Baathist regimes, had been unwilling or unable to implement genuine concessions or to repress the continuous uprising in Kurdistan. Unable to maintain a monopoly over the use of force, Baghdad waged a long-term and costly battle against the Kurds to ensure its continued territorial integrity that failed to resolve the conflict either through accommodation or repression. According to Proposition 5, if a state is weak and unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively to repress group mobilization, then ethnic groups will resort to violence. In the case of Kurdistan, a succession of weak regimes failed to do either, and the Kurds rapidly concluded that they had little stake in the system. After each failed agreement and the subsequent resumption of Baghdad's repressive measures, the Kurds adopted a strategy of ethnic violence.

However, the Algiers agreement represented a turning point. It signaled that the Baath party had finally managed to consolidate its hold on power and to transform Iraq successfully from a weak to a strong state, one capable of asserting its monopoly over the use of force, securing its borders, and defeating any challengers, both internal and external, to the regime. This transformation had fundamental repercussions for the Kurds, who were to discover this transformation on the battlefield in 1975. The Iraqi army was now strong enough to defeat the Kurds in the field, and the withdrawal of Iranian support led to their total defeat.

In the aftermath of the Algiers agreement, the Baath government moved quickly to strengthen its firm control over Kurdistan. According to Proposition 5.4, if a state responds to ethnic mobilization with repression, then ethnic groups will temporarily refrain from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence. The Baath government established a buffer zone along its northern borders with Turkey and Iran. At the same time, to remove potential support for a renewed Kurdish war in the future, the Baath government began implementing the autonomy law to create an aura of progress in Kurdistan.¹⁹⁰ As a result

¹⁹⁰McDowall, 339.

of these measures, Saddam Hussein was able to prevent any serious Kurdish threat from emerging to challenge his regime. Although Iraq's resettlement measures sparked the resumption of a guerrilla movement, Baghdad did not face a real threat to its regime until the Iran-Iraq war.

With the outbreak of the war in 1980, Baghdad could no longer devote the resources necessary to continue repressing the Kurdish threat in the north. It rapidly lost its monopoly over the use of force and its control over Iraq's borders. Iraq could no longer be classified as a strong state. In fact, during much of the war, Iraq lost control over most of Kurdistan, leaving the Kurds to rule themselves as Saddam fought for his very existence.¹⁹¹

The dire threat to Saddam's regime prompted Baghdad to begin negotiating with the Kurds in 1983. Negotiations with Masoud proved to be fruitless, prompting Saddam to order the execution of 8,000 Barzani males over the age of thirteen. They were taken from the camp where they were being held in South Iraq since 1975 and paraded in the streets of Baghdad before being executed. According to Saddam Hussein, "they went to hell."¹⁹²

Negotiations with Talabani proved more fruitful, and in 1983 the PUK withdrew from the Kurdish war following the negotiation of an agreement with Baghdad. However, Baghdad made no attempt to implement the agreement, having been assured by the West that Iraq's defeat was not in their interest.¹⁹³ After briefly considering negotiations, Baghdad turned to repression for the remainder of the war.

By 1987, Baghdad faced both a Kurdish war and an Iranian war. The various Kurdish groups had united behind the goal of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and creating a democratic Iraq with a federal status for Kurdistan. The success of the combined Kurdish-Iranian operations prompted Saddam to order a massive pacification campaign in Kurdistan and to commit 300,000 troops to the effort by 1987. Hundreds of hostile

¹⁹¹Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 230.

¹⁹²McDowall, 348-349.

¹⁹³Ibid., 350.

villages were destroyed in the effort. In 1987, Baghdad implemented chemical weapons attacks to deal decisively with the Kurdish threat, targeting towns such as Halabja that had supported the Kurds in the war. After the ceasefire of July 1988, repression only intensified.¹⁹⁴ Iraq was now able to devote all of its resources to a massive operation in Kurdistan. The Kurdish movement collapsed under the scale of Saddam's campaign of vengeance.

Iraq could again be defined as a strong state. It had managed to repress Kurdish resistance to end the threat to its regime and it had reclaimed its monopoly of the use of force. The unprecedented violence it employed against the Kurdish population prompted the Kurdish leaders to suspend armed resistance. For the remainder of the 1980s, the Kurds would refrain from challenging Baghdad. Yet repression will only temporarily suppress ethnic grievances, as Baghdad had learned in 1980, until the group reassesses the cost-benefit ratio favorably. In 1990, with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Kurds were suddenly presented with an opportunity to renew their efforts against the Iraqi regime. Despite Baghdad's warning, "if you have forgotten Halabja, ... we are ready to repeat the operation,"¹⁹⁵ the Kurds revolted.

Although Baghdad proved strong enough to put down the revolt despite its recent losses in the Gulf War, international intervention served to protect the Kurds from the full extent of Baghdad's wrath. Subsequently, Baghdad was forced to rely on a complete blockade of Kurdistan, including the construction of a fortified line and minefields to isolate Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq, and promises of an expanded autonomy agreement in a desperate attempt to ensure the continued existence of its regime. The Kurds, however, had concluded that they had little stake in the existing system and began to construct a government for the autonomous region. After decades of failed autonomy agreements

¹⁹⁴Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 97.

¹⁹⁵Izzat Ibrahim, Deputy Chairman of the RCC, quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 49-50.

followed by episodes of increasingly lethal repression, the Kurds had little reason to consider negotiations with Baghdad.

Except for the brief period between 1975-1980 and at the end of the Iran-Iraq War between 1988-1990, Iraq remained a weak state, unable and unwilling to offer the necessary concessions to resolve the Kurdish threat and unable to repress Kurdish mobilization. During the two periods when Baghdad managed to consolidate its power over all of Iraq, it chose repressive measures that only temporarily suppressed Kurdish demands. As a result, according to Proposition 5, when Iraq's power weakened and the costs of resistance were lessened, the Kurds resorted to a strategy of ethnic violence, having concluded that they had little stake in the system.

Exclusion and Denial

The history of the Kurds' exclusion from the Iraqi polity is closely intertwined with the strength of the Iraqi regime in power. When the Iraqi regime was weak, Baghdad offered extensive concessions but was unwilling to implement them. When state power was briefly consolidated under the Baathist regime, however, no concessions were offered, and the Kurds' exclusion appeared to be permanent. There are thus two sources of ethnic violence at the state level in the case of the Kurds. The first is the weakness of the Iraqi regime which prompts the shift in tactics between repression and accommodation discussed above. The second is the persistent exclusion of the Kurds in Iraq, punctuated by offers of autonomy and by the brief recognition of the Kurds as a separate national entity in Iraq. The failure to implement these promises and the seemingly perpetual exclusion such denials represent have prompted nearly continuous war between Baghdad and the Kurds.

The unranked structure of ethnic relations in Iraq is the direct result of the British decision to create a state in Mesopotamia out of the three Ottoman vilayets of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. According to Horowitz, unranked systems are produced "by encapsulation within a single territorial unit of groups that formerly had little to do with

each other.”¹⁹⁶ While the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad were Arab provinces, the former mostly Shi`a and the latter Sunni, the province of Mosul, or Southern Kurdistan as it is called by the Kurds, was an ethnically Kurdish province with small numbers of Turkomen and Christian Assyrian minorities. As a result, Iraq was from the outset a deeply divided state.

The inclusion of three separate provinces into a new state ensured that Iraq’s ethnic groups would stand in an unranked or parallel relationship to each other and that each group would function like an incipient whole society.¹⁹⁷ As Horowitz has demonstrated, the structure of group relations determines the nature of ethnic violence and the goals for which violence is adopted. “When ethnic violence occurs, unranked ethnic groups usually aim not at social transformation, but at something approaching sovereign autonomy.” This tendency has been clearly demonstrated in the case of Iraq, where the Kurds have sought autonomy, if not self-rule.

The persistent violent conflict between the Kurds and Baghdad over Kurdish autonomy has revolved around two issues: the legal extent of that autonomy and the geographical extent of the autonomous region. In the early stages of the Kurdish rebellion after the creation of the Iraqi state, the Kurds demanded only a minimal degree of autonomy that would ensure them the right to use the Kurdish language and to educate their children in Kurdish. Today, however, that demand has expanded to the point that the Kurdish definition of autonomy more closely resembles complete sovereignty. The reasons for this expansion and the violence that accompanied it can be found in an examination of the series of agreements promising Kurdish inclusion in the Iraqi polity and their subsequent continued exclusion when the agreement no longer suited Baghdad’s interests. The persistent denial of Kurdish demands fueled the outbreak of violence and resulted in nearly continuous warfare between Baghdad and the Kurds.

¹⁹⁶Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 29.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

The roots of the Kurds' exclusion from Iraq can be traced to the Mandatory period and the policies of the newly created Iraqi monarchy. In March 1920, Britain was appointed to exercise a League of Nations mandate over Iraq and the vilayet of Mosul, which British forces occupied. Although the final status of Mosul had not yet been resolved, the Kurds were offered the hope of autonomy, if not independence. The Treaty of Sèvres signed in August 1920 provided for "local autonomy in those regions where the Kurdish element is preponderant" (Article 62) and the possibility that "the Kurds living in that part of Kurdistan at present included in the Vilayet of Mosul" could "become citizens of the newly independent Kurdish state" (Article 64).¹⁹⁸

The British intended to include Mosul in the newly created state of Iraq, fearing that Iraq would not be a viable state without it, and perhaps more important, desiring to retain control of Mosul's rich oil fields. Because the inclusion of Mosul in Iraq was contested by Turkey, which sought to reclaim the former Ottoman vilayet for the new Turkish republic, the British, together with the newly installed Iraqi monarchy, issued a declaration that reaffirmed the right of the Kurds of Iraq to form an autonomous Kurdish government as had been promised in the Treaty of Sèvres. This Anglo-Iraqi Joint Declaration was presented to the Council of the League of Nations on December 24, 1922 in an attempt to gain international recognition for the British claim to Mosul. In the declaration, Britain and the Iraqi Monarchy recognized

the right of the Kurds who live within the frontiers of Iraq to establish a Government within those frontiers [and]...to reach some mutual agreement as quickly as possible as to the form they wish this Government to take and as to the boundaries within which they wish extend its authority. These groups will send responsible delegates to negotiate their future economic and political relations with His Majesty's Government and the Iraqi Government.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸The Treaty of Sèvres, Section III, Articles 62 and 64, quoted in Kendal, "The Kurds under the Ottoman Empire," in *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Gerard Chaliand, ed., 11-37 (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1993), 34.

¹⁹⁹Anglo-Iraqi Joint Declaration (December 24, 1922), quoted in Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq," in *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Gerard Chaliand, ed., 139-193 (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1993), 146-147.

Despite these promises, the Lausanne Treaty which replaced the Treaty of Sèvres in 1923 made no mention of the Kurds. In 1925 a commission sent by the Council of the League of Nations to establish the boundary between Turkey and Iraq concluded that the vilayet should be attached to the Iraqi state if certain conditions were met: first, that administrators, magistrates, and teachers in the Kurdish region be drawn from Kurdish ranks, and second, that Kurdish be adopted as the official language in Kurdistan.²⁰⁰ In response, Baghdad issued the Local Languages Law in 1926, the first time the Iraqi government legally recognized Kurdish cultural rights and a separate Kurdish identity.²⁰¹ Although the law met the League of Nations' provisions, it was never carried out.²⁰² In June 1930, a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty ended the British mandate and recognized the formal independence of the Iraqi Kingdom, but made no mention of the Kurds nor of their right to an autonomous Kurdish administration as established by the League of Nations.²⁰³

The persistent failure on the part of the British and the Iraqi Monarchy to implement the promises of Kurdish autonomy sparked a series of major revolts led by Shaikh Mahmud in 1919, 1922, and again in 1931. Thereafter, the leadership of the Kurdish movement was seized by Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who led yet another series of rebellions against Baghdad after the death of King Faisal in 1933.²⁰⁴ Each of these rebellions was aimed at securing the implementation of the rights established by the League of Nations in 1926. The Kurds did not demand full autonomy. Instead, they sought inclusion in the Iraqi polity, namely representation in the national assembly by genuine Kurdish representatives, a fair share of national resources, and the basic language rights established by the League of Nations.²⁰⁵ According to proposition 6, Baghdad's continued refusal led the Kurds to

²⁰⁰Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq," 148.

²⁰¹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 53.

²⁰²Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 2.

²⁰³Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq," 149.

²⁰⁴Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 3.

²⁰⁵McDowall, 288.

adopt a strategy of ethnic violence aimed at securing what they viewed as their minimal right to inclusion in the new Iraqi state.

The overthrow of the Iraqi Monarchy in July 1958 and the proclamation of a Republic by Qasim and the Free Officers gave the Kurds new hope that their aspirations would finally be realized. The new regime promised to transform drastically the condition of the Kurds, and its first efforts seemed indeed to herald a new era for Arab-Kurdish relations in Iraq. The provisional constitution promulgated that same month acknowledged the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group with national rights. According to Article III,

Iraqi Society is based on complete cooperation between all its citizens, on respect for their rights and liberties. Arabs and Kurds are associates in this nation; the constitution guarantees their national rights within the Iraqi whole.²⁰⁶

During the next two years the Kurds were granted an unprecedented degree of cultural and political freedom in Iraq. The KDP was legalized, cultural activities flourished, and at least fourteen Kurdish journals were published in Iraq.²⁰⁷ Several Kurds were appointed to senior positions in the government and schools in Kurdish region were allowed to teach in the Kurdish language.²⁰⁸

By 1960, however, it was clear that Baghdad had changed its mind. The KDP was banned, the journals closed, and activists in the KDP were arrested, including Ibrahim Ahmad, its General Secretary, who was charged with “inciting hatred between citizens” for having published a speech given by Sherif Ismet Vanly.²⁰⁹ Baghdad also began to indicate that the Kurds were no longer viewed as equal partners in Iraq, but, in Qasim’s words, as an indistinguishable and indivisible part of the Iraqi people.²¹⁰ The KDP renewed its demands that Kurdish be introduced as an official language and that Kurdish officials be returned to Kurdistan, demands no different from the rights established by the League of

²⁰⁶Article III, Provisional Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, quoted in Vanly, “Kurdistan in Iraq,” 150.

²⁰⁷Vanly, “Kurdistan in Iraq,” 150.

²⁰⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 63.

²⁰⁹Vanly, “Kurdistan in Iraq,” 151.

²¹⁰quoted in McDowall, 308.

Nations in 1926, as well as the removal of troop reinforcements in Kurdistan, the end of martial law, the restoration of democratic liberties, and the implementation of Article III of the provisional constitution.²¹¹

Despite these demands, which still amounted to less than complete autonomy, Qasim refused to consider any degree of political or cultural autonomy for the Kurds. Finally an Arab journal run by an associate of Qasim published a series of editorials calling for “the outright assimilation of the Kurdish people.”²¹² The Kurds had briefly enjoyed an unprecedented degree of cultural and political autonomy only to have those rights rescinded and their very national identity denied. The denial of these basic rights and their exclusion from the Iraqi state as equal partners with Iraqi Arab citizens prompted rebellion. In September 1961, tensions escalated and erupted into full scale war between the Iraqi armed forces and Kurdish forces in Kurdistan. Despite Qasim’s two offers in November 1961 and March 1962 to negotiate a settlement, the Kurds were now committed to ending Qasim’s dictatorship, reestablishing democracy in Iraq, and “obtain[ing] the full autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan within the framework of the Iraqi Republic.”²¹³ Although the Kurds were regionally concentrated, they did not seek secession (Proposition 6.2). Instead, they opted for interethnic violence to challenge the existing state system to ensure their inclusion in the Iraqi state (Proposition 6).

As it became apparent that Qasim’s downfall was imminent, the KDP leadership began negotiating with the Baath and agreed not to exploit the regime’s weakness after the planned coup d’état in exchange for assurances regarding Kurdish autonomy.²¹⁴ In February 1963, the Kurds began negotiations with the National Council of the Revolutionary Command, the new governing body in Iraq. Mulla Mustafa, distrustful of the Baath’s intentions, demanded full autonomy for Kurdistan, covering virtually the entire

²¹¹McDowall, 308.

