

Tragic Challenges and the Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention:
How and Why Ethnic Groups Provoke Genocidal Retaliation

by

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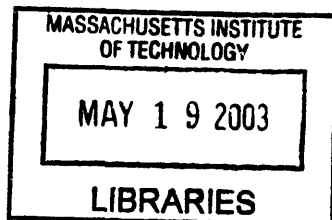
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the causes of, and possible remedies for, extremely violent ethnic conflict. It starts from a robust yet under-explored finding in the literature: Most groups that fall victim to genocidal violence actually trigger their own demise by launching armed secessions or revolutions against state authorities that only then retaliate with genocide or forced migration (“ethnic cleansing”). Accordingly, the dissertation asks why groups that are vulnerable to genocidal retaliation would provoke that very outcome by launching such “tragic challenges.”

To explain this phenomenon, the dissertation employs three case studies to test three hypotheses drawn from rational deterrence theory. The cases focus on three subordinate groups whose armed challenges provoked genocidal retaliation: Bosnia’s Muslims in 1992-95; Rwanda’s Tutsi in 1990-94; and Kosovo’s Albanians in 1998-99. To gain further insight by adding variation on the theory’s dependent variable, the dissertation also examines an earlier period of the third case during which the subordinate group did not launch a violent challenge, despite having substantial grievances, and thereby avoided genocidal violence (Kosovo’s Albanians in 1989-97).

The three hypotheses are as follows: (1) the group did not expect its armed challenge to provoke genocidal retaliation; (2) the group expected to suffer genocidal violence regardless of whether or not it launched an armed challenge; (3) the group expected its armed challenge to provoke genocidal retaliation but viewed this as an acceptable cost to achieve its goal of secession or revolution.

The dissertation confirms the third hypothesis: subordinate groups launch tragic challenges when they expect to prevail and are willing to sacrifice their own civilians as the cost of doing so. Most surprisingly, the dissertation finds that a key cause of the optimism leading to tragic challenges is the expectation by subordinate groups of receiving humanitarian military intervention if they provoke genocidal retaliation against themselves. This reveals that international policies of humanitarian intervention create moral hazard, encouraging vulnerable groups to launch armed challenges and thereby potentially causing the tragic outcomes that these policies are intended to prevent. The dissertation concludes by exploring prescriptions to mitigate this newly discovered “moral hazard of humanitarian intervention.”

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Alan J. Kuperman is Assistant Professor of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Bologna, Italy. He is the author of one book, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001). In addition, he has chapters in three other books: Raju G. C. Thomas, ed., *Yugoslavia Unraveled: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, Intervention* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, forthcoming in 2002); Paul L. Leventhal, ed., *Nuclear Power & the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's Inc., forthcoming in 2002); and Robert Jervis, ed., *The New American Interventionism: Successes and Failures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). He also has published articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *Political Science Quarterly*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other journals and newspapers. He has received fellowships from the University of Southern California's Center for International Studies, Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Harvard-MIT MacArthur Transnational Security Program, the Brookings Institution, and the Institute for the Study of World Politics. Prior to his academic career, he worked in politics as legislative director to Congressman Charles Schumer, legislative assistant to Speaker of the House Tom Foley, chief of staff to Congressman James Scheuer, and legislative director of the Nuclear Control Institute, a nonproliferation advocacy group. He also has served as a fellow at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He holds an M.A., with honors, in International Relations and International Economics from SAIS, and an A.B., *cum laude*, in Physical Sciences from Harvard University (1986).

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In 1994, I abandoned a successful eight-year career as a congressional staffer and political consultant in Washington, DC, to return to academia to explore the causes of, and possible remedies for, violent ethnic conflict. This dissertation, after another eight years, represents the main product of that exploration to date. I am indebted to too many people and institutions to list, but would like to single out a few.

Most importantly, I am grateful to the mentors who taught me by instruction and example how to be a scholar, especially Professor Barry Posen of MIT's Department of Political Science, who was also chairman of my dissertation committee. Professor Posen is what every graduate student should hope for in an advisor – someone who challenges students persistently to clarify and strengthen their arguments without imposing his own views on them. This dissertation benefited greatly from his advice on structuring its argument, his meticulous reading of several drafts, and his personal example of academic rigor and integrity. I also am indebted to my other professors at Harvard, SAIS, and MIT, including the two other members of my dissertation committee, and the numerous other scholars whose work I have tried to build on.

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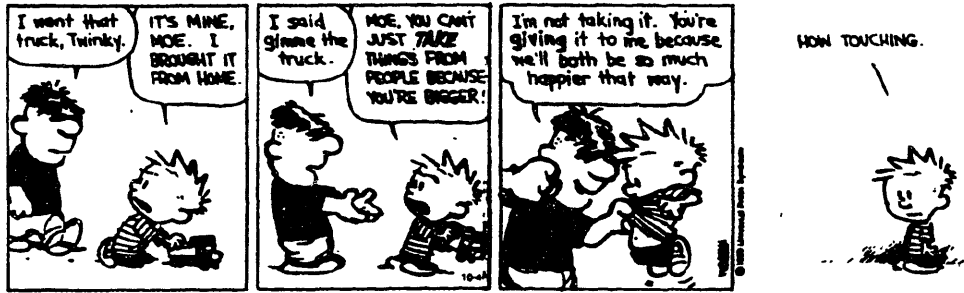
Fifth, portions of Chapter 5 of this dissertation are reprinted with permission by the Brookings Institution Press from Chapter 2 of my book, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001). The cartoons that precede the text, CALVIN AND HOBBS © Watterson, are reprinted with permission of UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE. All rights reserved.

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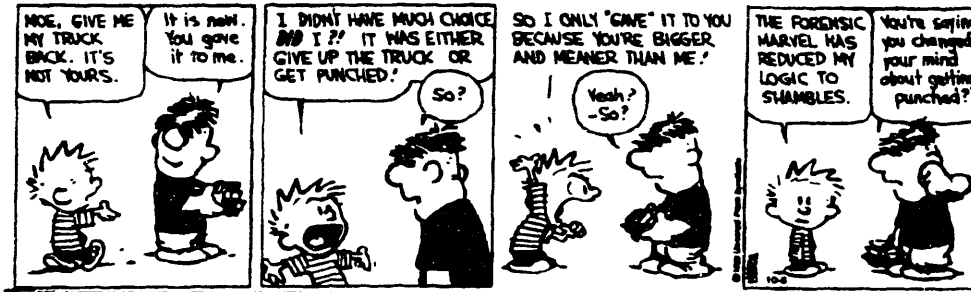
Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the victims of ethnic violence in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo – in the hopes that their premature deaths will not have been totally in vain if we can draw lessons from them to mitigate or prevent future such tragedies.

Figure 0-1: "Calvin and Hobbes" on Tragic Challenges and Moral Hazard

CALVIN AND HOBBS



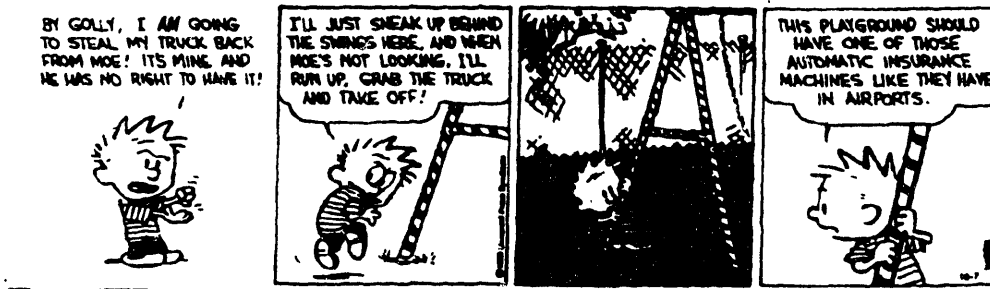
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CHAPTER 1

EXPLAINING TRAGIC CHALLENGES

The 1990s opened with great optimism for global peace. On the heels of the Cold War, many experts anticipated the UN Security Council finally would function as originally intended – blocking or nullifying any gains from armed aggression and thereby rendering such use of force obsolete. Successful multilateral action in 1990-91 to reverse Iraq's aggression against Kuwait lent credence to this notion of a "new world order." Soon, however, a series of deadly communal conflicts produced indelible images of human suffering: Bosnian children killed in marketplace bombings; Rwandan corpses bobbing in rivers; Kosovo's families fleeing to fetid refugee camps. The international community responded by creating or upgrading institutions intended to alleviate such suffering, punish perpetrators, and minimize future violence. These institutions include peacekeeping forces, relief agencies, and war crimes tribunals.

However, this array of responses has been developed and implemented without much rigorous analysis of the root causes of massive communal violence. To the extent that the internal dynamics of such violence have been examined at all, the overwhelming focus has been on the perpetrators – attempting to ascertain what sort of pathologic psychology or leadership could be responsible for such wanton attacks on fellow countrymen. Likewise, there has been little evaluation of the actual impact of humanitarian intervention on such conflicts. Rather, scholars and advocates have tended to focus on identifying and satisfying the preconditions for more robust multilateral action, on the assumption that more and bigger interventions will lead to better outcomes – that is, less violence and human suffering.

For humanitarian intervention to be optimized, however, it is necessary first to develop a theory for the underlying phenomenon it most often aims to address – large-scale communal violence. Ideally, such a theory should endogenize humanitarian intervention to explore the full range of its consequences – not merely its potential to stop violence after the fact but also its impact on the likelihood of violence breaking out in the first place. It is the goal of this dissertation to develop such a theory to contribute to the general understanding of massive communal violence, and to serve as the basis for developing better prescriptions to avert such violence.