²¹²Vanly, “Kurdistan in Iraq,” 151.

²¹³Ismet Cheriff Vanly, *The Revolution of Iraki Kurdistan* (Paris: Committee for the Defense of the Kurdish People’s Rights, April 1965), 17.

²¹⁴McDowall, 312-313.

former vilayet of Mosul, separate Kurdish armed forces, and two-thirds of the national oil revenue for the autonomous region.²¹⁵

The Baath countered with a separate offer, based on the “recognition of the national rights of the Kurdish people on the basis of self-administration.”²¹⁶ In addition, the agreement provided for general amnesty for all Kurdish rebels, purging of Iraqi officials guilty of misconduct in the north, lifting of the economic blockade, and withdrawal of Iraqi military units from Kurdistan.²¹⁷ However, the Kurds were alarmed by negotiations with the Syrian Baath and the UAR and increased their demands beyond what they could reasonably hope Baghdad would accept.²¹⁸ Finally, at the end of April 1963 the Kurds were offered “decentralization,” rather than autonomy, with Kurdish and Arabic as official languages in a Kurdish province that would exclude Kirkuk.²¹⁹

The Kurds remained dissatisfied and negotiations soon reached an impasse. The Kurds were unwilling to accept anything less than full autonomy, including Kirkuk, Irbil, Sulaymaniya, and parts of Mosul, and a share of the oil revenues, demands which were wholly unacceptable to the Baath government. On June 5, the Baath responded with an attack on Sulaymaniya that soon escalated into a resumption of the war. The Kurds again chose to resume the conflict rather than accept less than what they believed would ensure their full inclusion in the Iraqi state (Proposition 6).

In 1966 the Kurds were offered a substantial degree of autonomy in the twelve-point Bazzaz agreement. It fully accepted the principle of Kurdish autonomy and called for the use of Kurdish as an official language in the autonomous region, nominal control over educational affairs in Kurdistan, extensive cultural rights, general amnesty for those who had fought in the rebellion, free elections for a Kurdish legislative assembly to be established within one year, freely elected administrative councils, proportional

²¹⁵McDowall, 314.

²¹⁶Agreement of March 7, 1963, quoted in Ghareeb, 59.

²¹⁷Ghareeb, 59.

²¹⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 65-66.

²¹⁹Harris, 75.

representation for the Kurds in the central government in Baghdad, and the use of Kurdish forces to maintain internal law and order and to provide for the Kurds' security.²²⁰ The agreement was immediately accepted. However, Arab nationalists worked to undermine support for Bazzaz and his agreement in Baghdad, and Bazzaz was soon forced to resign. "With his departure the best chance both for the Kurds and a democratic republican Iraq disappeared."²²¹ The Kurds were once again denied the benefits of inclusion in the Iraqi regime and violence soon followed as the Kurds began to negotiate outside sources of support for their continuing battle with Baghdad which ultimately contributed in 1968 to yet another regime's collapse.

The war continued until the new Baath government came to the realization that the Kurds would be satisfied with nothing less than autonomy. Negotiations began in December 1969 but rapidly reached a stalemate over the issue of Kirkuk. The Kurds refused to accept any agreement that did not include Kirkuk, while the Iraqi government feared that Kirkuk's inclusion in an autonomous region would undermine Iraq's security. To overcome the impasse, Baghdad suggested granting autonomy to the Kurdish *people* rather than to a specific Kurdish *territory*. The Kurds refused, and Baghdad agreed to the principle of territory but insisted that demarcation of that territory would depend on a proven majority to be decided either by plebiscite or census.²²²

By early February an agreement had been negotiated and was presented to the Kurds for signature. The final form of the agreement, however, reflected none of the compromises reached during the negotiations. To prevent the complete collapse of the negotiations and the resumption of war, Saddam Hussein traveled to Kurdistan and met with Mulla Mustafa, refusing to leave until an agreement had been reached. This meeting culminated in the publication of the March Manifesto on March 11, 1970.²²³

²²⁰Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 8 and 68; McDowall, 318.

²²¹McDowall, 319.

²²²Ibid., 327.

²²³Ibid.

The fifteen point March Manifesto was the most extensive plan that any Iraqi government had endorsed to accommodate Kurdish aspirations.²²⁴ Its main elements dealt with autonomy, the structure of the autonomous region's governing bodies, and the

The March Manifesto²²⁵

1. The Kurdish language shall be, alongside the Arabic language, the official language in areas with a Kurdish majority; and will be the language of instruction in those areas and taught throughout Iraq as a second language.
2. Kurds will participate fully in government, including in senior and sensitive posts in the cabinet and military.
3. Kurdish education and culture will be reinforced through the building of more schools in the Kurdish area, the elevation of the standards of education, and the admission of Kurdish students at a fair rate to universities and military colleges.
4. All officials in the Kurdish majority areas shall be Kurds or at least Kurdish-speaking and the principle government functionaries shall be Kurds.
5. Kurds shall be free to establish student, youth, women's and teachers' organizations.
6. Workers, government functionaries and employees, both civilian and military, who fought on the Kurdish side during the hostilities shall go back to service.
7. Funds will be set aside for the development of Kurdistan, and pensions shall be established for the families of those who died or were incapacitated during the hostilities.
8. The inhabitants of Arab and Kurdish villages shall be repatriated to their places of habitation.
9. The Agrarian Reform Law shall be implemented in the Kurdish area.
10. The constitution will be amended to read: "the people of Iraq are composed of two principle nationalities, the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality." It will further state that "this constitution recognizes the national rights of the Kurdish people."
11. The broadcasting station and heavy weapons will be returned to the government.
12. One of the vice-presidents of the Republic shall be a Kurd.
13. The provincial law shall be amended to conform to this manifesto.
14. The governorates and administrative units populated by a Kurdish majority, as shown by the official census to be carried out, shall be unified. The exploitation of the natural riches in the area shall be the prerogative of the authorities of the Republic.
15. The Kurdish people shall contribute to legislative power in proportion to their ratio of the population of Iraq.

relation between the central government and the local autonomous administration.²²⁶ Baghdad began implementing many of the agreements' provisions immediately, and during the remainder of 1970 relations between the Kurds and the central government remained peaceful.

²²⁴Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 70.

²²⁵A copy of the agreement is reproduced in Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 14-16. See also Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 134-135.

²²⁶Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 71.

By early 1971, however, tensions had begun to mount, leading to a disintegration of trust and the suspicion among Kurds that Baghdad had only been trying to gain time. Baghdad refused to accept the Kurdish nominee for vice-president (Article 12), the legislative assembly was not the result of free elections but was hand-picked by Baghdad (Article 15), Kurdish was not recognized as an official language (Article 8), the new provisional constitution did not include the amendments concerning Kurdish national rights (Article 10), Arabization had not stopped (Article 9), and the census (Article 14) had been postponed indefinitely amid charges of forced resettlement and Arabization policies. By the beginning of 1972, Baghdad had twice attempted to assassinate Mulla Mustafa.²²⁷

As a result, Mulla Mustafa raised the stakes by demanding additional concessions, including the withdrawal of all army contingents and the inclusion of Kurdish representatives in the Revolutionary Command Council, the true governing body of the Iraqi government. In July 1972, the KDP issued a statement on Kurdish aims which indicated that the March Manifesto was only a step in the direction of "self-determination."²²⁸ The Kurds warned that failure to implement Articles 8 and 14 was tantamount to "an undeclared war against the Kurdish people."²²⁹ By the end of 1972 the Kurds had secured the necessary external support for another war with Baghdad.²³⁰

In early 1974 there were two more attempts to resolve the stalemate but neither the Kurds nor the Baath were willing to compromise on the issue of Kirkuk, particularly since Baghdad had nationalized the oil industry. The Kurds refused to accept an autonomous region that did not include Kirkuk as its capital. Baghdad concluded that additional negotiations would not resolve the deadlock. The Baath leadership unilaterally amended the plan and gave the Kurds fifteen days to accept it.²³¹ Idris was summoned to Baghdad where Saddam Hussein informed him:

²²⁷ See Ghareeb, 105-129

²²⁸ Quoted in McDowall, 331-332.

²²⁹ KDP Memorandum to the Baath Party (November 28, 1972) quoted in Ghareeb, 121.

²³⁰ Ghareeb, 105.

²³¹ Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 76.

From today, the ninth of March 1974, and until noon March 11, 1974, discussion of any serious formula will be accepted....After noon on March 11, 1974, we will be unable to discuss any proposal you may submit....Nevertheless, the door will remain open to you for a period of fifteen days, following the promulgation of the law of autonomy for the Kurdistan area, to allow you to join the National Front and abide by the law of autonomy. Until that time we will consider you allies....After that, we will not be your allies.²³²

The ultimatum caught the Kurds by surprise, and some members of the Kurdish leadership accepted the new law rather than risk another war with Baghdad. Mulla Mustafa and the KDP leadership, however, refused to accept an autonomous region without Kirkuk. According to Mulla Mustafa, "Kirkuk is part of Kurdistan. If the population census shows that the majority of its inhabitants are not Kurds, I will not recognize this. I will not bear, before the Kurds, the responsibility for relinquishing Kirkuk. Maybe this can take place after me."²³³

The new Autonomy Law had a number of provisions that were unacceptable to the Kurds: first, Kurdistan was to be determined on the basis of the 1957 census, which the Kurds had repeatedly rejected in negotiations following the March Manifesto, and the regional center was now to be Irbil, rather than Kirkuk (Article 1); two, Baghdad could appoint and dismiss the executive council which was to rule the autonomous region (Article 13); three, policy, security and nationality formations would be attached to the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad (Article 17); and four, the legality of decisions adopted by the autonomous region would be determined by the Supreme Court of Appeal of Iraq.²³⁴ It was clear that Baghdad retained the power to strip the autonomous region of any real self-control. ²³⁵

The Kurds rejected the plan, willing to resume the war with Baghdad rather than settle for a substantially weakened autonomy agreement that ensured their continued exclusion from the Iraqi polity. Violence erupted at the end of March and continued until

²³² Saddam Hussein, quoted in Ghareeb, 153-154.

²³³ Mulla Mustafa Barzani, quoted in Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 72.

²³⁴ McDowall, 336. See also Ghareeb, 157-160.

²³⁵ McDowall, 336.

their defeat in 1975. According to Proposition 6, the Kurds adopted a strategy of ethnic violence rather than settle for an agreement that would continue to deny them the right of inclusion in the Iraqi polity.

Until the outbreak of the Gulf War there seemed little chance that the Kurds would be able to challenge the 1974 autonomy law. However, the creation of a safe haven ensured the Kurds the necessary protection to begin the process of forming a government to rule Kurdistan. Faced with a total blockade from Baghdad, the Kurds concluded that their exclusion from the Iraqi polity was indeed complete. Rather than submit to Saddam's terms, as the blockade was intended to force them to do, the Kurds rejected any thought of a negotiated settlement with Saddam Hussein which the recent past had proven would win them only temporary inclusion, if at all. Instead, the Kurds proceeded with steps to create a *de facto* Kurdish state.²³⁶ Although the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) declared its intent to become a federal state within a future, post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, as time passed it has become clear that while the official goal remains autonomy within Iraq, the true long-term goal has now become independence.²³⁷

Since its creation, Iraq repeatedly offered and then denied the Kurds inclusion in the Iraqi state. With each failed agreement, the Kurds resorted to a strategy of ethnic violence rather than face perpetual exclusion from the polity. Until the Gulf War, the Kurds' aim was to force the regime to acknowledge the Kurds' separate national identity and to grant them a degree of autonomy in Kurdistan (Proposition 6).

After the Gulf War, however, the Kurds were no longer willing to accept autonomy within an Iraq ruled by the Baath. The Baath have clearly demonstrated their unwillingness to relinquish any degree of power to the Kurds, leading the Kurds to conclude that their exclusion from the Iraqi polity would indeed be perpetual. According to Proposition 6.2, if an ethnic group is regionally concentrated and has been excluded from a severely divided

²³⁶Michael M. Gunter, "A *de facto* Kurdish State in Northern Iraq," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1993): 295.

²³⁷Graham Fuller, "The Fate of the Kurds," *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1993): 113n3.

polity, then the group may adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to secede from the extant state. Whether the Kurds will in fact realize this goal of independence is highly unlikely, but it is clear that their continual exclusion has prompted not only a shift in tactics, but also a shift in the goals for which violence is adopted. For some fifty years, the Kurds were willing to contemplate some form of autonomy within Iraq. Since the Gulf War, however, the Kurds have created a de facto Kurdish state. Although the Kurds openly maintain their intent to form a federal unit within Iraq, they have increasingly contemplated independence, a shift which has not gone unnoticed in Turkey, Syria, or Iran.

International Support

Kurdistan provides one of the best examples of the crucial role international support plays in the outbreak of violent ethnic conflict. Since the Kurds are spread across the political boundaries of five major regional powers and since those regional powers have been at various times allied with the United States or the Soviet Union, conflict between the Kurds and Baghdad has immediate regional and international implications. Until the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy, the Kurds were prevented from capitalizing on potential divisions between the major regional powers to secure support for their dispute with Baghdad. In 1937 in the Treaty of Saadabad and again in the Baghdad Pact of 1955-1958, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, the three major regional powers with large Kurdish populations, had pledged to cooperate on the Kurdish issue in order to maintain their territorial integrity against any possible Kurdish threat. When these three powers coordinated their efforts, the Kurds had no hope of mounting a large scale campaign against Baghdad capable of forcing it to meet Kurdish demands.²³⁸

Once the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown and an Arab nationalist regime came to power in Baghdad, the regional situation shifted perceptibly as conservative regimes in the

²³⁸Malcolm Yapp, "'The Mice will Play': Kurds, Turks and the Gulf War," in *The Gulf War: Regional and International Dimensions*, Hanns W. Maull and Otto Pick, ed., 102-118 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 102.

region came to view the Kurds as a useful political and military weapon. While Turkey and Iraq experienced a period of some sixty years of cooperation over the Kurdish issue after the Mosul question was settled, tensions between Iran and Iraq emerged immediately after 1958.²³⁹ With only a brief period of respite between 1975-1979, the Kurds have served as a fifth column in the ongoing dispute between Baghdad and Tehran.

Ethnic groups actively recruit international support, ranging from diplomatic support to direct invasion, as part of their strategy of interethnic violence. In the case of Kurdistan, the Kurds have rarely emphasized political-diplomatic support from external actors, a strategic choice which some Kurdish critics claim has weakened the Kurdish movement and represents a serious failure on the part of the Kurdish leadership. The main goal of the Kurds' recruitment efforts has been to secure tangible support, ranging from material and utilitarian aid and sanctuary to full scale military intervention. As such, of all the ethnic groups' examined in the three case studies herein, the Kurds have arguably been the most successful in securing extensive external support as part of their strategy of interethnic violence.

Yet internationalization ultimately favors the center, and in no case is this clearer than in the Kurds' ongoing struggle with Baghdad. Although the Kurds actively sought and secured a substantial degree of international support and benefited from it in the short term, in the long term external support has entailed significant costs. Despite the critical assistance external actors provided, the Kurds repeatedly failed to achieve the goals for which their nearly continuous war with Baghdad has been fought. Why the Kurds have succeeded in the short term but failed in the long term becomes evident in a careful examination of six fundamental weaknesses in the nature of the Kurds' external support, namely, the Kurds' choice of states on which to rely; the manipulation of Kurdish divisions by those states; the Kurds' loss over the direction of their own movement and subsequent abandonment; the overestimation of Kurdish capabilities and the resultant rejection of a

²³⁹ Philip Robins, "The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue," *International Affairs* 69 (October 1993): 671.

proven strategy of guerrilla warfare in favor of a conventional strategy; and finally, the unreasonable and unwise expansion and multiplication of Kurdish demands. However, the most significant cost of external support has been suffered by the Kurds when, despite these weaknesses, their efforts proved successful, prompting the intervention of regional powers in favor of Baghdad and Baghdad's campaigns of vengeance against the Kurds.