The dissertation is divided into nine chapters. Chapter One proposes three hypotheses to explain the surprising empirical finding that victims of mass killing usually provoke their own demise. Chapter Two summarizes a test of these hypotheses in three cases: Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. The next six chapters explore the three cases in greater depth. Each case is covered in two chapters, the first of which provides a narrative history, including an historical overview, an analysis of the subordinate group's grand strategy, and a detailed account of two key turning points in the launching of the tragic challenge. For each case, a second chapter conducts a detailed test of the three hypotheses as explanations of the two key turning points in the tragic challenge. Finally, Chapter Nine explores the theoretical and policy implications of the most profound finding to emerge from the case studies – the “moral hazard” of humanitarian intervention.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. First, I document the empirical puzzle that gave rise to this dissertation – that most groups who fall victim to mass killing actually provoke their own demise by launching violent challenges against the authority of the state. I also note that a wide range of genocide scholars view retaliatory mass killing by the state in such circumstances as a “rational choice.” Second, I argue that there previously has been no good explanation of such tragic challenges, including in the literature on “why men rebel.” Third, I explore the possibility that deterrence theory, drawn from the literature of international relations, may provide a better explanation of such challenges. I summarize rational deterrence theory, discuss the critiques of that theory, and then propose a new version of rational deterrence theory for civil conflicts. Finally, I detail the research design, case selection, and methodology employed in the dissertation to test three rational hypotheses as explanations for tragic challenges.

The Empirical Puzzle: Victim Groups Provoke Retaliation

The starting point for this exploration is a surprising, yet largely unexplored, empirical puzzle in the literature. The puzzle is that most cases of mass communal violence are triggered by forceful challenges to state authority by communal groups that later become the primary victims of ensuing violence when the state retaliates. In other words, unlike in the prototypical case of genocide – the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews – most communal groups that fall victim to mass killing actually start the fights they wind up losing so terribly. The obvious question,

addressed by this dissertation, is why would a communal group sufficiently vulnerable to fall victim to genocide or ethnic cleansing at the hands of the state trigger that very outcome by launching a violent challenge to the state's authority? The puzzle is made more curious by the fact that the state typically issues advance warning to the communal group that it will respond to any such violent challenge by massive retaliation.

Although counter-intuitive and little publicized, the finding that victims of massive communal violence usually provoke their own demise is robust in the literature, across varying definitions, methodologies, and time frames within the post-World War II era – the only period for which reliable data is available. From 1943 to 1987, Harff and Gurr identify 44 episodes of "genocide and politicide," defined as state-sponsored policies lasting for at least six months that deliberately kill thousands of non-combatants because of their identity or political affiliation, respectively.¹ (See Figure 1-1.) They further subdivide the cases into six categories based on the intent of the perpetrator: *hegemonial* genocides aimed at forcing communal groups "to submit to central authority;" *xenophobic* genocides to promote "national protection or social purification;" *repressive* politicides in retaliation to "oppositional activity" by political parties; *repressive/hegemonial* politicides also in retaliation to "oppositional activity" but in cases where the opposition party is communal-based; *retributive* politicides by former opposition groups after seizing power to take revenge against former ruling groups; and *revolutionary* politicides by new regimes against "class or political enemies."

Harff and Gurr categorize 24 of the 44 cases (55 percent) as repressive or repressive/hegemonial, stating explicitly that the victim group "provokes this kind of mass murder" by "acts of resistance." Three other cases are categorized as hegemonial, which is closely related because the state's violence aims to force a communal group "to submit to central authority," which presupposes that the group already is resisting state authority. In addition, according to Harff and Gurr, three more cases tabulated as revolutionary can be categorized as repressive as well. Thus, based on Harff and Gurr's coding, at least 30 of the 44 cases (68

¹ Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr, "Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32 (1988), pp. 359-71. Subsequently, Barbara Harff, "A Theoretical Model of Genocides and Politicides," *The Journal of Ethno-Development*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (July 1994), pp. 25-31, broadened these definitions to include policies sponsored by non-state actors in the case of civil war. For a critique of their methods, see Helen Fein, "Genocide: A Sociological Perspective," *Current Sociology*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 83-85. In addition to disputing their broad definition, she notes that by counting each case by perpetrator rather than victim, they lump together several cases in the Soviet Union and Iran.

percent) exhibit the phenomenon in which the victim group provokes its own demise by challenging the state's authority. (As will be elucidated below, use of the word “provoke” does not imply that the victim group lacked legitimate grievance prior to challenging the state’s authority, but merely that this challenge is what triggered the state’s massive retaliation against the group.)

**Figure 1-1
Harff and Gurr's 44 Cases of Genocide and Politicide from 1943-87**

Category	#	Cause	# in which killing was provoked by a violent challenge to the state's authority
Genocide			
<i>Hegemonial</i>	3	To force a communal group to submit to central authority	3 (by implication)
<i>Xenophobic</i>	3	To promote national protection or social purification	0
Politicide			
<i>Repressive</i>	15	In retaliation to acts of resistance by a political party	15 (by definition)
<i>Repressive/ Hegemonial</i>	9	In retaliation to acts of resistance by a communal-based party	9 (by definition)
<i>Retributive</i>	4	Former opposition group taking revenge after seizing power	0
<i>Revolutionary</i>	10	By new regime against class or political enemies	3 (cases that also fit <i>Repressive</i> criteria)
TOTAL	44		30 (68 Percent)

Some of the other cases in Harff and Gurr's database also would satisfy this definition if re-coded properly. For example, the authors erroneously categorize the killing of Tutsi in Rwanda in 1963-64 as retributive on the grounds that it was perpetrated by new Hutu leaders in retaliation for years of Tutsi oppression. In fact, such retributive violence ended in Rwanda soon after the Hutu seized power in 1959. The subsequent killing of 1963-64 was rather a response by the Hutu nationalist state to fresh challenges to its authority from invading Tutsi refugee rebels and their domestic Tutsi allies – a fairly typical case of repressive politicide. Accordingly, 68

percent may represent a conservative (i.e., low-end) estimate of the proportion of cases of mass killing from 1943-1987 in which the ultimate victim group provoked its own demise, based on Harff and Gurr's database.

In a separate research project, Helen Fein focuses exclusively on genocide, ostensibly excluding cases of pure politicicide in which victims were targeted solely for political reasons and did not share communal identity. She operationalizes this distinction not on the basis of any objective definition, but rather by selecting cases identified as genocide by at least two of three prominent experts. This confines her database for the period 1945-1988 to 19 cases, which she divides into four categories, also based on the intent of the perpetrator.² She uses different labels for categories that are quite similar to those of Harff and Gurr, so that their "repressive" category translates approximately into Fein's *retributive*; revolutionary becomes *ideological*; xenophobic becomes *developmental*; and hegemonial becomes *despotic*. Despite this semantic difference, Fein likewise finds that the victim group usually provokes its own demise: "one could classify at least 11 cases [58 percent] as retributive genocide in which the perpetrators retaliated to a real or perceived threat by the victim to the structure of domination." She also suggests that two of the other cases could be coded properly as retributive, which would raise the proportion in her database to 68 percent as well.³

For the post-Cold War period, I have compiled a preliminary list of mass killings based on the following definition: "a campaign that kills more than 50,000 non-combatant members of a group during a period in which at least 5,000 were killed each year." This comprises brief but intense campaigns, as well as sustained but less intense campaigns. It includes extermination campaigns that directly target civilians, war strategies that knowingly inflict high levels of collateral damage on civilians, and economic blockades that result in deaths of civilians by starvation and disease. However, it intentionally excludes cases of protracted low-level killing

² Fein, "Genocide: A Sociological Perspective," pp. 85-87. The experts she relies on are Ezell, Kuper, and Harff and Gurr. In a subsequent study, Helen Fein, "Accounting for genocide after 1945: Theories and some findings," *International Journal on Group Rights*, No. 1 (1993), pp. 79-106, she identifies only 16 cases during the same period without acknowledging or explaining the discrepancy from her earlier study. In the latter study, she also distinguishes genocide from "genocidal massacres" or "pogroms," which are briefer or more episodic, and from "mass political killings," a term she does not define clearly but which appears to refer to killings of civilians during civil wars. It is not clear if she operationalizes these distinctions by rigorous standards.

³ She is not absolutely precise about which cases are retributive. However, she does identify seven cases precisely as ideological, developmental, or despotic, which leaves 12 rather than 11 cases as retributive. In addition, she says that one of the cases identified as despotic, Uganda, included periods of retributive genocide, which potentially raises the number of retributive cases to 13.

of civilians that may stem from guerrilla or counter-insurgency campaigns, on grounds that these are qualitatively different phenomena. It also avoids lumping together as a single case multiple incidents of mid-level violence that are separated by significant periods of relative calm.

The quantitative thresholds of 50,000 total and 5,000 annually are wholly arbitrary. As with any such arbitrary definition, cases that fall marginally short of the standard likely could be included in the universe without significantly affecting its characteristics. Furthermore, an argument could be made for utilizing an alternative threshold based on the percentage, rather than absolute toll, of people killed within the victim group. However, this alternative would have two drawbacks. First, it could include some cases with relatively low death tolls (in cases where the target group was small), while excluding others with significantly higher death tolls (among big target groups). Second, determining the size of the target population in many cases would be subjective, because it could depend on whether an entire ethnic group were counted or only that portion within a state or region. While my definition is arbitrary, it does have the merit of being relatively objective, at least to the extent that existing death-count estimates are themselves. It is possible that my high threshold may exclude some less violent examples of the very phenomenon I seek to examine, but that is the unavoidable price of seeking to exclude different phenomena such as terrorism or counter-insurgency campaigns that generally have lower death tolls. I accept this trade-off consciously, preferring to ensure that all cases in my universe represent the same phenomenon, rather than that the universe contain all examples of the phenomenon.