The Kurds' choice of external actors as outside sources of support in their conflict with Baghdad precluded other international actors from offering support, undermined the Kurds' cause within Iraq, and ultimately sparked the resumption of interethnic violence and full scale war. Since 1958, the Kurds have secured international support from a number of regional and international states, including Iran, Syria, the United States, Israel, the Soviet Union, Libya, and most recently, Turkey.²⁴⁰ At first, the Kurds targeted the "progressive" Arab states, the UAR, Algeria, and the Soviet Union, where Mulla Mustafa had been in exile for nine years.²⁴¹ These attempts failed to secure the extensive and sustained support the Kurds needed to challenge Baghdad. The Arab states were intent upon promoting Arab unity and had little interest in supporting a Kurdish movement intent upon dismembering Arab Iraq. The Kurds were thus left with little choice but to align themselves with the "enemies of the Palestinian cause and the Arab world," a decision which would prove costly in the long term.²⁴²

In the mid-1960s, the Kurds began to drop their contacts with Arab states and the Soviet Union in favor of gaining support from Iran, covert support from Israel, and ultimately drawing in the United States.²⁴³ Rumors of Iranian, Israeli and U.S. involvement "did little to raise interest in the Kurdish plight in the Middle East and the Third World." As a result, the Kurds failed to develop ties with outside actors capable of raising the Kurds' plight in international forums. In addition, by choosing to rely on the

²⁴⁰Graham Fuller, 108.

²⁴¹Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 137.

²⁴²*Ibid.*, 140.

²⁴³*Ibid.*, 137-138.

West's allies in the region, the Kurds failed to co-opt the Arab left which was historically sympathetic to the Kurds' cause.²⁴⁴ As a result, "the Kurds had managed through their policies to insulate themselves from an array of potential supporters."²⁴⁵ Instead of relying on external actors who in fact supported the Kurdish cause and who might have been less inclined to abandon them, the Kurds chose instead external states whose interest in the conflict was purely instrumental.

The Kurds' choice of allies also had a fundamental impact upon their relationship with Baghdad. By developing relations with Iraq's three cardinal enemies, the Kurds had given the Iraqi leadership, particularly Saddam Hussein, every reason for alarm.²⁴⁶ In fact, the Kurds' choice of allies played directly into Baghdad's strategy. By choosing to ally themselves with Israel, Iran, and the United States, the Kurds gave Baghdad the opportunity to portray them as traitors to the state, rather than simply opponents of either the Baath leadership or the Arab nationalists. This view was not entirely without foundation. In 1967, the Kurds provided crucial support for Israel during the 1967 war by keeping Iraqi forces tied down in Kurdistan. In the mid-1970s the Kurds fought for Iran in a proxy war between Iran and Iraq, and finally during the Iran-Iraq war, Kurdish-Iranian coordination was so extensive that Kurdish forces served as advance units for the invading Iranian armies. As a result, Saddam Hussein and his predecessors came to view the Kurds increasingly as a Trojan horse for an Iranian victory.²⁴⁷

The perception of the Kurds as traitors undermined their bargaining position within Iraq as well as regional support for their cause, and provided Baghdad with justification for launching indiscriminate attacks against the Kurds that at their height involved chemical weapons attacks and extensive scorched earth policies. By allying themselves with Iraq's cardinal enemies, the Kurds gave Baghdad little incentive to negotiate a settlement to the

²⁴⁴Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 141.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*

²⁴⁶McDowall, 352-353.

²⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 352.

ongoing conflict. Rather, such tactics encouraged Baghdad to attempt to defeat the Kurds by force. As a result, the conflict escalated into full scale war.

Second, external actors have manipulated the fundamental divisions among the Kurds to further their own interests, sparking intra-Kurdish violence and undermining the Kurds' effort to present a united front against Baghdad. Iran, Turkey and Iraq have at times backed the others' Kurdish movements while repressing their own.²⁴⁸ External actors have actively encouraged divisions among the Kurds of Iraq to further their own interests, and at the same time, have used these divisions to contain Kurdish resistance and prevent it from threatening Iraq's territorial integrity. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iran supported the KDP, which turned its new-found strength against the PUK. The combined effects of Iranian-KDP advances in PUK territory and attacks by the Iraqi armed forces led the PUK eventually to agree to a ceasefire with Saddam Hussein. As a result, the PUK, armed by Baghdad, began to fight alongside Iraqi units against the KDP. The intra-Kurdish violence continued until 1987 when the PUK and the KDP formed the IKF.

In the aftermath of the Gulf war, these divisions have proved particularly serious, threatening the very future of the KRG. Turkey's war with the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK), a radical Turkish-based Kurdish party, sparked intra-Kurdish fighting in Iraq, which then created the conditions for the PKK to continue using Iraqi Kurdistan as its base of operations against the Turkish government. Indeed, the PKK has sought to sabotage the peace process by promoting a continued expansion of the civil war in Kurdistan, and in this effort it has been supported not only by Syria and Iran, but even by the PUK.²⁴⁹ In fact, the Iraqi Kurds have charged that the PKK has been supported by Baghdad itself.²⁵⁰

Cognizant of the serious threat continued civil war presented to the goal of Kurdish autonomy, let alone independence, the IKF threatened to purge the PKK from the region. In response, the PKK imposed a blockade on trade between Turkey and northern Iraq, the

²⁴⁸Dunn, 73.

²⁴⁹Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 238-239.

²⁵⁰Gunter, "A *de facto* Kurdish State," 307.

last remaining conduit for goods to reach Kurdistan. As a result, the conflict escalated as the Iraqi Kurds launched a massive assault against the PKK, prompting Turkish forces to enter the fighting in support of the Iraqi Kurds' effort to force the surrender of the PKK. Again, external actors had used the divisions among the Kurds to pursue their own interests in the region, prompting the outbreak and escalation of violence.

Third, external actors have undermined the Kurdish leadership's control over its own movement and abandoned the Kurds before they were able to secure the goals for which they had been fighting. Indeed, Kurdistan presents a clear example of the fact that external actors are rarely motivated by the interests of the group they claim to support. In an interview with Edmund Ghareeb after the Kurdish defeat, Mulla Mustafa related that, as the deadline approached in March 1974, he had met with U.S. officials in Iran and handed them a list of arms possessed by the Iraqi forces. Apparently he told U.S. officials, "This is what they have to use against us. If you will give us arms to match those arms, we will fight. Otherwise, we will make peace. We don't want to be massacred."²⁵¹ Apparently, U.S. officials responded favorably to his offer.²⁵²

Thus, in 1974 when the Kurds rejected the Autonomy Law and chose to continue fighting, believing they could force Baghdad to grant them a better agreement that would include Kirkuk, Kurdish concerns over the Shah's commitment to their cause were overcome by the Kurds' belief that the United States would act as a guarantor of the Iranian commitment. Mulla Mustafa later acknowledged the Kurds' error. "We wanted American guarantees. We never trusted the Shah. Without American promises we wouldn't have acted the way we did. We knew Iran could not do it all on its own. We accepted American aid in what we believed was the interest of the Kurdish people."²⁵³

²⁵¹ Mulla Mustafa Barzani in an interview with Ghareeb before his death in Washington, D.C. Quoted in Ghareeb, 159.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 140.

U.S. support for the Kurds was in fact minimal, motivated largely by the dual aim of weakening Iraq, a Soviet ally, and supporting the United States' own main ally in the region, the Shah of Iran.²⁵⁴ Similarly, the Shah viewed the Kurds as an effective channel for the destabilization of the Baathist government in Baghdad²⁵⁵ and more generally, as "a blow to various forms of Arab nationalism and radicalism."²⁵⁶ Most important, however, was the Kurds' role as leverage against Iraq in the dispute over the Shatt al-Arab. The Shah sought to use the Kurds to force Baghdad to accept the Ottoman-Persian Protocol of 1913 which established a mid-channel line.²⁵⁷ Both Iran and the United States hoped to benefit from the continuation of the Kurdish threat to Iraq, and neither wanted to see the Kurdish conflict resolved.²⁵⁸

Believing he had a U.S. guarantee, Mulla Mustafa rejected Baghdad's Autonomy Law and embarked upon a full scale war with Baghdad. The result was a catastrophe for the Kurds. Without their knowledge, the Shah had agreed to cease supporting the Kurds in Iraq in exchange for Iraq's concession in the Shatt al-Arab. Within hours of the announcement of the agreement, the Kurds were abandoned, and the Kurdish movement collapsed.

The Iran-Iraq war presented the Kurds with yet another opportunity to wage a large-scale effort against Baghdad with the minimum goal of altering the 1974 Autonomy Law in favor of genuine autonomy for Kurdistan. By the end of the war, both Iraqi Kurdish organizations were allied with Iran such that Baghdad was fighting a two-front war. Again the Kurds were to suffer a bitter defeat when Iran agreed to a ceasefire on July 18, 1988. The Kurds rapidly lost their critical source of support, and the Kurdish effort collapsed. In a near repeat of the tragic defeat in 1975, the Kurds were again abandoned by a regional power whose interests precluded the realization of the Kurds' aspirations.

²⁵⁴Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 143.

²⁵⁵Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," 91.

²⁵⁶Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 142.

²⁵⁷*Ibid.*

²⁵⁸McDowall, 331.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, the Kurds were again to learn the bitter lesson that international and regional powers continued to value the territorial integrity of Iraq over Kurdish aspirations. With the outbreak of the Gulf War, the Kurds refrained from revolting for fear of sparking another chemical weapons campaign in Kurdistan. However, in March 1991, after having been urged to revolt by the Voice of Free Iraq, a CIA-run radio station out of Saudi Arabia, the Kurds responded, having been led to believe that they would receive outside assistance and protection.²⁵⁹ Fearing the disintegration of Iraq, the United States ruled out intervention. Despite Western appeals for the Kurds to rebel, it was not in the interest of the international community that Iraq should disintegrate, and the Kurds were again abandoned in favor of the external actors' broader regional interests.

After crushing the Shi`a revolt in the South, Baghdad turned its forces toward Kurdistan and rapidly defeated the Kurdish uprising, resulting in a refugee crisis of tragic proportions as a half million refugees fled to the border with Turkey. Both Talabani and Masoud Barzani appealed to President Bush, reminding him of his appeal to the Kurdish people. "You personally called upon the Iraqi people to rise up against Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship."²⁶⁰ The international community continued to resist. Finally, Turkey's refusal to admit the refugees inadvertently helped the Kurds' plight as the specter of hundreds of thousands of Kurds trapped in the mountains finally prompted the international community to create a safe haven in Kurdistan and a No Fly Zone to protect it.²⁶¹ Although the Kurds temporarily secured protection against Baghdad, the failure to resolve the status of the Kurdish region has meant that the Kurds now rely on Turkey, rather than Baghdad, for their basic needs and security. The Kurds again failed to secure the goals they sought, losing instead the direction of the Kurdish movement to regional actors whose own interests may lead to the Kurds' abandonment once again.

²⁵⁹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 146. See also McDowall, 372.

²⁶⁰Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 53.

²⁶¹*Ibid.*, 55.

Fourth, external actors have prompted the Kurds to overestimate their capabilities and to shift from a proven strategy of guerrilla warfare to a conventional strategy, leading to a significant expansion and escalation of the war. Until the Kurds secured extensive support from Iran, Israel, and to a lesser extent the United States, the Kurds fought the Iraqi armed forces using a classic strategy of guerrilla warfare. In the 1970s, however, Israeli and Iranian advisors, in an effort to overthrow the Iraqi Baath government, encouraged Mulla Mustafa to shift to a conventional strategy and to reorganize the Peshmergas as a conventional army.²⁶²

When the war resumed in 1974, the Kurds were rapidly overwhelmed, suffering such extensive losses that within months the Iraqi army held more of Kurdistan than at any time since 1961.²⁶³ As Kurdish losses mounted, Iran deployed regular troops, dressed as Kurdish Peshmergas, to fight alongside Iranian and Iraqi Kurds.²⁶⁴ Despite direct intervention, Iran could not save the Kurds short of a full scale war. As a result, Iran became receptive to an offer for a trade-off over the Shatt al-Arab, and the Kurds suffered a massive defeat.

A decade later, the Kurds were to repeat this mistake. During the Iran-Iraq war, the massive increase in Iranian support prompted the Kurds to abandon their successful guerrilla strategy for a conventional strategy that relied on heavy attacks against military centers in concert with invading Iranian forces.²⁶⁵ Kurdish forces operated as advance units for the invading Iranian forces and inflicted serious losses on the Iraqi forces. Despite success on the battlefield, Iran was unable to defeat Iraq and finally agreed to a ceasefire in 1988. Unable to continue the war on conventional terms without Iranian backing, the Kurds suffered yet another massive defeat. Although the shift in strategy produced success in the short term, it could not be sustained, and the Kurds were defeated.

²⁶²Ghareeb, 162.

²⁶³McDowall, 337.

²⁶⁴Ibid., 338.

²⁶⁵Ibid., 352.

Finally, external support has prompted the Kurds to increase their demands, leading to the repeated stalemate and collapse of negotiations and the resumption of war. The Kurds have sought to achieve independence, or at least self-determination, since the end of World War I. However, international actors and regional powers repeatedly sought to thwart Kurdish aspirations until the mid-1960s when external powers began to use the Kurds to pursue their own interests in the region. Although regional powers remained committed to preventing the actual realization of Kurdish goals, they encouraged and supplied the Kurds to continue fighting. A clear example of the role external actors have played in the formulation of Kurdish demands can be seen in the period between the announcement of the March Manifesto and the outbreak of the 1974 Kurdish war.

In 1971, as tensions increased between Baghdad and the Kurds over implementation of the provisions of the March Manifesto, Iran managed to persuade Mulla Mustafa to increase his demands, leading him to believe that a secessionist bid was possible.²⁶⁶ Aware that additional demands would undermine the shaky accord, Mulla Mustafa apparently agreed after receiving assurances from the United States, Israel, and Iran of increased support.²⁶⁷ Baghdad countered with the significantly weakened 1974 Autonomy Law and an ultimatum, but the Kurds continued to believe that they could achieve a better agreement, one which would include Kirkuk.²⁶⁸ The Kurds rejected the agreement, and the war resumed. In 1975 when the Kurds were defeated, Baghdad began implementing some of the provisions of the 1974 Autonomy Law.

The Kurds have been encouraged to increase their demands and to continue resisting Baghdad, a decision which served the purposes of the regional actors intent upon undermining Baghdad, but in no way served the interests of the Kurds. Although it remains questionable whether Baghdad ever intended to implement the March Manifesto,

²⁶⁶ Mohammad H. Malek, "Kurdistan in the Middle East Conflict," *New Left Review* 175 (May/June 1989): 83.

²⁶⁷ Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 72.

²⁶⁸ Gurr and Harff, 42.

the Kurds' decision to increase their demands only served to strengthen Baghdad's suspicions that the Kurds would not be satisfied with anything less than self-rule, if not outright secession, and to prompt Baghdad to refrain from granting the Kurds any substantial degree of autonomy since the Kurds apparently intended to use it as a stepping stone to something more.

In contrast to the mid-1970s, the Kurds have, since the 1991 Gulf War, couched their aspirations in language aimed at reassuring the international community, but most importantly Turkey, of their intention to remain within Iraq. According to Masoud Barzani, "our goal is not to set up an independent state."²⁶⁹ The limited nature of the Kurds' public pronouncements about the future of Kurdistan is reflective of a regional consensus among Turkey, Iran, and Syria against the partition of Iraq and the creation of a Kurdish state.²⁷⁰ This consensus has emerged out of a series of tripartite meetings held beginning in 1992 to which the Kurds were not invited.²⁷¹ As a result, the Kurds have proclaimed the KRG to be a "federated state," an integral part of a democratic, post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. Although the Kurds may still aspire to independence, it is not a goal that is publicly professed. Indeed, according to Masoud Barzani,

The situation in the world today is such that it will not permit any changes in regional borders. Nor will it stand for any partitioning....[The Iraqi Kurds] should not swim against the international tide. We should act with wisdom...[and] bear in mind that there is a wide gap between our wishes and our rights on the one hand, and what we can achieve on the other.²⁷²

As time progressed and the Kurds became increasingly dependent on Turkey for their continued survival in face of the complete blockade imposed by Baghdad, Kurdish goals began to shift. Turkey remained firmly opposed to Kurdish independence. According to Demirel, "a federated state is a stage...on the way to an independent state."²⁷³ As a result of Turkish pressure and in spite of U.S. opposition, the Kurds began to negotiate

²⁶⁹Masoud Barzani, quoted in Gunter, "A *de facto* Kurdish State," 300.