Based on existing evidence, seven cases from 1990-2000 appear clearly to satisfy my definition, as listed in Figure 1-2. Five of the seven cases (71 percent) – Bosnia,⁴ Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan – fit the pattern in which the ultimate victim group provoked its own demise by violently challenging the authority of the perpetrator group. Angola does not fit because the rebel group that challenged government authority became the perpetrator rather than victim of mass killing. Burundi does not fit perfectly, even though violence was launched by the traditionally dominant Tutsi in response to a challenge to their authority by the Hutu – because the challenge initially was peaceful, consisting of the election of the state’s first Hutu president

⁴ The formal name of the republic is Bosna i Hercegovina, or “Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Herzegovina is the area in the south and west of the republic, bordering Croatia and Montenegro. However, this dissertation uses the foreshortened “Bosnia” in its common usage to mean the entire republic. For consistency, I substitute the short form

in 1993. Despite the peaceful nature of the challenge, hardline Tutsi feared that peaceful Hutu consolidation of political power would lead to violence against them or threats to their way of life, and so they assassinated the new Hutu president and reclaimed power in 1993, triggering mutual ethnic violence and a Hutu rebel insurgency. The new Tutsi government then responded to the Hutu insurgency with a seven-year, brutal counter-insurgency that included mass killing of Hutu civilians. Although this second, protracted wave of killing fit the typical pattern of a tragic challenge, the case as a whole cannot be coded as the victim group provoking its own demise. (This coding could change if evidence were found that the assassination itself was provoked by impending Hutu plans for violence.)

Figure 1-2
Cases of Mass Killing After the Cold War

Country	Perpetrator	Victim	Time Period	Did Victim Group Provoke Its Own Demise by Violently Challenging Government Authority?
Angola	UNITA	Gov't Supporters	1990-94	No
Bosnia	Serbs	Muslims	1992-95	Yes
Burundi	Tutsi	Hutu	1993-2000	No
Iraq	UN Sanctions	Iraqis	1991-98	Yes
Rwanda	Hutu	Tutsi	1994	Yes
Somalia	Dominant clans	Opposing clans	1991-92	Yes
Sudan	Government	Southerners	1990-99	Yes
7				5

Iraq is an atypical case because the perpetrator was not the state but rather the international community. The United Nations imposed sanctions on Iraq in 1990 following its invasion of Kuwait, and maintained them after the Gulf War ended in late- February 1991, hoping to coerce Iraq to abide by the disarmament provisions of UN resolutions. Iraq challenged the authority of the UN by refusing to comply fully, and the UN retaliated by maintaining the sanctions, ostensibly intending to block funds to Iraq's weapons programs, but also having the effect of killing thousands of Iraqi civilians, mainly children, by disease each month. In August 1991, the UN offered an oil-for-food plan, under which Iraq could sell oil but the revenue would be controlled by the UN to provide humanitarian aid and to reimburse victims of Iraq's

in all quotations that originally used one of the longer forms. This is not intended to slight the importance of the Herzegovina region of the republic.

aggression. Iraq refused to accept the plan, which it criticized as an unwarranted infringement on its sovereignty, and the UN retaliated by maintaining the sanctions. In their first five years, the sanctions produced an estimated half-million excess Iraqi deaths. Finally, in 1996, Iraq agreed to an oil-for-food plan, which was expanded in 1998, and again in 1999 by removing the cap on oil sales. Many western politicians argue that any continued suffering in Iraq after adoption of oil-for-food is attributable exclusively to the distribution policies of its leader, Saddam Hussein. However, the former head of the UN assistance program in Iraq stated in December 2000 that much of Iraq's continued suffering stemmed from ongoing sanctions and the restrictions on spending funds from the oil-for-food program.⁵ In any case, the excess Iraqi deaths at least from 1991 to 1996 are attributable to the fact that Iraq violently challenged the authority of the UN by continuing its weapons programs and refusing to accept the oil-for-food program, despite the UN's threat to retaliate by maintaining sanctions expected to kill thousands of Iraqi civilians per month. Thus, the dynamic is the same as in the domestic cases, except that the Iraqi leadership provoked the demise of its own people by violently challenging *international* authority rather than state authority.

Seven other putative cases during the decade – in Afghanistan, Algeria, N. Korea, Russia, Rwanda, and Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo) – cannot yet be counted as mass killing because of insufficient reliable evidence that their violence satisfied my definition above. (See Figure 1-3). In addition, at least four other countries – Congo Republic, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Tajikistan – experienced thousands of non-combatant killings in civil conflicts during the

⁵ Dennis Halliday, former coordinator of UN humanitarian relief in Iraq, resigned in 1998, stating: "I am resigning because the policy of economic sanctions is totally bankrupt. We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that . . . Five thousand children are dying every month." He subsequently characterized the sanctions as follows: "I had been instructed to implement a policy that satisfies the definition of genocide: a deliberate policy that has effectively killed well over a million individuals, children and adults." John Pilger, "Squeezed to Death," *Guardian*, March 4, 2000. Similarly, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark has stated: "Sanctions which are continued with the knowledge that they have already killed more than 750,000 people in Iraq and physically damaged and radically shortened the lives of millions more unquestionably constitute genocide." Letter to UN Security Council, October 2, 1997, <http://www.plowshare.org/resources/iraq2.htm> [downloaded October 4, 2001]. Halliday's successor at the UN, Graf Hans von Sponeck, also resigned in protest, stating in December 2000 that much of Iraq's continued humanitarian suffering was attributable to the manner in which the oil-for-food program was being implemented under the sanctions, rather than to Saddam Hussein's misuse of humanitarian aid as had been alleged: "more often than not, it is the blocking of contracts by the US/UK which has created immense problems in implementing the oil-for-food programme." He also cited UN statistics that "over 90%" of food, medicine and other humanitarian assistance provided to Iraq is being distributed as intended. *Guardian*, January 4, 2001. UN information on the oil-for-food program is available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/backgroundindex.htm> [downloaded November 5, 2001].

decade, but the death toll in each remained well below the 50,000 threshold of my definition, based on available evidence.

Figure 1-3
Putative Cases After the Cold War Lacking Sufficient Evidence of “Mass Killing”

Country	Perpetrator	Victim	Time Period
Afghanistan	Government	Opponents	mid-1990s
Algeria	Islamists	Moderates	1992-99
N. Korea	Government	N. Koreans	late-1990s
Russia	Government	Chechens	mid-1990s
Rwanda	Tutsi	Hutu	1993-98
Zaire	Rwandant Tutsi	Rwandan Hutu	1996-97
D.R. Congo	Various	Kivu Residents	1998-2000

The “Rationality” of Mass Killing

Building on the literature’s finding that victims of mass killing often provoke their own demise by violently challenging the state’s authority, many theorists agree that states act “rationally” when they respond to such challenges by perpetrating mass killing.⁶ Far from the popular caricature of mass killing as a psychopathic outburst, these theorists view such violence typically as a calculated action by the state to defend its power against an aggressive challenger. As Barbara Harff writes, “usually genocide is the conscious choice of policymakers . . . for repressing (eliminating) opposition.”⁷ As early as 1979, Helen Fein wrote that “to grasp the origins of modern premeditated genocide, we must first recognize . . . how it may be motivated or appear as a rational choice to the perpetrator.”⁸ More recently, and more simply, she has concluded that genocide “is usually a rational act.”⁹ Likewise, Roger W. Smith characterizes genocide as “a rational instrument to achieve an end.”¹⁰ Peter du Preez says that mass killing is usually “perfectly rational” and even “pragmatic,” because the state chooses this policy when “it is thought that mere military victory will not solve the problem and measures of ‘population

⁶ Stating that genocide is a “rational” choice in such situations does not preclude the availability of other non-genocidal options, as elucidated below, nor does it make any claim as to the morality of such a choice.

⁷ Barbara Harff, “The Etiology of Genocides,” in Isidor Wallimann and Michael N. Dobkowski, eds., *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

⁸ Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 7.

⁹ Helen Fein, “Patrons, Prevention and Punishment of Genocide: Observations on Bosnia and Rwanda,” in Helen Fein, ed., *The Prevention of Genocide: Rwanda and Yugoslavia Reconsidered* (New York: Institute for the Study of Genocide, 1994), p. 5.

adjustment' are necessary."¹¹ Matthew Krain offers a similar rational explanation for state-sponsored mass murder: "elites trying to hold onto power can and must reconsolidate power quickly and efficiently."¹²

Going beyond these earlier theorists, who acknowledge but do not focus their scholarship on rational incentives, Benjamin Valentino emphasizes such perpetrator calculations and motivations at the core of his new "strategic" theory of mass killing. Interestingly, however, Valentino concentrates relatively less on the use of such violence as a defensive response by states to challengers, and more on its offensive use by states to achieve radical goals. He argues that all cases of mass killing in the 20th century can be divided into two broad categories based on perpetrator motivation. *Dispossessive* mass killings are those driven by a state's desire to attain some radical goal arising from its communist ideology, chauvinism, or colonial aspirations – which can be seen as offensive. (This category correlates roughly with Harff and Gurr's revolutionary and xenophobic categories, and Fein's ideological and developmental categories.) *Coercive* mass killings are those carried out by a state during a military conflict when it cannot achieve its objectives with more conventional operations – which can be seen as either offensive or defensive depending on the origins and nature of the conflict. Valentino observes that the greatest number of victims "have resulted from the effort to transform society according to communist doctrine." He does not explicitly reconcile this with the finding in the literature that mass killing is usually a state response to violent challenges by opposition groups, but the two are not necessarily inconsistent in light of Valentino's causal mechanism for such mass killing. Specifically, he argues that certain societal groups, who would be dispossessed by a communist transformation, logically oppose or can be expected to oppose such a transformation. Thus, the communist state engages in mass killing in retaliation to actual opposition, or as prevention against anticipated opposition.¹³

It is important to underscore that when theorists say that a state pursues mass killing as a rational choice – whether for offensive or defensive purposes – this does not mean it necessarily

¹⁰ Smith, "Human Destructiveness," p. 22.

¹¹ Peter du Preez, *The Psychology of Mass Murder* (London: Boyars/Bowerdean, 1994), pp. 2, 67, 74. Despite this title, the book devotes considerable attention to the strategic nature of genocide.

¹² Matthew Krain, "State-Sponsored Mass Murder: The Onset and Severity of Genocides and Politicides," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 1997), p. 335.

¹³ Benjamin Valentino, "Final Solutions: The Causes of Genocide and Mass Killing," *Security Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 2000), pp. 1-62. Quote is from p. 34.

was the *only* rational option available. When confronting a violent opposition, state leaders cannot know with certainty the consequences of any potential policy alternative.¹⁴ Accordingly, there may be several policies that appear plausibly rational to achieve the interests of state leaders, ranging from offering concessions to the opposition group, to launching a counter-insurgency against armed elements of the group, to compelling the forced migration (“ethnic cleansing”) of the group, to attempting to exterminate that group. Further research is needed to determine when and why states view mass killing as not only a rational response, but the chosen response to violent challengers.

No Good Explanation of Tragic Challenges

In remarkable contrast to the chorus of rational explanations for perpetrator behavior cited above – which typically view mass killing as retaliation by a state against domestic challengers – no analogous rational theory has been proposed to explain why vulnerable groups would launch such ill-fated challenges. Indeed, theorists of mass killing generally do not offer any explicit theory to explain these provocative challenges, and instead concentrate most of their attention on the actions of perpetrators. They imply, however, that such tragic challenges are an all but inevitable response by vulnerable societal groups to long-term discrimination or oppression at the hands of the state. Thus, the literature harbors an implicit, non-rational theory for the phenomenon: vulnerable groups are driven by the frustration of prolonged discrimination to launch violent challenges against state authorities without necessarily calculating their chances of success or the consequences of failure, and thereby unwittingly provoke their own demise.

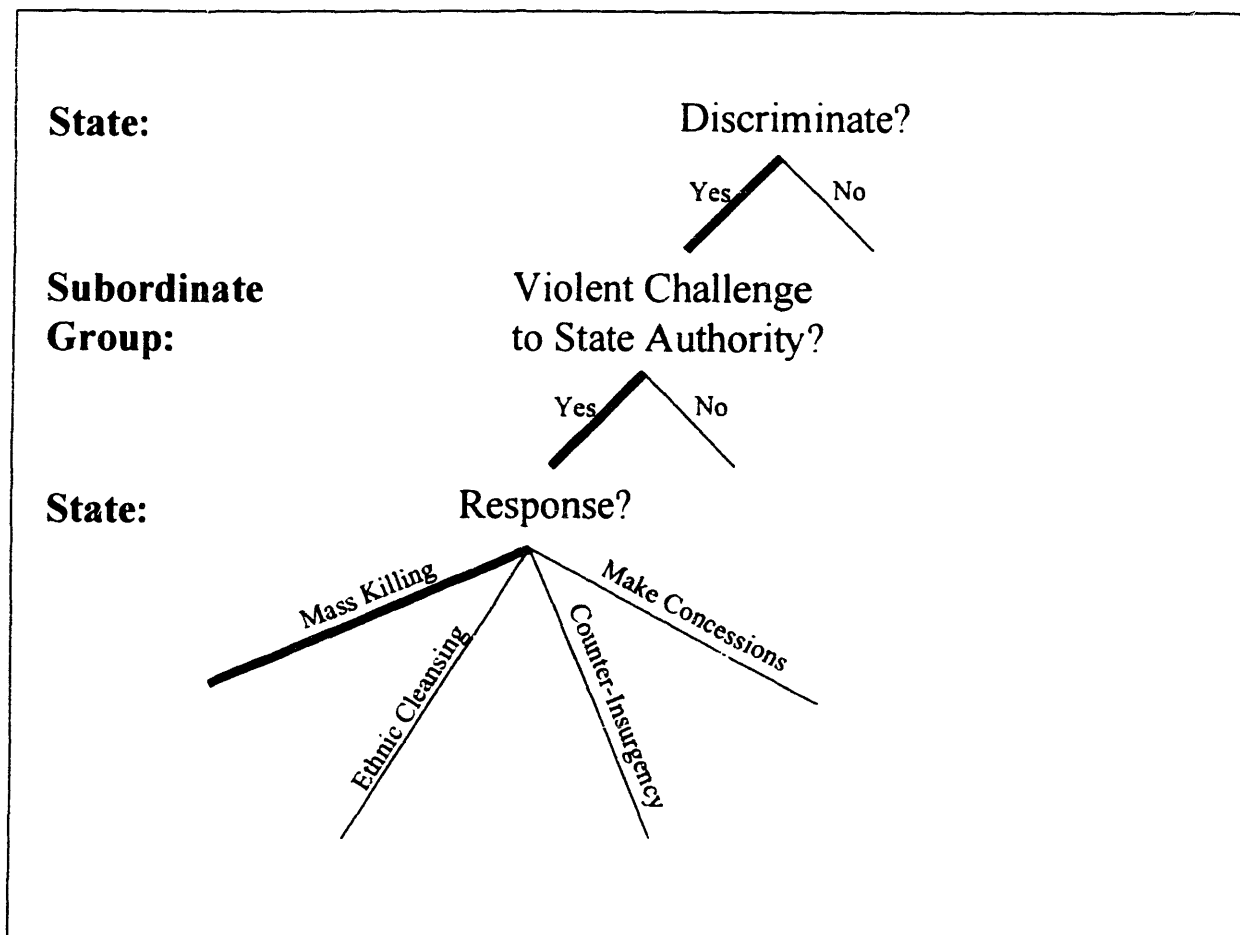
For example, Fein writes that, “Domination by a ruling ethnoclass . . . lead[s] to violent rebellion by the dominated class. . . . Expulsion and genocide are solutions for [ruling] ethnoclasses who perceive that they are threatened but are intent on domination.”¹⁵ Likewise, Harff and Gurr state that, “One tell-tale manifestation of conflicts with genocidal potential is discriminatory treatment of ethnic, religious, national, and regional minorities by dominant groups.” Discrimination compels subordinate groups to resist authority, which in turn compels

¹⁴ Valentino, “Final Solutions,” p. 29, n. 94, makes a similar point about the potential misperceptions of state leaders. “A strategic approach to mass killing does not imply that leaders accurately assess the threats they face. Nor does it suggest that mass killing will always help leaders achieve their goals or solve their problems. . . . Nevertheless, leaders ultimately act on the basis of their perceptions and beliefs . . .”

¹⁵ Fein, “Genocide: A Sociological Perspective,” pp. 88, 95-96.

the government to retaliate with violence. Thus, perversely, resistance by subordinate groups increases the chance that they will suffer mass killing. As Harff and Gurr note, groups “resisting discriminatory treatment are more likely to encounter massive state violence than quiescent groups.” Despite this, according to Harff and Gurr, discriminated groups pursue violent resistance because “leaders have alternatives, victims rarely do.”¹⁶ In reality, however, discriminated groups almost always have the alternative of eschewing violent resistance, which would reduce significantly their risk of suffering mass killing and thereby presumably improve their expected welfare. The fact that Harff and Gurr view violent resistance as all but inevitable, despite the availability of alternate welfare-improving strategies, implies that they do not view subordinate group actions as the product of rational calculation.

Figure 1-4
Tree of Actions Leading to Most Cases of Mass Killing



¹⁶ Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr, “Victims of the State: Genocides, Politicides, and Group Repression Since 1945.” *International Review of Victimology*, Vol. 1 (1989), pp. 30, 33, 38.

This implicit theory from the literature on mass killing is depicted graphically in Figure 1-4. As is readily apparent, it is woefully under-specified at almost every juncture. First, the literature offers no strong theoretical explanation as to why states originally are dominated by certain groups that discriminate against others. Second, even if suffering discrimination were a necessary condition for a group to launch a violent challenge against the state (which has not been demonstrated rigorously), it clearly is insufficient by itself, because most groups suffering discrimination do not launch such challenges.¹⁷ Third, although mass killing may be a rational response by a state to such challenges, it is not the only potential such response. Thus, the causal path responsible for most cases of mass killing, highlighted with bold lines in Figure 1-4, is contingent at every turn on other factors (“condition variables”) that have yet to be specified. Moreover, as already noted, some cases of mass killing do not result from this causal sequence at all.

This dissertation seeks neither to redress all of these inadequacies in the literature, nor to formulate a new comprehensive theory of mass killing. Rather it seeks only to specify more fully the determinants of a key juncture along this most common path to mass killing – the decision of a vulnerable group to violently challenge the authority of a state, which then retaliates with mass killing. Identifying the determinants of this decision could offer considerable insight into the causes of, and possible means of preventing, mass killing. Still, this decision is but one piece of a much larger puzzle, so the dissertation is intended as but the first step in a more comprehensive research project to determine the causes of, and potential remedies for, mass killing.