²⁷⁰Gunter, "A *de facto* Kurdish State," 312.

²⁷¹Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 234.

²⁷²Masoud Barzani, quoted in Gunter, "A *de facto* Kurdish State," 300.

²⁷³Stileyman Demirel, quoted in Gunter, "A *de facto* Kurdish State," 309-310.

with Baghdad. Although the Kurds initially ruled out any possibility of negotiations with Saddam Hussein, Turkish pressure and the Kurds' complete dependence on Turkey forced them to reconsider their goals once again.

The most serious cost of internationalization has taken place when the Kurds, despite the fundamental weakness in the nature of their external support, managed to achieve success. Kurdish successes have provoked two responses, both of which have resulted in the death of large numbers of Kurdish combatants and non-combatants and the destruction of large swathes of ethnically Kurdish territory in northern Iraq. The first response, the intervention of external powers in support of Baghdad, has proved to be the less deadly of the two. As Kurdish-Iranian successes mounted during the Iran-Iraq war, Turkey launched a massive incursion into Kurdistan under the terms of the 1978 "hot pursuit" agreement, using both ground forces and airpower and seizing some 1500 prisoners in the process.²⁷⁴ In 1986, the Turkish air force bombed a number of Kurdish villages on the pretext of destroying PKK camps.²⁷⁵ A clear example of the consistent regional consensus against Iraq's disintegration and the potential creation of a Kurdish state, Turkey's repeated incursions into Kurdistan replaced Baghdad's authority in northern Iraq during the remainder of the war. Kurdish successes on the battlefield had triggered the intervention of a third external power, whose intervention served Baghdad's interests at the expense of the Kurds.

At the height of the Iran-Iraq war, Turkey again intervened to prevent the conclusion of an agreement between the PUK and Baghdad which would have modified the hated 1974 autonomy law in the Kurds' favor. Turkey warned Baghdad that Iraq's sole remaining oil pipeline through Turkish territory would be shut down, paralyzing Iraq economically, should Baghdad proceed with the agreement.²⁷⁶ Rather than resolve the ongoing Kurdish threat through negotiations, Turkey suggested an alternative: negotiation

²⁷⁴McDowall, 347.

²⁷⁵Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 134.

²⁷⁶Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 133.

of an Iraqi-Turkish security agreement that allowed both sides to go beyond the measures of the earlier “hot pursuit” agreements. In the new agreement signed in October 1984, both sides agreed “to control terrorist activities by subversive elements that deal with foreign quarters.”²⁷⁷ Either side could now penetrate the other’s territory and remain there for up to three days to accomplish their mission.²⁷⁸ For the remainder of the war, Turkey would use this agreement to stage massive incursions and cross border raids aimed at Kurdish insurgents that resulted in numerous civilian casualties as well.

The second response, adopted by Baghdad to counter mounting Kurdish victories, has been massive repression ranging from the destruction of entire Kurdish villages and their inhabitants’ forced resettlement to extensive chemical weapons attacks on Kurdish villages suspected of aiding Baghdad’s enemies. Kurdish successes in the mid-1970s prompted Baghdad to subject Kurdistan to a massive “clean-up” operation in the war’s aftermath that involved creating a wide security belt along Iraq’s borders and resettling hundreds of Kurds. At the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Baghdad was to repeat such measures, albeit on a much larger scale. Chemical weapons attacks began in the last year of the Iran-Iraq war, and continued in its aftermath to clear suspect villages of its inhabitants and to send a clear message to Iraq’s Kurdish population of the costs of supporting Iraq’s enemies. In both cases, the Kurds, having managed to secure a significant degree of external support for their cause, were subject to massive repression that succeeded in ending, at least temporarily, Kurdish resistance.

The involvement of a third party in a conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers raises the stakes of conflict, transforms it from an internal to an international conflict, and prompts the ethnic group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 8). Although the Kurds actively sought international support and benefited from it in the short term, in the long term external support has entailed significant costs, clearly

²⁷⁷Yapp, 133.

²⁷⁸Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 133.

demonstrating that while external support sustains such movements, it rarely enables them to be successful.

Arms and Financial Resources

At the international level, a second source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan is the access to arms and financial resources. Without such access, the Kurdish war against Baghdad could not have been sustained. Unlike the cases of the former Yugoslavia and Nagorno-Karabakh, the Kurds have neither an extensive Diaspora network nor ready access to the weapons stockpiles of a disintegrating Soviet or Yugoslav state. Despite these significant handicaps, the Kurds have certainly been one of the more successful ethnic groups in securing weapons from outside sources, more often than not of an unreliable nature, over a long duration. Indeed, the Kurds have been receiving weapons and financial assistance from outside powers since the aftermath of World War I when Turkey sought to arm the Kurds in its efforts to reclaim Mosul.²⁷⁹ It was not, however, until the collapse of the Iraqi monarchy that the Kurds were able to secure substantial resources on the scale necessary to fight a large scale war.

Although the Kurds have not had access to domestic-based supplies on the order of the quantity of weapons available to ethnic contenders in the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, the Kurds have managed to seize weapons from the Iraqi forces, particularly during the height of the Iran-Iraq war. Most weapons were seized during successful offensives, but in some instances, the Kurds were able to make purchases from the Iraqi armed forces.²⁸⁰ According to one PUK member in 1985, “we are indebted to the Iraqi army. The overwhelming proportion of our small arms is captured from Iraq, together with over 700 vehicles. And what we don’t take, they sell us.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁹Ghareeb, 42.

²⁸⁰Anthony Hyman, *Elusive Kurdistan: The Struggle for Recognition* (London: Centre for Security and Conflict Studies, 1988), 15.

²⁸¹Fuad Masum, senior PUK Politburo member, quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 41.

The most significant Iraq-based supply of weapons and funds has come from Baghdad in its efforts to divide the Kurds and co-opt one of the rival leaderships, either the Barzani or Talabani faction. Although the Kurds have, at various times, managed to accumulate a significant store of weapons from Iraq, Baghdad has never been a reliable supplier. When the Kurds did manage to receive arms from Baghdad, it was always a short-term arrangement and never constituted the whole of the Kurdish supply system.

Iran has been the primary source of weapons and financial resources for the Kurds since the early 1960s. After Qasim's overthrow, Iran began supplying funds, arms and other military equipment to Mulla Mustafa's forces,²⁸² such that by the late 1960s Mulla Mustafa's forces had grown to more than 20,000 well-equipped Peshmergas armed with anti-aircraft guns, field guns, and anti-tank weapons.²⁸³ According to one estimate, by 1966, Iran was supplying at least 20 percent of Mulla Mustafa's requirements.²⁸⁴

The steady supply of arms and ammunition as well as funds to purchase weapons from the regions' black market²⁸⁵ had a significant impact on the course of the Kurdish-Iraqi war which erupted in 1961. Rapid losses on the battlefield led to Qasim's overthrow, the subsequent overthrow of the Baath regime nine months later, and the collapse of the Arif regime in 1968. Indeed, by 1967 neither the Iraqi government nor the army were in a position to present much of a threat to the Kurds. As a result of Iran's extensive supply, "Baghdad could now only defeat the Kurds if it could seal the border with Iran."²⁸⁶

By late 1969, the Kurds had an armory of weapons which included over a hundred lightweight anti-aircraft guns, 20 twenty-five pound field guns, and a number of anti-tank guns.²⁸⁷ In late August 1969, when the new Baathist government launched a major military campaign against the Kurds, Mulla Mustafa's forces were well-prepared. The

²⁸²Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 141.

²⁸³Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict," 229.

²⁸⁴McDowall, 320.

²⁸⁵Hyman, 15.

²⁸⁶McDowall, 320.

²⁸⁷Ghareeb, 78.

attempt rapidly reached a stalemate, prompting the offer of negotiations which led to the 1970 March Manifesto. Again, Iran's financial support and weapons and ammunition supply had given the Kurds the necessary means to force Baghdad to the negotiating table.

In the mid 1970s, Iranian military and financial support was critical to the Kurdish decision to pursue a strategy of violence against Baghdad rather than accept the proffered autonomy law. Iran supplied the Kurds with light and medium field guns (75mm and 130mm) and anti-tank missiles, and encouraged Mulla Mustafa to continue the war, fearing that the Kurds' acceptance of the agreement would obviate the Kurds' role in undermining the Baath regime.²⁸⁸ Although the Kurds were influenced by the belief in a U.S. guarantee, a critical element in the fateful decision to continue the war was the seemingly reliable supply of both small arms and heavy weapons from Iran.

In addition to being the primary supplier of arms and financial resources, Iran has also been the main conduit through which arms from other sources have reached the Kurds. Beginning in 1963, Israel initiated a covert program of support for the Kurds in Iraq that included both financial assistance and small amounts of arms and ammunition, all of which reached Kurdistan through SAVAK, Iran's internal security organization.²⁸⁹ In addition, Israel provided military advisors who were dispatched to Mulla Mustafa's headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan and established training camps for Mulla Mustafa's Peshmergas in the Kurdish mountains. Israel's Mossad also assisted the Kurds in the creation of *Parastin*, the Kurdish intelligence unit, in 1966.²⁹⁰ After the June 1967 War, when Mulla Mustafa provided an invaluable service by engaging Iraqi troops and preventing them from aiding Syrian and Jordanian forces, Israeli military assistance for the Kurds increased dramatically. Mulla Mustafa visited Israel in September 1967 where he was promised aid in the amount of fifty thousand U.S. dollars per month.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 141.

²⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 144.

²⁹⁰Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 118; Ghareeb, 142; and Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 127n24.

²⁹¹Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 118; Ghareeb, 142.

Throughout the 1960s Mulla Mustafa appealed to the United States for support, but it was not until the early 1970s, when Moscow and Baghdad signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, that the United States was persuaded to assist the Shah in his efforts to undermine the Baath regime. The United States provided some sixteen million dollars in aid to the Kurds through SAVAK and reportedly promised sufficient arms and ammunition to match the Iraqi armed forces in the events leading up to the outbreak of the war in 1974.²⁹²

A second important regional supplier of arms and financial assistance has been Syria. Like Iran, Syria has served as an important conduit for outside states to support the Kurds. Syrian support has mostly favored the PUK. In the aftermath of the Algiers defeat, the PUK was formed in Damascus, and its forces were rearmed by Syria and Libya, thereby allowing the PUK to be the first to return Peshmergas to Kurdistan. Using its new found strength, the PUK targeted KDP forces. Syria provided substantial aid to the Kurds during the Iran-Iraq war, and continued to do so in the aftermath of the war, thereby making it possible for the Kurds to continue small scale, but symbolically critical, resistance even after the Anfal.²⁹³

In addition to Iran, Israel, the United States, and Syria, the Soviet Union briefly supplied the Kurds with weaponry and financial assistance in the early 1960s. By 1970, however, Moscow relations with Iraq had improved and, after brief attempts to mediate a solution to the Kurdish problem, the Soviet Union began supplying Baghdad with weapons and technical expertise on a large scale.²⁹⁴ Turkey also played a minimal role in supplying the Kurds prior to the settlement of the Mosul question, but thereafter Turkey remained hostile to the Kurds with the once exception of a brief period in the early 1960s when Turkey allowed the Iraqi Kurds to use Turkish territory in their war against Qasim.²⁹⁵ In the aftermath of the Gulf War, however, Turkey's role changed

²⁹²Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 144.

²⁹³Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1992), 42.

²⁹⁴Heraclides, *Self-Determination of Minorities*, 143.

²⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 144.

fundamentally, such that Turkey is now the Kurds' single-most important source of external support. Although Turkey does not officially recognize the KRG, it granted the KRG some 13.5 million dollars in aid in 1993.²⁹⁶

The Kurdish case clearly demonstrates the critical role access to financial resources and weaponry plays in the outbreak and conduct of interethnic war. Although a group may have a strong sense of identity, a capable leadership, and grievances against a regime, adopting a strategy of interethnic war is not possible on the scale witnessed in Iraqi Kurdistan without access to the necessary funds and arms and ammunition. Indeed, access to arms is a crucial threshold for violence, one that the Kurds were repeatedly able to reach because of a large supply of available weaponry. Although external support did not come without costs, as was demonstrated in the previous discussion of tangible and political-diplomatic support, it was still a vital component of the successful pursuit of a strategy of ethnic violence. According to Proposition 9, if the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or from the military itself, then there is a strong tendency for ethnic groups with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of interethnic warfare.

A Triggering Event

A final source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan is the emergence of a "triggering event" that suddenly propels rapid group mobilization and sparks the outbreak of ethnic violence. A triggering event can be external or internal to the group, shaping a group's opportunities for action. According to Proposition 10, if a sudden "triggering event" occurs either internal or external to the group, then there will be a strong tendency for an ethnic group to resort to violence.

²⁹⁶McDowall, 384.

In the case of Kurdistan, the rapid defeat of Iraq by the Coalition Forces in the Gulf War served as a triggering event, sparking a sudden revolt in Kurdistan. Throughout the war, Kurdish leaders refrained from mobilizing the Kurds for fear of Iraqi retaliation, a fear that was not unjustified. In the month preceding the war, the RCC had warned the Kurds to remember Halabja, promising that the government was “ready to repeat the operation.”²⁹⁷ During the brief war between Iraq and the Coalition forces, the Kurds ignored Western appeals for a Kurdish revolt in the north, fearing a repeat of the Anfal.

On February 28, 1991, however, the large-scale unexpected defeat of Iraqi forces acted as a triggering event, sparking a massive revolt in Iraq, first in Southern Iraq on March 4 and then in Kurdistan a few days later. The revolt caught the KDP and PUK leaderships by surprise, such that they “had to play catch-up to the man in the street.”²⁹⁸ The hated jash defected *en masse* and joined the Kurdish rebellion, such that Kurdish forces expanded from 15,000 to well over 100,000 men in the space of a few days.²⁹⁹ Most of the major cities in Iraqi Kurdistan fell with astounding alacrity. By March 10, rebels controlled Dohuk, Irbil, and Sulaymaniya,³⁰⁰ and by mid-March all of Kurdistan had fallen to the rebels, including Jalula, Zakho, and even Kirkuk.³⁰¹

The Kurdish uprising, although short-lived, was sparked by the defeat of the Iraqi forces in the Gulf War, which served as a triggering event that ignited communal tensions and propelled the Kurdish people to revolt. After the tragic events of the Anfal operation following the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurds refrained from mounting any large-scale resistance for fear of prompting another chemical weapons attack. However, the fear of such an attack was overcome by the sudden opportunity that Iraq’s rapid defeat seemed to promise, and the Kurds revolted, seizing all of Kurdistan from Iraqi forces in the process.

²⁹⁷Izzat Ibrahim, quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 49-50.

²⁹⁸Dunn, 82.

²⁹⁹McDowall, 372.

³⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 371.

³⁰¹Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 49-50.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the outbreak of violence in Kurdistan in this chapter, seven of the ten propositions about the sources of ethnic violence developed in Section I are relevant to understanding what prompted the outbreak of violent conflict between the Kurds and a succession of Arab regimes in Baghdad. These seven propositions identify the critical triggers of interethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan.

One important source of ethnic violence in Kurdistan is the belief, shared by the Kurds of Iraq, that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened by the policies of ethnic strangers, the Arab rulers in Baghdad. Four factors led the Kurds to conclude that their survival was threatened: First, a decrease in the size of the Kurdish population in Kurdistan in absolute terms (Proposition 3.1) and second, in relative terms (Population 3.2), through Arabization, resettlement, deportation, massacre, and genocide; third, the lack of cultural autonomy (Proposition 3.3) which threatened to destroy Kurdish distinctiveness and the Kurdish way of life through resettlement outside Kurdistan, as well as through more traditional measures, such as a lack of Kurdish language education, restrictions on cultural institutions, and limited access to higher education and jobs; and finally, pressure on group lands and resources (Proposition 3.4) through restrictive land ownership laws, limited industrialization, modernization or regional development, and through creative boundary adjustments that have removed large sections of Kurdish-inhabited territories outside of Kurdistan itself. Having concluded that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened, the Kurds adopted a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense (Proposition 3).

The decision on the part of the Kurdish ethnic leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence is one of the most important sources of violence in Kurdistan (Proposition 4). This decision was prompted as much by a desire to realize a genuine degree of autonomy for the Kurds in Kurdistan as by persistent, debilitating, and counterproductive power struggles within the deeply fragmented Kurdish ethnic leadership. Neither Mulla

Mustafa nor his successors managed to unite the Kurds behind a single Kurdish leadership, although under Mulla Mustafa's leadership the endemic factionalism of the Kurdish leadership was kept somewhat in check by his charisma and preponderant strength as well as his willingness to defeat, deport, or assassinate rivals. After the 1975 defeat, however, the Kurdish leadership dissolved into two main contenders for hegemony, the KDP and the PUK. Their persistent and frequently violent competition for the right to assume undisputed leadership of the Kurds and more recently for hegemony in Kurdistan, has been a primary source of violence in Kurdistan.

The first source of ethnic violence at the state level is Iraq's response to Kurdish mobilization. With only two brief exceptions, Iraq has been a weak state since its creation, unable or unwilling to offer meaningful concessions to the Kurds and too weak to suppress the Kurdish rebellion on more than a temporary basis. Unable to maintain a monopoly over the use of force, Baghdad waged a long-term and costly battle against the Kurds that failed to resolve the conflict either through accommodation or repression, prompting the Kurds to conclude that they had little stake in the system and to adopt repeatedly a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 5). When Baghdad managed briefly to consolidate its power between 1975-1980 and again between 1988-1990, its repressive measures led the Kurds to conclude that the costs of rebellion were too high. As a result, the Kurds temporarily refrained from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 5.4). However, the consolidation of power was to be short lived. Following Baghdad's decision to declare war on Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990, Iraq could again be classified as a weak state. The Baath lost its monopoly over the use of force and the cycle of repression and accommodation resumed.

A second source violence at the state level is the Kurds' exclusion from the Iraqi polity. In no other case study is the link between an ethnic group's exclusion from the polity and the decision to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence clearer than in the case of the Kurds in Kurdistan. The history of the Kurds in Iraq is one of a confusing series of

promises and negotiated agreements for autonomy that are subsequently ignored or only partially implemented, prompting the outbreak and escalation of ethnic violence and the resumption of full scale war until the next regime is again forced to negotiate and the cycle begins anew. With each failed agreement, the Kurds resorted to a strategy of ethnic violence rather than face perpetual exclusion from the polity. Until the Gulf War, the Kurds' aim was to force the regime to acknowledge the Kurds' separate national identity and to grant them a degree of autonomy in Kurdistan (Proposition 6). After the Gulf War, however, the Kurds were no longer willing to negotiate an agreement with the Baath for autonomy within Iraq. The Baath had clearly demonstrated their unwillingness to relinquish any degree of power to the Kurds, and the Kurds concluded that their exclusion was permanent, adopting a strategy of ethnic violence to secede (Proposition 6.2). Whether the Kurds will in fact realize this goal of independence is highly unlikely, but the de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq is a possible step toward independence as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power in Iraq.

There are three important sources of ethnic violence at the interstate level in the case of the Kurds. The first is the crucial role of third party support. The Kurds have been remarkably successful in securing a significant degree of external support ranging from material and utilitarian aid to full scale military intervention. Although the Kurds benefited from this support in the short term, in the long term external support has entailed significant costs. Despite extensive third party support, the Kurds repeatedly failed to achieve the goals for which they had been fighting.

There are five reasons for this failure. First, the choice of states on which the Kurds relied for external support precluded other international actors from offering support and provided Baghdad with the opportunity to portray the Kurds as traitors and to justify large-scale repression of the Kurds in Iraq. Second, external actors were able to manipulate the endemic divisions within the Kurdish leadership to the detriment of the Kurdish movement as a whole. Third, the Kurds lost control over the direction of their own movement to

external actors whose interests rarely coincided with those of the Kurds, resulting in the Kurds' repeated abandonment before the goals for which they had been fighting were realized. Fourth, external support prompted the Kurds to overestimate their capabilities and to abandon a proven strategy of guerrilla warfare for a large-scale conventional strategy that resulted repeatedly in the Kurds' defeat. Fifth, external support prompted the unreasonable and unwise expansion and multiplication of Kurdish demands resulting in the repeated stalemate and collapse of negotiations and the resumption of war.

The most serious cost of internationalization, however, occurred when the Kurds, despite these weaknesses, managed to succeed in their efforts against Iraq, prompting the intervention of external powers in favor of Baghdad and massive repression involving chemical weapons attacks and other scorched earth policies. Third party intervention thus raised the stakes of violence, transformed the conflict from an internal to an international conflict, and prompted the Kurds to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence that enabled short term successes but resulted in the Kurds' ultimate defeat (Proposition 8).

The second source of ethnic violence at the interstate level is the access to arms and financial resources which sustained the nearly continuous war between Baghdad and the Kurds since the collapse of the Iraqi monarchy. The extensive supply of arms, ammunition, and financial resources from a number of regional and international sources enabled the Kurds to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence and to resume fighting after a succession of failed agreements (Proposition 9).

The final source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan is the emergence of a sudden "triggering event" which propels rapid mobilization and sparks the outbreak of ethnic violence. The rapid defeat of Iraq against the Coalition forces in the Gulf War served as such a trigger, sparking a sudden revolt in Kurdistan that resulted in nearly all of Kurdistan falling to Kurdish forces in the space of two weeks. Although the Kurdish leadership had refrained from acting when the war began, Iraq's defeat prompted a

seemingly spontaneous rebellion that surprised even the Kurdish leadership (Proposition 10).

Each of these seven propositions presents a clear source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan. The three remaining propositions developed in Section I were not directly relevant to explaining the violence in the case of Kurdistan. The reasons for their exclusion will be discussed briefly below.

First, ethnonationalism is not a source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan (Proposition 1). Although Gurr defines the Kurds of Iraq as ethnonationalists, they have neither a history of autonomy nor independence. The Kurds were promised an independent state in the Treaty of Sèvres, but its provisions were never implemented and the Mahabad Republic in Iran barely survived a year even with Soviet backing. Furthermore, unlike the Serbs or the Armenians, the Kurdish ethnic identity is not based on a particular homeland or territory. Rather, the Kurds' ethnic identity is closely linked to the Kurdish way of life that is symbolized by "the Mountain." Territory is thus important only to the extent that the Kurds are allowed to remain in the mountainous regions of Kurdistan which stretch across the political boundaries of not only Iraq, but Turkey, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan as well. The only territory which has emerged as a source of dispute between the Kurds and Baghdad is the status of Kirkuk. Although the Kurds argue that Kirkuk belongs to Kurdistan, the claim to Kirkuk has been prompted more by the potential revenues control over the oil rich region would bring than by any Kurdish link to Kirkuk "since time immemorial." In fact, the Kurdish majority in Kirkuk is recent. The Kurds have fought not to claim ownership to a particular homeland or territory or to reclaim a past history of autonomy but to preserve their Kurdish identity and way of life. The decision to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in Kurdistan has thus not been prompted by the desire to reclaim a lost homeland or territory, but to secure autonomy for the Kurds *within* Iraq.

Ethnic chauvinism is similarly not a source of ethnic violence in Kurdistan (Proposition 2). The Kurds have not been motivated to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence

by any belief in the innate superiority of Kurds over Arabs. Even though the Kurds have been subject to massive repression and widespread chemical weapons attacks by Saddam Hussein's regime, the extreme forms of intolerance and ethnic hatred that characterized the war in Yugoslavia have not prompted ethnic violence or ethnic cleansing in Kurdistan. In fact, although the Kurds may aspire to a state of their own, they have been willing to remain a part of Iraq and to share in Kurdistan's oil revenues. Even after the Gulf War, the Kurds have been willing to remain part of a post-Saddam Hussein democratic Iraq.

Finally, the adoption of ethnic violence by transnational kindred did not have a demonstration effect upon the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan (Proposition 7). As in the case of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Kurds in Iraq were not prompted to adopt a violent strategy by Kurdish populations elsewhere in the Middle East. The Kurds of Iraq have been the leaders of Kurdish resistance since the fall of the Mahabad republic in 1946.

Why did the locus of Kurdish resistance shift to Iraq after the failure of Mahabad? The reasons are five-fold. First, as a relatively new state, Iraq is weaker than either Turkey or Iran. Second, the Iraqi Kurds represent a larger percentage of the population than the Kurds in Turkey and Iran, and the Iraqi Kurdish population is more concentrated. As a result, Kurdish demands represent a greater threat to Iraq than to Iran or Turkey. Furthermore, because of their regional concentration, the Iraqi Kurds have been less accessible to government forces and less susceptible to assimilation. In addition, the Kurds in Iraq were recognized by both the League of Nations and the British. Finally, the Kurds in Iraq had a charismatic leader and larger, better supplied forces to conduct a full scale war. For all of these reasons, the Kurds in Iraq have presented the most serious, violent, long-term challenge of any of the Kurdish populations in the region. Although the Kurds of Iraq may themselves be a source of inspiration for other Kurdish populations in the region, they were not prompted by other instances of Kurdish resistance to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. If there has been contagion and diffusion in Kurdistan, it has been inspired by the Kurds of Iraq.

Seven of the ten propositions developed in Section I were relevant for identifying what caused the outbreak of sustained ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan: ethnic group survival, ethnic group leadership, the weak state, exclusion and denial, international support, arms and financial resources, and finally, a “triggering” event. The remaining three propositions were not directly relevant to the case of the Kurds, namely ethnonationalism, ethnic chauvinism, and contagion and diffusion. Together, the seven relevant propositions explain the sources of ethnic conflict in one of the Middle East’s most persistent and protracted ethnic conflicts.

Section III

**A FINAL ASSESSMENT OF THE
SOURCES OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE**

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

The most common explanation for the explosion of ethnic conflict since the end of the Cold War attributes the extreme interethnic violence of the wars in Yugoslavia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Kurdistan, and elsewhere to the explosion of ancient ethnic hatreds following the collapse of the Cold War system. According to this argument, competing ethnic groups are prompted to adopt some of the most violent strategies of ethnic cleansing and large scale massacre by a deep-seated hatred members of a group have felt for members of a competing ethnic group for centuries.

This approach has fostered the misperception that there can be no rational explanation for ethnic violence and the belief that preventative measures are futile. Violent ethnic conflict cannot be prevented, it can only be limited or halted. As a result, the common response to violent conflicts such as those studied here has been to prevent the further spread of violence through negotiations, often accompanied by peacekeeping forces to separate the warring factions. As is evident in each of the cases above, such an approach fails to prevent the further spread of violence. Instead, it transforms the war from an internal to an international conflict and raises the stakes of conflict, resulting in the escalation and expansion of the war in both time and space. In the case of Yugoslavia, the impact of outside actors was so significant as to determine what *form* that violence would take. In fact, attempts by outside actors to find a resolution to the conflict tragically encouraged the further expansion of ethnic cleansing to Bosnia.

The ancient ethnic hatreds thesis fails to offer a complete explanation for the outbreak of ethnic violence. It fails to explain why some ethnic groups seem content to solve competing claims within existing structures, relying on nonviolent interethnic

bargaining and competition, while other groups resort to violence, employing guerrilla tactics, ethnic cleansing, and even wholesale massacre. It ignores the many sources of ethnic violence at the state and interstate levels, as has been clearly demonstrated in the three case studies above. It engenders an approach to conflict resolution that ignores the many factors, at the group, state, and interstate level, that prompt violence. Without an understanding of the numerous, complex, and interrelated sources of conflict, no attempt at resolving ethnic violence over the long term will succeed. To resolve the bitterly violent struggles that have emerged since the end of the Cold War requires an understanding of the many sources of ethnic violence not just at the group level and not just limited to ethnic hatred, but at the state and interstate levels as well.

A second, common explanation for ethnic violence focuses on an ethnic group's leadership and lays the blame for the outbreak of interethnic violence upon these "aggressive," "chauvinistic," "tribal," and "reactionary" ethnic leaders. This instrumentalist explanation, which views ethnicity as a social construct and ethnic violence as a rational choice, has been used to explain the outbreak of ethnic violence in two of the case studies examined above.¹ According to this approach, Yugoslavia degenerated into a violent ethnic war because of the aspirations of an aggressive Serbian leadership that sought the destruction of Yugoslavia and the creation of a Greater Serbia in its place. This same approach places the blame for nearly four decades of continuous warfare in Kurdistan on a Kurdish leadership who placed its own interests above those of the Kurds as a whole and willfully undermined a series of negotiated settlements meant to normalize Kurdistan in favor of continued warfare.

In all three of the case studies examined above, a group's ethnic leadership did play a central role in the decision to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. Indeed, no explanation of the sources of ethnic violence in any of these case studies would be complete without a careful examination of the critical role a group's ethnic leadership plays in the outbreak of

¹Young, 72.

ethnic warfare. However, placing sole responsibility for the outbreak of violence on ethnic leadership ignores the three other factors at the group level, namely ethnonationalism, ethnic chauvinism, and ethnic group survival, as well as the factors at the state and interstate levels. In both the Yugoslav and Kurdish cases, the state itself played a critical role in the outbreak of ethnic violence, as did numerous international organizations, outside states and non-state actors.

A third explanation that has been widely used to explain the explosion of ethnic conflicts along civilizational faultlines is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" paradigm. Unlike the previous two explanations, Huntington's argument offers an explanation for ethnic violence at the interstate level. He argues that adjacent ethnic groups along the faultlines of civilizations will "struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other."² Although Huntington's explanation is appealingly simple, it fails to provide a convincing explanation for the outbreak of violence in any of the three cases examined in Section II. As has been shown above, civilizational differences alone drove neither Armenians and Azerbaijanis nor Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Slovenes to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. In the case of Kurdistan, Huntington's paradigm is at a complete loss since the Kurds and the Iraqi Arabs are part of the same "civilization," as Huntington defines it, and as a result, should not be at war at all. In addition to being unable to account for violence in Kurdistan, Huntington's approach is incomplete for the same reason that the previous two arguments were rejected: he fails to account for the many sources of ethnic violence at the group and state level and ignores additional important sources at the interstate level.

The lack of an adequate, comprehensive explanation for the sources of ethnic violence in the post-Cold War period prompted the development of a series of ten propositions and related subpropositions that identified potential sources of ethnic violence at three levels of analysis, the group, state and interstate levels, in Section I above. In

²Huntington, 29.

Section II, these propositions and subpropositions were tested across three case studies, the results of which are shown schematically in the table below. In the case of Yugoslavia,

Case Studies	GROUP LEVEL				STATE LEVEL		INTERSTATE LEVEL			
		P2		P4	P5	P6 P6.1 P6.2		P8	P9 P9.1	
Yugoslavia										
Nagorno-Karabakh	P1		P3 P3.2 P3.3 P3.4	P4	P5 P5.4			P8	P9	
Kurdistan			P3 P3.1 P3.2 P3.3 P3.4	P4	P5 P5.4	P6 P6.2		P8	P9	P10

six of the ten propositions are relevant to understanding the sources of ethnic violence among the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims first in Croatia and then in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, six of the ten propositions are relevant to understanding what caused the outbreak of violent interethnic conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Finally, in the case of Kurdistan, seven of the ten propositions developed in Section I are relevant to understanding what prompted the outbreak of violent conflict between the Kurds and a succession of Arab regimes in Baghdad.