Why Men Rebel

Literature outside the field of mass killing explores phenomena that are closely related to tragic challenges. For example, many scholars have explored the more general question of why people rebel or revolt.¹⁸ However, their theories generally do not differentiate among rebellions

¹⁷ For example, in 1995, the Minorities at Risk database identified 268 “ethnic or communal groups” worldwide that were “disadvantaged by comparison with other groups in their society,” of which only 22 (8%) were engaged in violent rebellion at or above the level of intermediate-scale guerrilla activity. See Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples Versus States* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2000), pp. 8-10, 28. Valentino, “Final Solutions,” p. 17, notes that “Recent quantitative research on ethnic conflict and genocide has found little correlation between the severity of ethnic, social, economic, and cultural differences and the likelihood of large-scale violence between groups.”

¹⁸ A good primer is James Chowning Davies, *When Men Revolt and Why* (New York: Free Press, 1971). Perhaps most prolific is Ted Robert Gurr, who has published numerous versions of his theory. See, for example,

that have greatly varying likelihood of success – and costs of failure – so they are under-specified for the narrower phenomenon at issue in this dissertation. In other words, a general theory of rebellion capable of explaining and successfully predicting low-cost, successful rebellions is unlikely to explain the near-suicidal rebellions examined herein.

Still, the literature on rebellion and revolution does offer some important insights into the causes and strategies of challenges to authority, applicable to the “tragic challenges” examined in this dissertation. For example, nearly all theorists identify *relative* deprivation, rather than absolute deprivation, as the leading cause of revolution and rebellion, which accounts for the counter-intuitive but persistent finding that such challenges are launched by groups actually enjoying rising socio-economic conditions. However, two underlying questions remain the subject of academic inquiry. First is the specific definition of relative deprivation – namely, deprivation of what and relative to whom or what? The second is which factors mediate the connection between deprivation and rebellion – that is, when will relative deprivation actually lead to rebellion?

Aristotle wrote that people will rebel “if they think that they have too little although they are the equals of those who have more.”¹⁹ Marx typically focused narrowly on the relative material inequality between classes, predicting that workers would rebel even in the face of improving living standards if they perceived capitalist living standards to be rising even faster. Tocqueville crucially observed that relative deprivation alone was insufficient, and that also necessary was an expectation that rebellion would improve the situation: “Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable when once the idea of escape from them is suggested.” This, he said, explained his empirical observation that revolution tended to occur when states were relaxing, not heightening, oppression.²⁰

Why Men Rebel (Princeton: Center of International Studies, 1970) and *Minorities at Risk* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1993).

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, excerpted in James Chowning Davies, ed., *When Men Revolt and Why* (New York: Free Press, 1971), p. 86.

²⁰ Both quoted in James C. Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution,” in Davies, ed., *When Men Revolt and Why*, p. 135. Davies notes that the original theory of Marx and Engel posited revolution as the response of industrial workers to their progressive absolute deprivation under capitalism. However, Marx later wrote that revolution still was inevitable in the face of rising living standards of the proletariat, because “although the enjoyments of the workers have risen, the social satisfaction that they give has fallen in comparison with the increased enjoyments of the capitalist.” Thus, according to Marx, relative deprivation of material goods leads to absolute deprivation of social satisfaction, and thence to revolution.

In the early 1960s, James C. Davies posited that the decisive relative deprivation was not between groups but rather between the expected satisfaction and actual satisfaction of one group. Rebellion was caused by “an intolerable gap between what people want and what they get,” so that it was “most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal.” Like Tocqueville, he identified the key mediating factor between deprivation and rebellion as the expectation of success. “It is when the chains have been loosened somewhat, so that they can be cast off without a high probability of losing life, that people are put in a condition of rebelliousness.”²¹

However, theorists disagree about the impact of government repression on the likelihood of rebellion. David Schwartz and William Kornhauser, also in the early 1960s, theorized that violent rebellions arose when states cracked down on peaceful reform movements, thereby leaving disgruntled constituents no alternative to violence.²² While deductively attractive and possibly sometimes true, this contradicted the anecdotal correlation cited above between liberalization and rebellion. An early empirical study by Gurr indicated a curvilinear relationship between repression and rebellion: low and high levels of repression were negatively correlated with rebellion, while medium and extra-high levels were positively correlated with rebellion.²³ One possible explanation is that low repression provides little motivation for rebellion; medium repression spurs rebellion without being sufficient to stop it; high repression is sufficient to stop most rebellion; but extra high repression spurs such intense rebellion that it cannot be stopped. It is alternately possible that causality runs in the opposite direction – that is, rebellion causes repression – or in both directions. Most likely, government repression is a double edged-sword

²¹ Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution,” pp. 135-36. His work draws on “frustration-aggression” theory, from the field of psychology, which posits that the frustration from unfulfilled aspirations or expectations is the root cause of aggression, although aggression may be deterred by the expectation of sufficient punishment. The theory originates with Freud and was formalized and tested originally by John A. Dollard, et al., *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939). Subsequent studies include Ivo K. and Rosalind L. Feierabend, “Aggressive Behaviors Within Politics, 1948-1962: A Cross-National Study,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, No. 10 (September 1966), pp. 249-71; and Raymond Tanter and Manus Midlarsky, “A Theory of Revolution,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, No. 21 (September 1967), pp. 264-80. In addition, Gurr, “A Causal Model of Civil Strife,” p. 294, explicitly roots itself in this theory.

²² David C. Schwartz, “A Theory of Revolutionary Behavior,” in Davies, ed., *When Men Revolt and Why*, pp. 127-131. William Kornhauser, “Rebellion and Political Development,” in Harry Eckstein, ed., *Internal War: Problems and Approaches* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 142. A recent version of this theory is found in Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²³ Ted Gurr, “A Causal Model of Civil Strife,” in Davies, ed., *When Men Revolt and Why*, p. 313.

that can either stanch or provoke rebellion, depending on when and how it is used, so that statistical correlation is too blunt a methodology to provide useful insight.

Other theorists in the 1960s – including Lucian Pye, Edward Gude, and Thomas Perry Thornton – identified the most decisive state policy as its reaction to initial acts of political violence. If the state over-reacts by retaliating with indiscriminate violence, they found, it will backfire by mobilizing the population in favor of the rebellion out of sympathy and perceived self-defense. Rebel leaders are aware of this dynamic, Gude wrote, so that a key goal of their attacks is to “trigger governmental repression that can provide a basis for recruitment into an insurgent movement.”²⁴ In other words, rebel leaders may initiate violence despite an unfavorable balance of forces in the hopes that the government’s over-reaction inadvertently will mobilize the populace and thereby tilt the balance in the rebels’ favor.

In the 1970s, Charles Tilly and others focused more generally on the process of mobilization that is essential to rebellion. More recently, theorists such as Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow have emphasized the mediating role of “political opportunity structures” in determining when relative deprivation and mobilization actually will lead to actions such as rebellions.²⁵ This work clearly echoes Tocqueville.

For more than three decades, Gurr has integrated these and other emergent findings of the literature into his repeatedly revised and expanded general theory of ethno-cultural rebellion and political action. His primary causal variable continues to be relative deprivation, although he defines it broadly like Davies as the difference between perceived entitlement and actual welfare, so that even relatively privileged groups may be motivated to rebel by perceived disadvantage. Gurr says three mediating variables determine whether deprivation actually will lead a group to take action – salience of ethnocultural identity, group capacity for mobilization (based partly on geography)²⁶, and political opportunities for success. All four variables have both domestic and

²⁴ Edward W. Gude, “Political Violence in Venezuela: 1958-1964,” in Davies, ed., *When Men Revolt and Why*, pp. 263-64. Similarly, Thomas Perry Thornton, “Terror as a Weapon,” in Eckstein, *Internal War*, p. 87, writes that “terroristic acts often are committed with the express purpose of provoking reprisals.” Lucian W. Pye, “The Roots of Insurgency,” in Eckstein, *Internal War*, p. 167, writes that, “The initial decisions of a government confronted with the threat of internal war are usually the most fateful and long-lasting.”

²⁵ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978). Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1982). Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁶ As early as 1968, a study for the U.S. military found that rebellions tend to occur in rural societies with rough terrain favorable to guerrilla warfare. D.M. Condit, “A Profile of Incipient Insurgency,” June 1968, cited in Jesse

international determinants. Finally, a domestic political variable – whether state institutions and resources favor repression or accommodation of group demands – determines whether ethnopolitical action will take the form of peaceful protest or violent rebellion. Gurr concedes problems of endogeneity, noting the mutual causation between relative deprivation, on the one hand, and salience of identity and political mobilization, on the other.²⁷ In addition, Gurr sacrifices parsimony for completeness by specifying an additional twenty causal variables that underlie the five or six main variables of his theory.²⁸ Nevertheless, Gurr's theory remains useful as the most comprehensive inventory of variables and feedback processes that can impact the likelihood of rebellion and political protest.

Unfortunately for our current inquiry, however, none of these general theories of rebellion resolves the puzzle of tragic challenges. They explain how relative deprivation may motivate a group to want to change the *status quo*, how the salience of ethnic identity may intensify such feelings, how these factors and others may enable a group to mobilize, how the unavailability of institutions to redress grievances peacefully may lead to consideration of violent alternatives, how the expectation of success at low cost may induce a mobilized group to launch

Orlansky, *The State of Research on Internal War* (Arlington, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, August 1970), p. 20. A similar finding was recently made by James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Weak States, Rough Terrain, and Large-Scale Ethnic Violence Since 1945," paper presented at annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA, September 2-5, 1999. Other researchers have discovered that areas of ethnic geographic concentration – that is, when a group is a majority in a local region but a minority in the state as a whole – also favor rebellion, presumably by facilitating mobilization but also possibly by exacerbating the security dilemma with other groups in the state. On this point, Gurr, *Peoples Versus States*, pp. 75, 353, cites the work of Erik Melander, Monica Duffy Toft, Barry Posen, and Stephen Van Evera.

²⁷ See Gurr, *Peoples Versus States*, p. 74, on "feedback effects" and the "dynamics of protracted conflict." Unfortunately, a linear causal diagram (p. 70) masks the endogeneity of his theory. A diagram in his previous book, containing feedback loops, was more confusing but more explicit about this endogeneity. See, Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, p. 125.

²⁸ The main variables, and their underlying variables, are also summarized in the diagram in Gurr, *Peoples Versus States*, p. 70. *Salience of identity* is a function of (1) the extent of cultural differentials, (2) relative deprivation, and (3) intensity of past and present conflicts with the state and other groups. *Incentives* for collective action (based on various types of relative deprivation) include (4) overcoming collective disadvantage, (5) regaining political autonomy, and (6) resisting repression. *Group capacity* for action (i.e., mobilization) is a function of all the preceding variables and (7) territorial concentration (including terrain features), (8) preexisting group cohesion, (9) intra-group coalition building, and (10) legitimacy of group leaders. *Political opportunities* for action are opened by (11) state creation or destruction, (12) regime transition including democratization, and (13) leadership transition. *International factors* that can affect all of the above variables include (14) global norms of group rights, (15) diasporas, (16) diffusion and contagion of ideas and resources between similarly situated but ethnically distinct groups in different states; and (17) other external political and material support. *Domestic political factors* that determine whether ethnopolitical action will be peaceful or militant include (18) institutions of democracy or authoritarianism, (19) extent of state resources to accommodate group demands, and (20) state traditions of accommodating or repressing group demands.

a rebellion, and what tactics of rebellion it may employ to maximize its chances. However, these theories do not explain why or when a group that is vulnerable to genocidal retaliation would launch a seemingly suicidal, violent challenge against a state that has threatened such retaliation.

Deterrence Theory as a Possible Explanation

A more promising framework with which to analyze tragic challenges is deterrence theory. From this theoretical perspective, the state can be seen attempting to deter violent challenges to its authority by threatening to retaliate with mass killing. When mass killing actually occurs, it is because deterrence has failed. Despite the state's threats, an opposition group has launched a violent challenge, thereby prompting the state to implement its threatened retaliation. The theoretical question is why does deterrence fail?

Deterrence failure is well explored in the literature of international relations with regard to the deterrence of one state by another state. Fortunately, this existing theory can be adapted to the intra-state cases examined in this dissertation. Two basic schools of thought compete in the literature. The first is rational deterrence theory, which posits that potential challengers are unitary rational actors who seek to maximize their utility. According to this school, a single explanation accounts for all deterrence failure: the challenger's expected gains from defying the deterrent threat exceed its expected costs.²⁹ Rational deterrence theorists deduce three

²⁹ Several definitions of "deterrence failure" compete in the literature. The first is the broadest and encompasses all attempts at deterrence in which the target launches a challenge. The second is narrower and includes only those of the above cases where the challenger ends up incurring greater costs than gains, so that – if it had perfect information and if the assumptions of rational deterrence theory are correct – it *should* have been deterred. This dissertation employs the first, broader definition, meaning that deterrence is said to fail even if the challenger reaps a net benefit from its challenge. As underscored by Robert Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence," *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (January 1989), p. 187: "we must not equate failures of a deterrence policy with failures of deterrence theory." A similar point is made by Christopher H. Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (January 1989), p. 152, who characterize the first definition as failure of deterrence and the second definition as failure of deterrence theory. However, as I discuss in the text, not all cases satisfying the second definition are necessarily failures of deterrence theory, because deterrence theory does not assume perfect information. Indeed, an important aspect of deterrence theory is that a challenge may occur, in the face of a threatened punishment that should be large enough to deter, because of inadequate communication. Such a case should correctly be characterized as a failure of deterrence but not of deterrence theory, contrary to Achen and Snidal's assertion. However, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (January 1989), p. 212, go too far in declaring that "Deterrence theory does not predict that initiators will be rational. It specifies the conditions under which rational initiators will choose not to attack." In fact, it does both, which is why it is not merely descriptive but also offer prescriptions – based on the assumption that targets of deterrence (initiators) will act rationally. Moreover, Lebow and Stein incorrectly define as a failure of deterrence theory any case in which a challenge occurred despite the issuance of a credible threat (p. 220). As I note in the text, deterrence theory actually

competing hypotheses for why the challenger reaches this positive cost-benefit expectation: (1) The deterrer does not communicate clear and credible threats to retaliate, so the challenger expects the costs of the challenge to be minimal; (2) The deterrer does not communicate clear and credible reassurances that there will be no retaliation if there is no challenge, so the challenger expects high costs whether or not it challenges and therefore assesses the net costs of a challenge to be minimal; (3) The deterrer does communicate clear and credible threats and reassurances, but the challenger nevertheless expects its gains from challenging to exceed its costs.³⁰

Each of these rational hypotheses also has several possible underlying causes. For example the failure to communicate a clear and credible threat could mean that such a threat was never voiced, that it was voiced but not heard, or that it was heard but the challenger deemed that the deterrer lacked the means or will to attempt to carry it out, so the threat was not credible. Likewise, the failure of reassurances could mean they were not voiced, not heard, or not deemed credible. Finally, the failure of deterrence despite the communication of credible threats and reassurances has at least two potential underlying causes. First, the threatened retaliation might be too small, so that even if fully implemented it would impose costs smaller than the expected gains from challenging. Alternately, the challenger might expect that by fighting it can mitigate the threatened retaliation, thereby reducing the costs below the expected gains from challenging. In either case, the challenger must expect to prevail in order to launch its challenge; otherwise there would not be expected gains to offset the expected costs.

Critiques of Rational Deterrence Theory

The opposing school cites six factors that each purportedly undermine the central assumption of rational deterrence theory – namely, that targets of deterrence rationally assess the expected costs and benefits of prospective challenges and launch them only when the expected

would predict a challenge in such a case if a credible reassurance were absent or if the threatened punishment were not large enough.

³⁰ These three concepts can be extracted from, for example, Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 3, 75. “To exploit a capacity for hurting and inflicting damage one needs to know what an adversary treasures . . . and one needs the adversary to understand what behavior of his will cause the violence to be inflicted and what will cause it to be withheld. . . . We often forget that both sides of the choice, the threatened penalty and the proffered avoidance or reward need to be credible.”

outcome is net positive.³¹ As detailed below, the six factors – misperception, domestic politics, external considerations, prospect theory, bureaucratic politics, and computational limitations – present varying degrees of challenge to the basic theory and in some cases do not undermine it at all.³² Indeed, only the last two factors – bureaucratic politics and computational limitations – provide the basis for strong alternative theories of deterrence failure.

The first criticism, most associated with Robert Jervis, is that challengers are plagued by misperception – both motivated and innocent – which prevents them from measuring accurately the inputs that go into their otherwise rational calculus of expected cost and benefit.³³

According to these critics, because challengers cannot gauge correctly three key factors – the expected cost of fighting, the probability of winning, and the probability of retaliation – their decisions cannot be rational.³⁴ However, these critics fail to appreciate that while misperception may well be pervasive, it cannot undermine rational deterrence theory because it actually is an implicit basis of the theory, which can be demonstrated as follows. In the absence of misperception, challenges would be launched only when the challenger was sure to benefit and, in a zero-sum environment, the deterrer sure to lose. However, without misperception, the

³¹ In mathematical terms, under rational deterrence theory, challenges are launched when:

$$\sum_{i=1}^n P_i * V_i > \text{value to the challenger of the outcome of not challenging}$$

where V_i = the value to the challenger of outcome (i) that could result from a challenge, and P_i = the challenger's expected probability that a challenge will cause outcome (i).

³² In addition, Alexander George and Richard Smoke note that classical deterrence theory does not account for two types of minor deterrence failure. First, in a "limited probe," the challenger may launch a tiny challenge against the deterrer, to check the credibility of the deterrent threat but avoid risking full retaliation. Second, in "controlled pressure," the target of deterrence may launch a non-violent challenge, to show some resistance against the deterrer but avoid provoking the threatened retaliation. Although these are interesting phenomena, they are not truly deterrence failure, because in both cases the challenger avoids engaging in the violent action that the deterrent threat was intended to prevent. For a summary of George and Smoke, see Achen and Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," pp. 155-56.

³³ A number of sources of misperception are summarized in Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence," pp. 196-97. Motivated biases include assuming that the other knows you are good and *pro-status quo*; assuming that all good things go together with one policy; being over-optimistic about one policy when the alternatives are perceived as poor; and seeing things even less clearly when faced with the prospect of great personal loss. Unmotivated biases, subsumed within his category of cognitive limitations, include Freudian projection and assuming that others' actions are intentional rather than accidental. I adopt the useful re-division of Jervis's two categories – motivated biases and cognitive limitations – into the categories of misperception and computational errors, as suggested by Achen and Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," p. 148-49.