In this final section, the results from the three case studies will be examined in a comparative framework to determine which propositions identified the strongest triggers of ethnic violence, which propositions identified potential sources of ethnic violence, and which propositions failed to identify a source of ethnic violence in the cases examined above. These findings will be examined below at each of the three levels of analysis.

The Group Level

Only one proposition at the group level, ethnic group leadership, is relevant to all three case studies examined in Section II. The remaining three propositions are relevant in at least one, and in the case of Proposition 3, in two of the three case studies. We will now turn to each of the four propositions at the group level.

Ethnonationalism is one of the most important sources of ethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. According to Proposition 1, if autonomy or the control of a special homeland is viewed as the essence of a group's identity by members of that group, then ethnonationalism may inspire an ethnic group to resort to strategies of interethnic violence. At its root, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh is a war over territory, a tiny enclave in the mountains of Azerbaijan. Because Karabakh represents the essence of the Armenian ethnic identity, that which makes the Armenian nation unique in a most vital way, and since the failure to reclaim Karabakh would leave the Armenian nation incomplete, Armenian ethnonationalists shifted from a strategy of non-violent protest to one of interethnic violence and full scale war to reclaim "orphaned Karabakh."

Gurr argues that ethnonationalists opt for rebellion over non-violent protest. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, however, the Armenians first attempted to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh through peaceful means. Once Azerbaijan revoked the oblast's autonomy and began bombing its capital, it became clear that this strategy of non-violent protest had become untenable. In its place, violence became an optimal strategy. Although Armenian demands for transfer of the region certainly prompted a violent Azerbaijani response, ethnonationalism did not lead to the adoption of an *offensive* strategy of ethnic violence. Instead, Armenian ethnonationalism justified the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense after non-violent measures had failed to secure the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Although Gurr identifies the Serbs and the Kurds as ethnonationalists in his *Minorities at Risk* study, ethnonationalism is not a source of ethnic violence for either the

Yugoslav or Kurdistan case studies. Gurr's categorization of Serbs as ethnonationalists is questionable for the following two reasons: first, the Serbs were to some degree autonomous since a majority of the Serbian population resided in the Serb republic prior to the collapse of Yugoslavia, and second, under the federal system created following the devolution of power to the individual republics in the 1970s, Serbia also had a significant degree of power within the federal system. Although the Serbs were not technically autonomous since they did not in fact "own" their own state, in practice, Serbia was one of the most powerful of the Yugoslav republics, most Serbs resided within Serbia, and Serbia still "owned" Kosovo, the birthplace of Serbian civilization and the essence of the Serb nation.

Even if we assume that Gurr's categorization of the Serbs as ethnonationalists is correct, ethnonationalism still fails to identify a source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia. If ethnonationalism were a source of violence, ethnic warfare should have erupted in Kosovo. Violence erupted not in Kosovo, however, but in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was sparked not by a desire to reclaim a historical homeland, as the Armenians sought with reference to Nagorno-Karabakh, but was the result of an aggressive Serbian ethnic chauvinism that aimed the creation of a Greater Serbia upon the ruins of Yugoslavia.

Gurr's categorization of the Kurds as ethnonationalists is similarly incorrect. The Kurds have neither a history of autonomy nor independence. Unlike the Serbs or the Armenians, the Kurdish ethnic identity is not based on a particular homeland or territory. Rather, the Kurds' ethnic identity is closely linked to the Kurdish way of life. Territory is thus important only to the extent that the Kurds are allowed to remain in the mountainous regions of Kurdistan. The Kurds have fought not to claim ownership to a particular homeland or territory or to reclaim a past history of autonomy (which they do not have), but to preserve their Kurdish identity and way of life. Proposition 1 thus fails to identify a source of ethnic violence in the Yugoslav and Kurdistan cases.

Although the case of Kurdistan is irrelevant to the question of whether ethnonationalism prompts a defensive or offensive strategy of ethnic violence, the case of Yugoslavia does support the argument that ethnonationalism, unlike ethnic chauvinism, prompts the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense. The violent incidents in Kosovo between Serb police and ethnic Albanians that began in the spring of 1998 are, for the Serbs, part of an effort to prevent the loss of Kosovo. Should these incidents escalate to full scale war, then ethnonationalism would be a source of ethnic violence in the case of the rump Yugoslavia since the Serbs seek to protect Kosovo and to defend their nation's birthplace from ethnic strangers, the Albanians. Indeed, Kosovo represents for the Serb nation what Nagorno-Karabakh represents for the Armenians: the essence of their nation. Based on the Nagorno-Karabakh and Yugoslav case studies, an important subproposition can thus be added at the group level:

Ethnonationalism prompts ethnic groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense. (P1.1)

In the case of Yugoslavia examined in chapter 5, the Serbs adopted an *offensive* strategy of ethnic violence not to reclaim Kosovo, but to expand Serbia's control over Serb-populated areas in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This distinction between offensive and defensive uses of ethnic violence is important not only for understanding how ethnonationalism prompts the adoption of ethnic violence, but also for understanding the link between ethnic chauvinism and ethnic violence.

Like ethnonationalism, ethnic chauvinism is relevant as a source of ethnic violence in only one of the three case studies examined in Section II. According to Proposition 2, if ethnic chauvinism is propagated by members of an ethnic group, then there is a strong tendency for the ethnic group to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers. A critical source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia is the militant and aggressive version of Serbian nationalism that sought the destruction of Yugoslavia and the creation of a Greater Serbia upon its ruins. Serbian chauvinism is founded upon a belief in the superiority of the Serb nation. This

superiority was used to justify the adoption of an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion and annihilation of ethnic strangers, the Croats and the Muslims, in order to redress past grievances, secure Serbia's rightful place in Yugoslavia, and ultimately realize the dream of a Greater Serbia.

While the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh adopted a strategy of ethnic violence only after non-violent measures had failed and even then, only to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh and not to expand Armenian control over Azerbaijan, the Serbs in Yugoslavia adopted an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at territorial aggrandizement that sparked some of the worst atrocities of the war first in Croatia and then in Bosnia. Based on an examination of the Yugoslav case study, it is thus appropriate to introduce an important subproposition:

Ethnic chauvinism prompts ethnic groups to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence. (P2.1)

Although ethnic chauvinism is an important trigger of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia, it is not relevant to identifying the sources of ethnic violence in either the Nagorno-Karabakh or the Kurdistan case studies. Neither the Armenians nor the Azerbaijanis adopted chauvinist policies based on their alleged superiority as the Serbs did in the case of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the extreme forms of exclusivism, intolerance, and hatred that characterized the war in Yugoslavia did not prompt interethnic violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Finally, both the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis adopted a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. The Armenians fought to safeguard their homeland and ensure their continued survival while the Azerbaijanis fought to prevent the dismemberment of their national homeland. While interethnic hatred and ethnic cleansing were certainly a part of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, ethnic chauvinism did not prompt either side to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence.

Ethnic chauvinism is similarly not a source of ethnic violence in Kurdistan. The Kurds were not prompted to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence because of any widespread belief in the innate superiority of Kurds over Arabs. Even though the Kurds have been

subject to massive repression and widespread chemical weapons attacks by Saddam Hussein's regime, the extreme forms of intolerance and ethnic hatred that characterized the war in Yugoslavia have not prompted ethnic violence or ethnic cleansing in Kurdistan. Finally, the Kurds have not sought the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers. Although the Kurds aspire to a state of their own, they have been willing to remain a part of Iraq and to share in the governance of a post-Saddam Hussein, democratic Iraq.

A third source of ethnic violence at the group level that is relevant to understanding the outbreak of ethnic violence in two of the three case studies examined above is ethnic group survival. According to Proposition 3, if group members commonly believe that their very survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened, then there is a strong tendency for the group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. Ethnic group survival is a clear source of ethnic violence in both the Nagorno-Karabakh and Kurdistan case studies. Both the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Kurds in Iraq believed that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened by the policies and actions of ethnic strangers, the Azerbaijanis who controlled the oblast and the Arab rulers in Baghdad, respectively. Three factors led the Armenians to conclude that their survival was threatened: the decrease in the size of the Armenian population relative to the Azerbaijani population in the oblast (Proposition 3.2), the lack of cultural autonomy with respect to education and language use (Proposition 3.3), and finally, pressure on group lands and resources (Proposition 3.4). In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, the decrease in the absolute size of the Armenian population (Proposition 3.1) did not apply since the Armenian population actually increased.

Four factors led the Kurds to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened: a decrease in the size of the Kurdish population in absolute terms (Proposition 3.1) and in relative terms (Proposition 3.2), the lack of cultural autonomy which threatened to destroy the Kurdish way of life (Proposition 3.3), and finally, pressure

on group lands and resources (Proposition 3.4). These three factors in the case of the Armenians and four factors in the case of the Kurds led both groups to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was indeed threatened by the policies and actions of ethnic strangers, prompting both groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense.

Pressure on group lands and resources (P3.4), what Gurr terms “ecological stress,” is particularly important for ethnonationalists who view the possession of a special territory or homeland as a vital part of their national identity and as the source of their group’s unique traits, a real or mythical greatness to which the group seeks to return, the site of an historical event deemed crucial to the group’s identity, or the location of a great cultural center or past empire that emerged by virtue of the group’s possession of this particular territory. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, encroachment upon Armenian lands and resources by the Azerbaijanis who controlled the oblast was a critical factor leading the Armenians to conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was indeed threatened. Azerbaijan’s policies were directly aimed at encouraging Armenians to emigrate, thereby threatening not only the population balance in the region, but also the Armenians’ moral right to ownership of the region. Although the Kurds are not ethnonationalists, ecological stress was also a critical factor prompting the group to conclude that their survival was indeed threatened. Unlike the Armenians, however, the critical factor was not so much pressure on group lands in the sense of group ownership, but on group resources, particularly the rich oil resources of Kurdistan. In both cases, pressure on group lands and resources is a critical factor leading groups to conclude that their survival is threatened. As a result, subproposition 3.4 should be modified to stress the critical link to ethnic group survival and, thus, violence:

If an ethnic group’s lands and resources are encroached upon by ethnic strangers or by a state controlled by ethnic strangers, then the group will conclude that its survival is threatened. (P3.4)

Ethnic group survival is not a source of ethnic violence in the case of Yugoslavia despite claims of genocide in Kosovo and of a dire threat to Serbian cultural autonomy in Croatia such that the Serbs' survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened. Although the Serb and Montenegrin population in Kosovo decreased in both absolute and relative terms, and although the Serb population in Croatia felt justifiably threatened by Croatian ethnic chauvinism such that the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo and the Serbs in Croatia did conclude that their survival as a distinct ethnic group was threatened, there is no evidence of genocide, violence did not erupt in Kosovo, and when it erupted in Croatia, it was aimed not at securing cultural autonomy for Croatia's Serb population, but at building a greater Serbian state. The Serbs did not adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self-defense. Instead, they opted for a strategy of violence aimed at creating an enlarged Serbian state that would include not only parts of Croatia, but parts of Bosnia as well.

A fourth source of ethnic violence at the group level and arguably one of the most important triggers of ethnic violence in all three case studies examined in Section II is the decision on the part of the Serbian, Azerbaijani, and Kurdish ethnic group leaderships to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. In fact, ethnic group leadership is the only factor at the group level that is relevant to explaining the outbreak of ethnic violence in all three case studies examined above. According to Proposition 4, if an able ethnic leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy and if it successfully articulates a group ideology and mobilizes the ethnic group around its source of grievances, then the group will adopt a strategy of interethnic violence.

In the case of Yugoslavia, one of the most important triggers of ethnic violence is the decision by the Serbian leaderships in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia itself to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. The Serbian leadership mobilized the Serbian nation around the alleged genocide of Serbs first in Kosovo and then in Croatia, adopted a strategy of deliberately destroying interethnic peace to justify the measures it was to adopt and to build a consensus among Serbs in Yugoslavia, and embarked upon a strategy of interethnic

violence and massive ethnic cleansing. Although the leaderships of the other Yugoslav republics all bear responsibility to some degree for the events that led to the gradual collapse of Yugoslavia following Tito's death, it was the Serbian leadership who embarked upon a strategy of ethnic violence in Croatia and Bosnia. It was the Serbian leadership who used the opportunity provided by Tito's death and the lack of consensus among the other republican leaderships about Yugoslavia's future to embark upon a strategy of ethnic violence and ethnic cleansing to realize the dream of a Greater Serbia.

The decision on the part of the Azerbaijani leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence was not the result of a carefully constructed and well-planned strategy based on an assessment of Azerbaijan's strengths and weaknesses in relation to its interests. Unlike the case of Yugoslavia where the process of mobilization and the decision to adopt violence were the result of a carefully constructed, well-articulated policy on the part of the Serbian leadership, the articulation of group grievances over Nagorno-Karabakh and the mobilization of Azerbaijani society around these grievances were driven by divisions within the Azerbaijani leadership. Rather than an able leadership determining that violence was an optimal strategy, it was the growing power and increased radicalization of the Azerbaijan Popular Front leadership and the struggle between that leadership and the Azerbaijani Communist Party that mobilized Azerbaijanis in support of a radical and hardline strategy toward Karabakh. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, it was the competition between the two leaderships that drove Azerbaijani strategy toward the conflict in an increasingly radical direction and ultimately propelled the Azerbaijani leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in a desperate attempt to maintain its hold on power.

The decision on the part of the Kurdish leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence is similarly one of the most important sources of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan. Like the Azerbaijani leadership, the Kurdish leadership was riddled by deep divisions and frequently embroiled in violent competition for the right to assume the role as the undisputed leader of the Kurds. The decision to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence was

thus prompted as much by a desire to realize a genuine degree of autonomy for the Kurds in Kurdistan as by the persistent, debilitating, and counterproductive power struggles within the deeply fragmented Kurdish ethnic leadership, particularly after the defeat of 1975.

One important point arises from the testing of these four propositions at the group level. As the three case studies analyzed above show, the sources of ethnic violence at the group level are not found by looking solely at the actions of the group that perpetrates the first incident of violence. In the case of Yugoslavia, it was not just the Serbs, but also the other ethnic group leaderships, particularly the Slovene, Croatian, and Bosnian Muslim leaderships, whose actions had an impact on outbreak of ethnic violence. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, although it was the Azerbaijani leadership, and not the Armenian leadership in either Nagorno-Karabakh or Armenia itself, that first embarked upon a strategy of ethnic violence, the actions of the Armenians and their leadership clearly played a critical role in the outbreak of ethnic violence. Finally, the Kurds, while repeatedly embarking upon a strategy of ethnic violence, are not solely responsible for the outbreak of ethnic warfare in Kurdistan. Indeed, as the analysis in chapter 7 shows, the Kurds were left with little option after autonomy agreements negotiated with the Arab rulers in Baghdad were repeatedly ignored and the Kurds remained excluded from participation in the Iraqi polity.

Although the group who first embarks upon a strategy of ethnic violence is not the sole source of ethnic violence at the group level, an ethnic group's leadership is one critical source of ethnic violence at the group level, not only in the three case studies above but potentially also in other cases beyond the scope of this dissertation. The importance of ethnic group leadership in each of the three case studies examined in Section II suggests that where an ethnic group's leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy and successfully articulates group grievances and mobilizes members of the ethnic group in support of a strategy of ethnic violence, as the leaderships in each of the three case

studies above successfully managed to do, then there is a strong tendency for the conflict to escalate and for one or more groups to embark upon a strategy of ethnic violence.

These four propositions, expanded and revised in the table below, identify the sources of ethnic violence at the group level. Only one proposition at the group level, ethnic

The Group Level
<p>If autonomy or the control of a special homeland is viewed as the essence of a group's identity by members of that group, then ethnonationalism may inspire an ethnic group to resort to strategies of interethnic violence. (P1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethnonationalism prompts ethnic groups to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. (P1.1)
<p>If ethnic chauvinism is propagated by members of an ethnic group, then there is a strong tendency for the ethnic group to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence aimed at the exclusion, expulsion, or annihilation of ethnic strangers. (P2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethnic chauvinism prompts ethnic groups to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence. (P2.1)
<p>If group members commonly believe that their very survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened, then there is a strong tendency for the group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. (P3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If an ethnic group experiences a decrease in its <i>absolute</i> size within the same state or region, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.1)• If an ethnic group experiences a decrease in its <i>group size relative</i> to ethnic strangers within the same state or region, then the group may conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.2)• If a group experiences a loss of cultural autonomy or lacks any measure of cultural autonomy, then the group will conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.3)• If an ethnic group's lands and resources are encroached upon by ethnic strangers or by the state controlled by ethnic strangers, then the group will conclude that its survival as a distinct ethnic group is threatened. (P3.4)
<p>If an able ethnic leadership determines that violence is a necessary or optimal strategy and if it successfully articulates a group ideology and mobilizes the ethnic group around its source of grievances, then the group will adopt a strategy of interethnic violence. (P4)</p>

group leadership, is relevant to explaining the outbreak of ethnic violence in all three case studies. Ethnic group survival is relevant to understanding the outbreak of ethnic violence in two of the cases examined above, while ethnonationalism and ethnic chauvinism identify triggers of ethnic violence in only one case study each.

The State Level

There are two important source of ethnic violence at the state level. The first, the weak state, is relevant to explaining the outbreak of ethnic violence in all three case studies

examined in Section II, while the second, exclusion and denial, is relevant to two of the three cases examined above. As the primary arena of conflict and often the main goal of ethnic conflict, the state plays a critical role in the outbreak of ethnic violence. No understanding of the sources of ethnic violence can be complete without a careful examination of the critical role state structure plays in ethnic conflict.

According to Proposition 5, if a state is weak and unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively to repress group mobilization, then ethnic groups will resort to violence. Yugoslavia's weak federal structure and the devolution of power from the federal center to the individual republics meant that Yugoslavia had neither the resources or capabilities to reach accommodation with the far more powerful republics nor the means to repress the emergence first of Serbian ethnic chauvinism and then of the other Yugoslav nationalisms. The powerful republics, led by Serbia and Slovenia, set out to destroy the Yugoslav system. The federal center was too weak to respond. Its failure either to repress the destructive policies of its republics or to offer concessions and broker compromise resulted in its collapse and the outbreak of ethnic violence.

In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Proposition 5 identifies the sole source of ethnic violence at the state level. Until 1985, the Soviet Union was capable of repressing ethnic mobilization and thus preventing the outbreak of ethnic violence (Proposition 5.4). With Gorbachev's rise to power, however, the Soviet Union began to decay. By 1991, the USSR had become a weak state. Unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively to repress group mobilization, Moscow's fundamentally inconsistent attempts to resolve the conflict were directly responsible for the rapid escalation to full scale war.

In the case of Kurdistan, the Iraq's weak federal structure represents an important source of ethnic violence at the state level. Since its creation, Iraq has only managed to consolidate its power for two brief periods between 1975-1980 and again between 1988-1990. During these two periods, the Kurds concluded that the costs of rebellion were too high to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 5.4). For the remainder of its

existence, however, Iraq has been a weak state. Baghdad's inability or unwillingness to offer meaningful concessions to the Kurds or to suppress the Kurdish rebellion on more than a temporary basis prompted the Kurds to adopt repeatedly a strategy of ethnic violence.

Three subpropositions to Proposition 5 were not relevant to any of the three cases examined in Section II. First, in none of the cases examined did the state respond to ethnic mobilization with genuine concession or measures aimed at redressing group grievances such that the group was less likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence (Proposition 5.1). Since all three of the cases studied were indeed violent, this proposition could not be relevant for any of the featured case studies, but is certainly relevant for other instances of ethnic conflict where the state is capable and willing to offer concessions and the aggrieved group is willing to settle for less than secession. Second, in none of the cases examined did institutionalized democracy facilitate non-violent communal protest and inhibit rebellion (Proposition 5.2). Since neither Yugoslavia nor Iraq is an institutionalized democracy and since the Soviet Union was at best a democratizing autocracy, this proposition could not be relevant to any of the cases examined herein. To determine whether democracy does facilitate non-violent protest, a democratic state facing an ethnically based challenge would need to be examined. Finally, none of the cases examined above could support the contention that democratization facilitates both non-violent protest and rebellion (Proposition 5.3) since none of the relevant states was undergoing democratization at the time violence erupted. To support this statement, at least two cases of states undergoing democratization would need to be examined to support Proposition 5.3.

The critical role state structure plays in the outbreak of ethnic violence is clearly reflected in the three cases examined above. These three cases suggest some additional conclusions regarding the role of the state in ethnic conflict. First, the transition from a strong to a weak state inevitably invites the escalation of violence to full scale war, as was evident in both the Yugoslav and the Nagorno-Karabakh cases following the disintegration

of the federal state structure of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, and in the Kurdish case following Baghdad's ill-fated decisions to declare war on Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990. In addition, the nearly continuous violence since Iraq's very inception between the Kurds and a succession of governments in Baghdad suggests that states with little or no legitimacy are particularly vulnerable to violent rebellion while states with a degree of legitimacy, such as institutionalized democracies, are more likely to confront non-violent protest (Proposition 5.2). Regardless of the nature of the state in question, whether it can be classified as "strong" or "weak," the state clearly plays a crucial role in the outbreak of violent ethnic conflict over non-violent protest.

A second important source of ethnic violence at the state level that is relevant to two of the three case studies examined in Section II is exclusion and denial. According to Proposition 6, if an ethnic group is excluded or is threatened with exclusion from the polity, then the ethnic group may adopt a strategy of interethnic violence to challenge the existing state system or seize the state for itself. In the case of Yugoslavia, a second source of ethnic violence at the state level is the exclusion of the Serbs from the newly independent Croatian and Bosnian states. Serbs in both these states were willing to adopt a strategy of violence to prevent their relegation to the status of a minority and their exclusion from participation in the polities in which they found themselves upon Yugoslavia's collapse. In both Croatia and Bosnia, this exclusion, by virtue of the Serb percentage of the population in each state, seemed permanent. Rather than be ruled by Croats, or by Croats and Muslims in a seemingly permanent alliance, the Serbs adopted a strategy of ethnic violence to seize the state for themselves (Proposition 6.1). In Croatia, because the Serbs were regionally concentrated, the threat of exclusion prompted them to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence aimed at secession (Proposition 6.2), while in Bosnia, exclusion prompted the Serbs to claim a right to self-determination.

In none of the three cases examined above is the link between an ethnic group's exclusion from the polity and the decision to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence clearer than

in the case of the Kurds in Kurdistan. The history of the Kurds in Iraq is one of a confusing series of promises and negotiated agreements for autonomy that are subsequently ignored or only partially implemented, prompting the outbreak and escalation of violence until the next regime is again forced to negotiate and the cycle begins anew. With each failed agreement, the Kurds resorted to a strategy of ethnic violence rather than face perpetual exclusion from the Iraqi polity. Until the Gulf War, the Kurds were willing to settle for a degree of autonomy for Kurdistan in Iraq, but after the war, the Kurds were no longer willing to negotiate with Baghdad. After decades of failed autonomy agreements, the Kurds concluded that their exclusion was permanent and adopted a strategy of ethnic violence to secede (Proposition 6.2).

Unlike the cases of Yugoslavia and especially Kurdistan, exclusion and denial is not relevant to identifying a source of ethnic violence in Nagorno-Karabakh for two reasons. First, although the Armenians in the contested region were excluded from the Azerbaijani polity, and although they were to a large extent regionally concentrated, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Armenian SSR were not bidding for a share of power in the Azerbaijani state. In fact, the Armenians were intent upon securing their complete *exclusion* from the Azerbaijani state. From the earliest stage of the conflict, the Armenians sought inclusion in Armenia, not Azerbaijan.

Second, when the Armenian request for transfer was denied, the Armenians did not mobilize and adopt a strategy of ethnic violence against the Soviet authorities who had denied the request. In fact, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh did not embark upon ethnic violence for another two years. It was the failure to secure the transfer of the oblast by non-violent means followed by the Azerbaijani bombing of the region and not the seemingly perpetual exclusion of Armenians from the Azerbaijani polity (Proposition 6.1) that prompted Armenians to adopt a strategy of violence.

Although there are only two propositions at the state level, Propositions 5 and 6 represent two critical sources of ethnic violence, not just in the cases examined in Section

II, but in ethnic conflicts beyond the scope of this dissertation. These two propositions at the state level are reproduced below. No discussion of the triggers of violence in ethnic

The State Level

If a state is weak and unable to offer sufficient concessions, or alternatively, to repress group mobilization, then ethnic groups will resort to violence. (P5)

- If a state responds to ethnic mobilization with genuine concessions or measures aimed at redressing group grievances and the group is willing to settle for less than secession, then the group will be less likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. (P5.1)
- Institutionalized democracy facilitates non-violent communal protest and inhibits rebellion. (P5.2)
- Democratization facilitates both non-violent protest and rebellion. (P5.3)
- If a state responds to ethnic mobilization with repression, then ethnic groups will temporarily refrain from adopting a strategy of ethnic violence. (P5.4)

If an ethnic group is excluded or is threatened with exclusion from the polity, then the ethnic group may adopt a strategy of interethnic violence to challenge the existing state system or seize the state for itself. (P6)

- If a group faces a seemingly perpetual exclusion from a severely divided polity after having unsuccessfully attempted to address its claims through non-violent means, then the ethnic group will adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to seize the state for itself. (P6.1)
- If an ethnic group is regionally concentrated and has been excluded or is threatened with exclusion from a severely divided polity, then the group may adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to secede from the extant state. (P6.2)

conflict can be complete without careful attention being paid to the role of the state, the arena in which ethnic conflict takes place.

The Interstate Level

There are four sources of ethnic violence at the interstate level, two of which are relevant to all three cases examined in Section II. A third proposition is relevant only to the case of Kurdistan, and a fourth proposition is the only one in this study that is not relevant to any of the three cases examined above.

The first proposition at the interstate level, transnational kindred, is not relevant to identifying a source of ethnic violence in any of the three cases examined. According to Proposition 7, if mobilized ethnic groups elsewhere who are either transnational kindred or who share similar circumstances of discrimination at the hands of strangers adopt a strategy of ethnic violence, then their example may have a demonstration effect upon an ethnic

group. In the case of Yugoslavia none of the competing ethnic groups was influenced by either transnational kindred or groups who shared similar circumstances to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. In Nagorno-Karabakh, a case can be made that the war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, the first violent conflict to challenge Soviet rule in nearly seventy years, inspired mobilized ethnic groups *elsewhere* in the Soviet Union and particularly in the Caucasus to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. However, neither the Armenians nor the Azerbaijanis were inspired by ethnic kindred or transnational groups sharing similar circumstances to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

Finally, contagion and diffusion is not relevant to identifying a source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan even though the case of the Kurds is often cited in the literature on ethnic conflict as an example of the contagion and diffusion of conflict. The main reason that the Kurds were not prompted to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence based on a demonstration effect of Kurdish groups elsewhere is that the Kurds of Iraq have been the leaders of Kurdish resistance since the fall of the Mahabad Republic in 1946. It has been the Kurds of Iraq who have presented the most serious, violent, long-term challenge of any of the Kurdish populations in the region. Thus, while the Kurds of Iraq may themselves serve as a source of inspiration for Kurdish populations elsewhere, they were not prompted by other instances of Kurdish resistance to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

A second source of ethnic violence at the interstate level is international support, which like ethnic leadership and the weak state is relevant as a source of ethnic violence for all three case studies examined in Section II. According to Proposition 8, if a third party becomes involved in conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers, then the stakes of conflict will be raised, the conflict will be transformed from an internal to an international conflict, and the ethnic group will be more likely to adopt a strategy of violence.

In the case of Yugoslavia, the international actors who became involved in the war, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and finally and most tragically in Bosnia, were fundamentally inconsistent in their understanding of the conflict, in their goals, in their commitment to ending the violence, in their application of the right to self-determination, and in their application of international law to the question of recognition of the individual republics as successor states. International actors determined not only the nature of the conflict, as between ethnic groups rather than between the federal government and secessionist republics, but also determined who would be included in the negotiations over Yugoslavia's future and who would be excluded. International support was so critical in the case of Yugoslavia that it served not only to trigger ethnic violence, but also to change the nature, course and duration of the violence. Western involvement made war over territory inevitable and determined what *form* that violence would take, where and when it would spread, and how the war would be fought.

International support on the part of regional powers and international organizations is an equally critical source of ethnic violence in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. Unlike the case of Yugoslavia, where there were many competing outside states and non-state actors, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh there was one preeminent outside actor, the Russian Federation, which managed to undermine and marginalize the efforts of Iran and Turkey and of the CSCE Minsk Group and the United Nations. Moscow used its ability to control events on the battlefield to keep Armenia firmly within and to bring Azerbaijan back within its traditional sphere of influence. In the process, violence escalated and the war spread well beyond the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh. As in the case of Yugoslavia, international support served not only to transform the war from an internal to an international conflict, but also to change the course and duration of the violence.

International support is an equally critical source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan. The Kurds have been remarkably successful in securing a significant degree of external support ranging from material and utilitarian aid to full scale military intervention

over an extended period of time. Yet despite this extensive support, the Kurds have repeatedly failed to achieve the goals for which they have been fighting. The costs to the Kurds for this support have been high, underlining the fact that internationalization rarely favors the ethnic group in its standoff against the state. In fact, in the case of Kurdistan, international support proved most costly when it allowed the Kurds to succeed against Baghdad, sparking chemical weapons attacks and other scorched earth policies and prompting the intervention of external powers in support of Baghdad. As in the cases of Yugoslavia and Nagorno-Karabakh, third party intervention in the case of Kurdistan transformed the conflict from an internal to an international conflict. As in the previous two cases, third party intervention also changed the way the war was fought, prompting the Kurds to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence that enabled short term successes but resulted in the Kurds' ultimate defeat.

International support is clearly a critical source of violence in ethnic conflict. In all three cases examined above, third party support raised the stakes of conflict, transformed the interethnic violence from an internal to an international conflict, and prompted the ethnic groups involved to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. But the impact of external support on ethnic violence is even more extensive than Proposition 8 suggests. In Yugoslavia, international support was so critical as to change the nature, course and duration of the violence. In fact, it determined what *form* violence would take, where and when it would spread, and how the war would be fought. In Nagorno-Karabakh external support similarly changed the course and duration of the violence, and in the case of Kurdistan it determined the way the war was fought, leading directly to the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence that enabled short term successes but ended in defeat. Two additional subpropositions should thus be included at the interstate level:

International support changes the nature, course, and duration of ethnic violence. (P8.1)

International support determines what *form* of interethnic violence will erupt. (P8.2)

A second critical source of ethnic violence at the interstate level in all three of the cases examined in Section II is the access to arms and financial resources. According to Proposition 9, if the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or local militaries, then there is a strong tendency for an ethnic group with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

In the case of Yugoslavia, the massive amount of weaponry available locally, combined with outside sources secured after the imposition of the arms embargo, ensured that the various ethnic groups had both the weaponry and funding necessary to sustain interethnic war. The Serbs were armed mostly by the JNA, but the Muslims and Croats were forced to rely on outside sources to secure the necessary weaponry and financial resources to purchase them. The transport of weapons into Bosnia and Croatia was tied closely to organized crime, whose links to the arms smuggling operations served to change the nature and course of the conflict, extending it in both time and place and raising the level of violence (Proposition 9.1). As the case of Yugoslavia clearly demonstrates, the relationship between ethnic groups and organized crime heightens the level of violence and makes continued conflict both possible and profitable.