³⁴ Lebow and Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," pp. 215-17.

deterrent would know this in advance, and so would withdraw its threat and seek compromise prior to the challenge.³⁵ Thus, without misperception, a rational theory would predict the absence of deterrence failure and war. But rational deterrence theory is intended precisely to explain deterrence failure and war. This demonstrates that misperception, rather than undermining rational deterrence theory, actually is essential to it. The critics' error is to conflate "rational" with "optimal." In the real world of imperfect information, a rational theory does not predict optimal decision-making.³⁶ Rather, it predicts only that potential challengers will rationally calculate expected outcome based on the information at hand, and challenge when the expected outcome is net positive.

The second criticism, most associated with Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, is that even if political leaders are rational, they seek to optimize their own personal well-being rather than the welfare of the state, and thus they respond more to expectations about domestic politics than about the outcomes of challenges.³⁷ If true, this is not necessarily a fatal criticism of rational deterrence theory, which contends only that states make decisions as if they were unitary rational actors, not that political leaders substitute their own judgment for the collective rational preference of the state. For example, if a political leader embraces a policy because the majority of his or her constituency expects the policy to maximize the state's welfare, the state as

³⁵ This argument is sometimes used to claim that rational deterrence theory fails because it ignores strategic interaction. See James W. Davis, Jr., "Threats, Promises and Influence in International Politics," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, September 3-6, 1998. A simpler explanation is mine – that the theory assumes misperception.

³⁶ Achen and Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory," pp. 160, 164, get it exactly backward because they start from the assumption that all decisions are both rational and optimal, despite contrary evidence. Thus, they are forced into the tautological assumption that decisions reveal hidden rational preferences even where decision-making processes involve no evident calculation and outcomes are sub-optimal. Remarkably, they claim that "analysts have misinterpreted the propositions of rational deterrence as descriptions of decision makers' thought processes," and label this the "descriptivist fallacy." To the contrary, it is Achen and Snidal that distort rational theory into a non-falsifiable version by claiming it applies even in situations where decision-making processes are demonstrably not rational. Further, they contend it does not matter whether decision processes are rational, so long as the decisions themselves are rational in relation to the options and preferences of the challenger. However, this cannot be tested because those underlying preferences are revealed only by the decisions themselves. Moreover, it is not clear how a non-rational decision-making process could possibly yield decisions that are consistently identical to those of a rational process. As Lebow and Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory," p. 223-24, correctly observe, Achen and Snidal claim that a "theory based on unrealistic assumptions can still be a good predictor of behavior. Philosophers of science challenge this assertion." However, Lebow and Stein also overreach in claiming (pp. 216-17) that rational deterrence theory cannot incorporate or account for systemic misperception. For example, Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 35-91, spends an entire chapter explaining the causes, consequences, and means of reducing misperception that stems from miscommunication.

a whole is acting as a rational actor even if the leader does not personally share that expectation. The only way that domestic politics could undermine rational deterrence theory is if the leader eschewed the state's rational choice in order to gain political support from a narrow, non-representative segment of the constituency. One can imagine such a scenario, but it is not the typical one cited by Lebow and Stein, which involves leaders deferring to the collective will of their populace.

A third, related criticism, is that although states are rational they sometimes seek to maximize an expected outcome that is broader than the obvious and immediate consequences of a deterrent challenge. For example, states may value highly some longer-term consequence of defying a deterrent threat such as establishing a reputation as a fighter or eventually drawing an outside power into the conflict.³⁸ Thus, a rational state might launch a challenge that it expected to fail – that is, produce greater costs than gains in the short-run – because it also expected the failed challenge to produce a net positive benefit in the long run. This criticism does not undermine any of the core assumptions of rational deterrence theory, but merely requires that we employ a broader and longer-term conception of the expected costs and benefits for challengers. Indeed, as will be seen below, such an expansive conception of expected costs and benefits is integral to rational deterrence theory in the context of communal conflicts.

The fourth criticism, based on prospect theory in the literature of psychology, is that decision-makers value prospective losses more highly than objectively equivalent prospective gains.³⁹ An illustrative example is that most people would decline to wager \$10,000 for the chance to win \$10,001 on the toss of a coin, even though the expected value of the bet would be positive for them. Applied to deterrence theory, this insight suggests that targets of deterrence do not decide whether to challenge based merely on their net expected outcome, but also on

³⁷ Lebow and Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," p. 211, declares based on case studies that: "The calculus of initiators depends on factors other than those identified by deterrence. Perhaps the most important of these is the expected domestic political consequences of a use of force."

³⁸ Davis, "Threats, Promise and Influence in International Politics," p. 6. An oft-cited example is Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat's decision to invade Israel in 1973, despite supposedly expecting military failure, because of an expectation that renewed hostilities and military escalation would eventually bring the United States into the conflict to apply pressure on Israel for territorial concessions.

³⁹ See, for example, Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence," pp. 206-207. A classic work is Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk," *Econometrica*, 47 (March 1979), pp. 263-91. See also, Barbara Farnham, ed., *Avoiding Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory in International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1994); Jack S. Levy, "Loss Aversion, Framing and Bargaining: The Implications of Prospect Theory for International Conflict," *International Political Science Review*, 17 (1996), pp. 177-93.

whether they view the potential challenge as defending against losses or seeking gains. If the former, they may decide to challenge even if their expected outcome is marginally negative – that is, if they expect to lose more than they gain. Conversely, if they view the challenge as aimed at acquisition, they may demur even if their expected outcome is marginally positive. If critics are correct that prospect theory applies in the context of deterrence, which is difficult to test and has yet to be proved empirically, it still would affect only one aspect of rational deterrence theory – the final calculus used to convert rational expectations into action. Moreover, prospect theory does not predict to what extent potential losses will be weighed more heavily than gains, so it is unclear how much a challenger’s calculus would diverge from the simple rational assumption of equal weighting, even if prospect theory were correct. Prospect theory would significantly undermine rational deterrence theory only if challengers value losses much more highly than gains, because then the framing of challenges – as either defensive or acquisitive – would be more important than expected outcome in determining whether challenges are launched.⁴⁰ This remains a matter for empirical inquiry.

The fifth criticism stems from one aspect of the theory of bureaucratic politics – namely, that government policies sometimes are not implemented correctly because bureaucracies or even individual officials alter them during implementation in order to satisfy their own agendas.⁴¹ By analogy, if the state is seen as a unitary actor, this critique argues that the brain is not connected to the mouth or limbs. In the context of deterrence, if a state’s leaders decide rationally whether or not to launch a challenge, but its diplomatic and military subordinates do otherwise, the theory of rational deterrence would not hold. Admittedly, problems of bureaucratic politics are pervasive in routine government operations. However, it is not clear they are as common during implementation of crucial decisions such as whether to risk war by defying a deterrent threat. Nevertheless, this possibility presents a clear theoretical alternative to rational deterrence theory.

⁴⁰ In fact, this argument is made by both Jervis, “Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence,” p. 198, and Davis, Jr., “Threats, Promises and Influence in International Politics,” p. 18. They claim that deterrent threats often backfire and cause escalatory spirals because the targets of attempted deterrence favor the *status quo* and view the attempted deterrence as threatening them with losses, which causes them to launch challenges even when they do not expect to prevail.

⁴¹ See, for example, Jervis, “Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence,” pp. 197-98. The classic treatise on this problem is Morton Halperin, with the assistance of Priscilla Clapp and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1974).

Finally, the sixth and potentially most devastating critique of rational deterrence theory is that states lack the computational abilities to process rationally the facts at their disposal. This criticism sometimes is wrongly conflated with misperception, which as noted above is the state's inability to correctly perceive the facts it examines, rather than its inability to process facts that are or can be perceived correctly. Critics identify three main causes of computational failure: crisis pressures, bureaucratic politics, and cognitive limitations. Crisis pressures are fear and urgency, which inhibit the computational abilities of a state by reducing the number of facts that are processed and the reliability of that processing.⁴² Bureaucratic politics, in addition to distorting implementation of government decisions as noted above, also may prevent those decisions from being rational in the first place. Thus, Graham Allison contends that "large acts result from innumerable and often conflicting smaller actions by individuals at various levels of bureaucratic organizations in the service of a variety of only partially compatible conceptions of national goals, organizational goals, and political objectives."⁴³ Finally, theorists of cognitive limitation argue that states cannot make decisions rationally for the same reason that humans cannot – the information processing demands are too great. Cognitive theorists and economists, notably Herbert Simon, have formalized an observation by John Stuart Mill that human behavior often stems from habit rather than rational calculation.⁴⁴ In part, this is because humans and their institutions are confronted with myriad decisions, so that achieving optimal outcomes would require processing enormous amounts of information, some of which is unavailable or potentially costly to obtain.⁴⁵ In light of constraints on time, biology, and resources, these critics

⁴² See, for example, Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

⁴³ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), p. 6. Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence," p. 204, makes a similar point about the internal bargaining inherent in coalition politics – which is actually closer to the bureaucratic politics explanation than that of domestic politics.

⁴⁴ For example, Mill criticizes Bentham for not understanding that people do not actually calculate each day whether they should observe the law. "He was not, I am persuaded, aware, how very much of the really, wonderful acquiescence of mankind in any government which they find established is the effect of mere habit and imagination . . ." J.S. Mill, "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy," in *Collected Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), Vol. X, p. 17.