In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, neither the Armenians nor the Azerbaijanis had to look far for the arms and financial resources necessary to embark upon a protracted war. The military stockpiles of the Soviet military, and after 1991, of the Russian Federation, provided both sides with a ready and cheap supply of weaponry that could be seized from military stockpiles, captured on the battlefield, or purchased on favorable terms. Such ready access ensured the escalation of conflict and its transformation from isolated incidents of ethnic violence to full scale war fought between two opposing armies.

As the cases of the Serbs and to a lesser extent the Croats in Yugoslavia and both the Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh clearly demonstrate, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union meant that the contending ethnic groups did not have to

search far for a ready supply of weaponry. Indeed, both these cases suggest that the dissolution of empires or states ensures a ready supply of weaponry such that ethnic groups contemplating the adoption of a strategy of ethnic violence need not look beyond their own borders. In fact, as both cases clearly demonstrate, this ready, local, and often cheap supply of weaponry removes a critical constraint on the eruption of ethnic violence.

Access to weaponry and the necessary funds to sustain a nearly continuous war between Baghdad and the Kurds since Iraq's creation similarly presents a critical source of ethnic violence in the case of Kurdistan. The extensive supply of arms, ammunition and financial resources from a number of regional and international sources enabled the Kurds to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence and to resume fighting after a succession of failed agreements. Neither the Kurds nor the Armenians and Azerbaijanis were forced to rely on organized crime to the extent that the competing groups in Yugoslavia were forced to do following the imposition of the arms embargo. As a result, organized crime, although certainly present in both conflicts, is not a relevant source of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh or Kurdistan (Proposition 9.1). Access to arms and financial resources, however, represents a fourth and final source of ethnic violence that applies to all three cases examined in Section II.

A final source of ethnic violence at the interstate level, the emergence of a sudden "triggering event," is only relevant to one of the cases examined in Section II. According to Proposition 10, if a sudden "triggering event" occurs either internal or external to the group, then there will be a strong tendency for an ethnic group to resort to violence. In the case of Kurdistan, the rapid defeat of Iraq against the Coalition forces in the 1991 Gulf War served as such a trigger, sparking a sudden revolt that resulted in nearly all of Kurdistan falling to Kurdish forces in the space of two weeks. Although the Kurdish leadership refrained from acting upon the opportunity provided by outbreak of the war, Iraq's defeat prompted a seemingly spontaneous rebellion despite the Kurdish leadership's restraint.

Unlike the case of Kurdistan, there is no sudden “triggering event” that ignited communal tensions and sparked interethnic war in Yugoslavia. The disintegration of Yugoslavia that led to the outbreak of violence was not spontaneous or sudden, but was the result of a carefully planned and implemented strategy to destroy Yugoslavia fashioned by the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. Similarly, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, there is not one, sudden “triggering event” that caused the outbreak of ethnic violence. Although the introduction of glasnost and perestroika certainly unleashed a series of challenges to the Soviet system and certainly revived the Armenian effort to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh, the time lag between its introduction in 1985 and the first petition for transfer in 1987 and the first incident of violence in 1988 does not allow for a “sudden” ignition of communal violence. As in the case of Yugoslavia, the escalation of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh was gradual, beginning with isolated incidents in 1988 and erupting into full scale war four years later in 1992.

The Interstate Level

If mobilized ethnic groups elsewhere who are either transnational kindred or who share similar circumstances of discrimination at the hands of strangers adopt a strategy of ethnic violence, then their example may have a demonstration effect upon an ethnic group. (P7)

- A demonstration effect is stronger within networks of ethnic kindred and between groups who are nearer rather than farther. (P7.1)
- An ethnic group’s responsiveness to the demonstration effect of ethnic violence elsewhere increases with the ethnic group’s level of previous protest. (P7.2)
- A demonstration effect is stronger in states or regions with either a history of past conflict or with a deeply divided society. (P7.3)
- A demonstration effect is weaker in states marked by extreme heterogeneity. (P7.4)

If a third party becomes involved in conflict between an ethnic group and ethnic strangers, then the stakes of conflict will be raised, the conflict will be transformed from an internal to an international conflict, and the ethnic group will be more likely to adopt a strategy of violence. (P8)

- International support changes the nature, course, and duration of ethnic violence. (P8.1)
- International support determines what *form* of interethnic violence will erupt. (P8.2)

If the financial resources and arms necessary for conducting a strategy of violence are available for purchase or seizure from arms suppliers or local militaries, then there is a strong tendency for an ethnic group with grievances against ethnic strangers to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence. (P9)

- Linkages between ethnic groups and organized crime extend the conflict in time and space and raise the level of violence. (P9.1)

If a sudden “triggering event” occurs either internal or external to the group, then there will be a strong tendency for an ethnic group to resort to violence. (P10)

These four propositions, expanded and revised in the table above, identify the sources of ethnic violence at the interstate level. Two propositions at the interstate level, international support and access to arms and financial resources, are relevant to explaining the outbreak of ethnic violence in all three case studies. A sudden “triggering event” is relevant to understanding the outbreak of ethnic violence in only one of the cases examined above, while contagion and diffusion was not relevant to explaining the outbreak of ethnic violence in any of the three cases examined in Section II.

The Critical Sources of Violence in Ethnic Conflict

The comparative case study approach adopted in this study facilitates the identification of the critical sources of violence in ethnic conflict. Based on the cases examined above, there are four propositions that are relevant to all three case studies: ethnic group leadership, the weak state, international support, and access to arms and financial resources. These four propositions represent four critical sources of violence in ethnic conflict. They are thus relevant not only to understanding the outbreak of violence in the cases examined above, but also to identifying the sources of ethnic violence in cases of violent ethnic conflict beyond the scope of this dissertation.

At the group level, the decision of an ethnic group’s leadership to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence is a clear source of violence in ethnic conflict. Where such a decision is made by an ethnic group’s leadership, that leadership represents a critical source of ethnic violence. At the state level, the weak structure of the state and the consequent inability or unwillingness of the state to respond to ethnic mobilization with either accommodation or repression represents a second, critical source of violence in ethnic conflict. Where a weak state attempts to repress mobilization and fails, or where it fails to offer meaningful concessions, its weakness represents a second, critical source of violence in ethnic conflict. At the interstate level, external support presents a critical source of violence in ethnic conflict. Where such third party support is present, it will lead to the rapid escalation of

ethnic violence. Additionally at the interstate level, access to arms and financial resources presents a fourth, critical source of violence in ethnic conflict. Where such critical support is readily available for purchase or seizure, access to weaponry leads to rapid escalation of interethnic warfare.

If any or all of these four critical sources of violence in ethnic conflict is present, the likelihood that conflict between contending ethnic groups will escalate to the level of full scale, interethnic war is very high. As the three case studies examined above demonstrate, the relationship between each of these four factors and the outbreak of ethnic violence is strong and direct. Where one or more of these factors are present, ethnic conflict will escalate rapidly to full scale interethnic war.

The remaining six propositions also represent important sources of violence in ethnic conflict, but the relationship between each of these factors and the outbreak of ethnic violence may not be as critical or direct as the four propositions mentioned above. Based on the comparative case study analysis above, five of these six remaining propositions identify important potential sources of violence in ethnic conflict. Three of these propositions are found at the group level. The first, ethnonationalism, is relevant to only one case study examined above. Ethnonationalism prompts an ethnic group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. Where members of a group view group autonomy or the possession of a special homeland or territory as representing the essence of their nation and the source of their group's uniqueness, members of that group are likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. Ethnonationalism is a potential source of violence in ethnic conflict. It may identify a source of ethnic violence, as in the case of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, but it is not necessarily a relevant source of ethnic violence in all cases, even where the group in question, such as the Serbs or the Kurds, is identified as an ethnonationalist group. Ethnonationalism remains an important source of violence, but not one that is likely to identify a source of violence in all or nearly all escalating ethnic conflicts.

The second proposition at the group level, ethnic chauvinism, is similarly relevant to only one case study examined above. Ethnic chauvinism prompts an ethnic group to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence. Where members of an ethnic group commonly share a belief in the group's innate superiority, members of that group are likely to adopt an offensive strategy of ethnic violence to exclude, expel, or annihilate ethnic strangers. Ethnic chauvinism is thus a potential source of violence in ethnic conflict. It may identify a source of ethnic violence, as in the case of the Serbs in Yugoslavia, but it is not necessarily a relevant source of ethnic violence in all cases. However, based on the examination of the case studies above, the link between ethnic chauvinism and violence is stronger than the link between ethnonationalism and violence. Unlike ethnonationalism which does not represent a source of violence in all cases where at least one group is identified as an ethnonationalist group, there is no similar example in the cases examined above where a group that propagated ethnic chauvinism failed to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence.

A third proposition at the group level, ethnic group survival, is relevant to two cases examined above. A threat to the survival of an ethnic group prompts members of that group to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence in self defense. Where members of an ethnic group believe that their very survival is threatened by the policies or actions of ethnic strangers, members of that group are likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to protect the group. Ethnic group survival is thus an important potential source of violence in ethnic conflict. It may identify a source of ethnic violence, as in the case of the Armenians and the Kurds, but it is not necessarily a relevant source of ethnic violence in all cases, despite, as the case of the Serbs demonstrates, claims to the contrary.

At the state level, one proposition, exclusion and denial, that is relevant to two of the cases examined above identifies a potential source of violence in ethnic conflict. Exclusion and denial prompts a group to adopt a strategy of violence. Where an ethnic group is excluded, threatened with exclusion, or faces a seemingly perpetual exclusion, that

ethnic group is likely to adopt a strategy of ethnic violence to challenge the existing state structure or to seize the state for itself. Exclusion and denial is thus a potential source of violence in ethnic conflict. It may identify a source of ethnic violence, as in the cases of Yugoslavia and Kurdistan, but it not necessarily a relevant source of ethnic violence in all cases. Based on the analysis of the three cases studies above, both ethnic group survival and exclusion and denial are relevant to understanding the outbreak of violence in two cases and thus represent an important source of violence in ethnic conflict. Although the link with violence is not as strong as for ethnic group leadership, the weak state, international support and access to arms and resources, both propositions do point to an important, but perhaps not critical, source of violence in ethnic conflict.

At the interstate level, two remaining propositions identify potential sources of violence in ethnic conflict. The first, contagion and diffusion, is not relevant to any of the cases examined in this study and may be thus of limited relevance in identifying the sources of violence in conflicts beyond the scope of this study. At best, contagion and diffusion may facilitate the sharing of information between groups of transnational kindred, but it is unlikely to have a strong impact on the actual outbreak of violence in ethnic conflict. The second, a “triggering event,” is relevant to one of the cases examined above. A sudden “triggering event” may prompt a group to embark upon a strategy of ethnic violence, as the case of Kurdistan shows. As in the case of ethnonationalism and ethnic chauvinism, this final proposition identified a source of violence in only one case study. As a result, a triggering event may identify a source of violence, but it is not necessarily a relevant source of ethnic violence in all cases. In fact, of the nine propositions that identified a source of violence in ethnic conflict, a sudden “triggering event” represents perhaps the weakest source of violence. By its very definition, such a “triggering event” is difficult to identify, let alone analyze. A triggering event is likely to facilitate the outbreak of ethnic violence, but it is not a clear, direct source of violence as international support or access to arms and financial resources, two important sources of ethnic violence at the interstate level.

Neither ancient ethnic hatreds nor civilizational differences provides a comprehensive or accurate explanation for the proliferation of violent ethnic conflicts since the end of the Cold War, and ethnic group leadership provides only a partial explanation for the violent ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Kurdistan, and elsewhere. The sources of violence in ethnic conflict can be found at the group, state, and interstate levels. There is no one, single source of interethnic violence, as the analysis of the three cases studies in Section II clearly shows. Rather, ethnic violence is sparked by a combination of factors, the most important of which are ethnic group leadership, the weak state, international support and access to arms and financial resources. Together with the remaining six propositions, these ten factors identify the critical and potential sources of violence in ethnic conflict, not only in the cases examined above, but in conflicts between and among contending ethnic groups beyond the scope of this dissertation. Understanding the explosion of ethnic violence since the collapse of the Cold War system requires a careful analysis of the competing groups themselves, the state or states which define the arena of interaction and conflict, and the international system in which these groups recruit support and resources. Only an examination of each of these factors at all three levels of analysis will provide an accurate, comprehensive understanding of the sources of violence in ethnic conflict.

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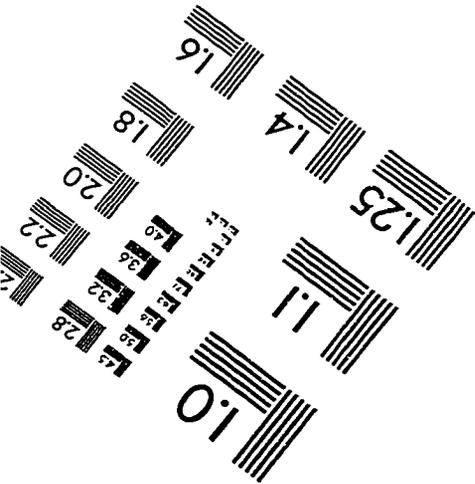
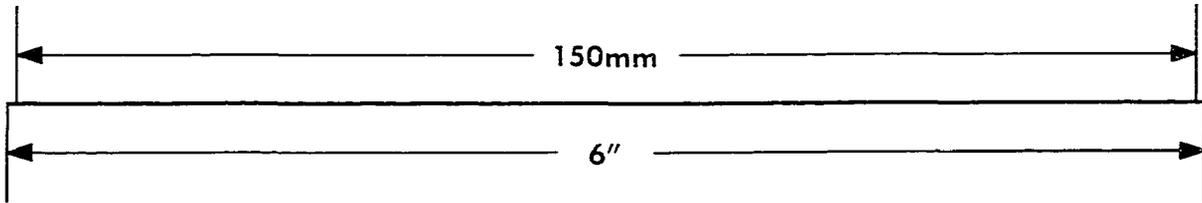
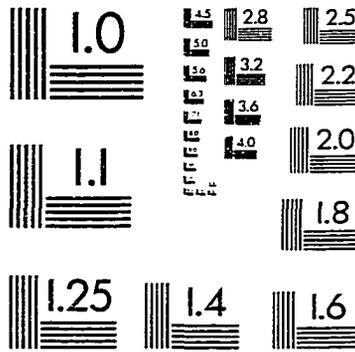
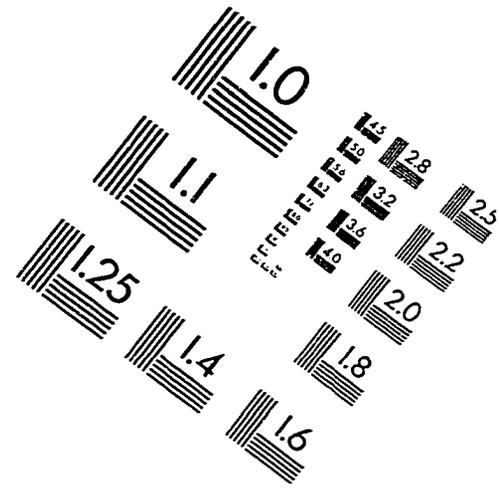
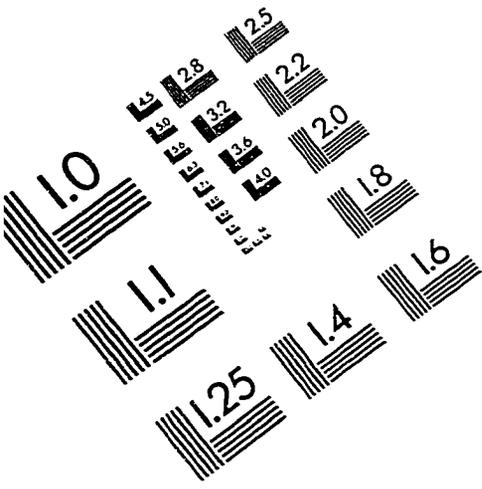
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