⁴⁵ Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man: Social and Rational* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957). Herbert A. Simon, "Theories of Bounded Rationality", in Roy Radner and C.B. McGuire, *Decision and Organisation* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1972). Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Bounded Rationality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982). It is sometimes claimed that such decision-making is "rational," because it is efficient not to expend resources on information gathering unless it would produce an equal or greater return in utility. However, Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence," pp. 199-203, notes that decision-makers often ignore important information that is freely available to them, which is neither efficient nor rational. He also is skeptical of attempts to incorporate motivated biases, which systematically impede rational processing of information, into a rational theory

say humans and institutions make decisions the only feasible way by employing “bounded rationality” – that is, utilizing decision rules that rely on limited information in order to strive for merely satisfactory, rather than optimal, outcomes. Applying this to governments, John Steinbruner proposes a similar “cybernetic” theory of decision-making, in which states tend to repeat past policies, adjusting them only marginally and incrementally in the face of clear evidence of failure.⁴⁶ These theories of computational limitation do present a clear alternative to rational deterrence theory.

A New Version of Rational Deterrence Theory for Civil Conflicts

This dissertation tests rational deterrence theory to see if it can explain the tragic challenges that provoke retaliatory mass killing and, if so, which aspects of the theory have most explanatory power. In order to facilitate this test, a new version of the theory is formulated for domestic communal conflicts. Under this adapted theory, based on ideal types, the state is assumed to be dominated by one communal group. This “dominant group” uses its control of the state to funnel itself resources and opportunities in employment, education, legal rights, and infrastructure investments – disproportionate to its share of the population and/or contribution to the economy. The dominant group discriminates against and usually has disdain for other “subordinate groups.” However, under ordinary circumstances, the dominant group does not engage in mass killing against them – despite having the ability to do so – because that would sacrifice the benefits of exploiting them and/or incur other costs of fighting not justified by compensating benefits.

Subordinate groups, all things being equal, would prefer to change the *status quo* – either to be treated equally, to take control of the state themselves, to gain communal or regional autonomy, or to secede and take control of their own mini-state. Commonly, they pursue these goals peacefully, at little cost but small hope of success. They usually avoid launching violent challenges against the state because of a rational expectation of failure and massive retaliation. Thus, subordinate groups are deterred from launching violent challenges, which in turn sustains

of “subjective expected utility.” Proponents of such a theory would argue that some people “prefer” objectively inferior outcomes that permit them to avoid changing their motivated biases. This is tantamount to arguing that some states are rational masochists, which stretches the definition of “rational” beyond the breaking point.

⁴⁶ John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). Jervis, “Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence,” p. 196, notes that one cognitive shortcut is to formulate policy based on analogy to a recent important case. In vernacular, this is known as “fighting the last war.”

the incentive of dominant groups not to kill them. In this narrow sense, the *status quo* situation is mutually beneficial because both sides perceive themselves to be enjoying higher utility than if they were to engage each other in violence. Such convergence of interest is the hallmark of effective coercion, as Thomas Schelling long ago noted:

Coercion by threat of damage also requires that our interests and our opponent's not be absolutely opposed. If his pain were our greatest delight and our satisfaction his greatest woe, we would just proceed to hurt and to frustrate each other. It is when his pain gives us little or no satisfaction compared with what he can do for us, and the action or inaction that satisfies us costs him less than the pain we can cause, that there is room for coercion. Coercion requires finding a bargain, arranging for him to be better off doing what we want – worse off not doing what we want – when he takes the threatened penalty into account.⁴⁷

The key question, under this rational framework, is what changes in the mutually beneficial situation to make deterrence fail, so that the subordinate group launches an ill-fated, violent challenge against the state. As noted above, three hypotheses are posited for such failure in the inter-state version of rational deterrence theory. Transformed to the domestic context, these three hypotheses for tragic challenges are as follows: (1) The state fails to communicate credible threats, so the subordinate group does not expect that launching a violent challenge will prompt retaliatory mass killing against its civilians; (2) The state fails to communicate credible reassurances, so the subordinate group expects to fall victim to mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge; (3) The state communicates credible threats and reassurances, but the subordinate group nevertheless expects that a violent challenge can achieve its goal at an acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.

This last hypothesis has two requirements. First, the subordinate group must expect that it can win – that is, achieve its goal of secession or revolution – by defeating the state on the battlefield at some expected cost in dead civilians. Second, the subordinate group must be willing to accept this number of dead civilians as the cost of winning. The group's expected number of dead civilians will depend on its expectations about two underlying factors: the degree of retaliation the state will attempt; and the group's ability to mitigate this retaliation by use of

⁴⁷ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p. 4.

military force (which is closely related to the group's expectation of victory). The transformation of these three potential causes of deterrence failure from the international to the domestic sphere is summarized in Figure 1-5.

Figure 1-5
Why Does Deterrence Fail?
Comparing Rational Deterrence Theory in International and Domestic Contexts

Rational Hypothesis	International Relations	Communal Conflict
1	Threat not communicated clearly and credibly.	Subordinate group does not expect its violent challenge to provoke retaliatory mass killing.
2	Reassurance not communicated clearly and credibly.	Subordinate group expects mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge.
3	Despite credible threat and reassurance, expected gains from challenge exceed expected costs.	Subordinate group expects violent challenge to achieve its goal at acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.

These three rational hypotheses are the only ones explicitly tested in the dissertation. Alternative, non-rational hypotheses are not explicitly tested. However, the null hypothesis in this dissertation is that tragic challenges are explained by some alternative theory in which subordinate groups do not act as unitary, rational, utility-maximizing actors. In other words, if the evidence obtained by my research did not confirm any of the proposed rational hypotheses, the presumption would be that a better explanation could be found among alternative theories, including those discussed above that explicitly critique rational deterrence theory. In the case-study chapters that follow, I duly report all evidence obtained, even where it is inconsistent with the rational theory and more consistent with an alternative theory.

Methodology

My method for testing the proposed rational hypotheses is comparative case study, drawing on George's "structured, focused comparison" and "process-tracing," as elucidated by Van Evera.⁴⁸ This method is appropriate given that the universe of cases after the Cold War is too small – seven – for a meaningful statistical analysis, and that accurate coding of the cases requires in-depth analysis. To select cases among the seven, I start from the five in which the victim group provoked its own demise by violently challenging government authority. I then exclude the atypical international case of the confrontation between Iraq and the United Nations, leaving four prototypical cases of tragic challenges, in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan. From these, I select the two cases of Bosnia and Rwanda.

To provide variation on my theory's dependent variable (the launching of a tragic challenge), I add a third case in which a discriminated communal group did not launch such a challenge – Kosovo's Albanians from 1989 to 1997 in Yugoslavia. This case provides an excellent contrast to the Bosnia case because it controls for several variables, including the dominant Serbian central authority in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Kosovo's Albanians suffered considerably greater discrimination than Bosnia's Muslims at the time, so the literature's implicit discrimination-based theory would have predicted a tragic challenge in Kosovo rather than Bosnia – precisely opposite to what actually occurred from 1989 to 1997. Subsequently, in 1998-99, Kosovo's Albanians did launch a violent challenge against the Yugoslav state, which provoked massive retaliation. Accordingly, I trace the case longitudinally to determine what accounts for the Albanians' switch from pacifism to militarism. The inclusion of the Kosovo case in this study thus provides variation in the launching of violent challenges both between cases and within an individual case, thereby reducing potential degrees-of-freedom problems and enabling more robust tests of the theory. However, it must be acknowledged that the Albanians' eventual turn to violence does not constitute a "tragic" challenge by my definition because the number of people killed by the state in retaliation was at least five times below the required threshold. (In this case, the state retaliated mainly by forcibly expelling half the Albanian

⁴⁸ Alexander L. George "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1979). Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

populace of Kosovo – some 850,000 civilians – rather than engaging in mass killing, which may be explained by several factors discussed in the case narrative of Chapter 7.)

**Figure 1-6
Cases Examined in the Dissertation**

		Violent Challenge?	
		No	Yes
Kosovo	1989-97		Bosnia 1991-92 Rwanda 1990-94 Kosovo* 1998-99

* Kosovo 1998-99 is a violent challenge, but not a “tragic” challenge because the resulting government backlash failed to produce a death toll in excess of the threshold in my operational definition.

I focus my process tracing on the subordinate group’s key actions that represent the launching of a violent challenge against the state’s authority. Most obviously, this includes arming a rebel force and then initiating violence. However, it also includes pursuit of secession or revolution while actively preparing for violence. By contrast, where there is no such preparation for violence, a group’s pursuit of secession, revolution, or civil rights is not a violent challenge and thus not likely to become a tragic one, because the threat to the state is insufficient to compel a massively violent response. If a state were to perpetrate mass killing against a group that employed only peaceful tactics, it could not be explained by this theory. However, most of the provocative challenges in the databases cited above did entail violence, or at least preparation for it. For instance, Harff and Gurr note that 23 of their 44 cases of mass killing “occurred during or in the immediate aftermath of civil wars and rebellions,” while still other of their cases occurred during the preparatory phase of such wars and rebellions.⁴⁹ As noted above, my proposed theory is intended to explain this typical dynamic, where a violent challenge provokes genocidal retaliation.

In the three cases I examine, the violent challenge was spearheaded by “leaders” of the subordinate groups, so that my research focuses primarily on the actions and decision-making of these leaders. However, such leaders did not operate in a vacuum and were subject to feedback from their constituencies, as made clear in my case narratives. This raises principal-agent considerations such as whether leaders held the same preferences and were subject to the same costs as their constituencies, or whether leaders tried to manipulate the preferences of their

constituencies by withholding information or provoking the state into violence – which I also discuss in the case narratives and theoretical analyses that follow. In rare instances, key actions were initiated from below, without the approval of the leaders of the subordinate groups, as I also detail. In general, however, unless otherwise noted, when this study refers to decisions by subordinate groups, it means decisions taken by the leaderships of those groups.

I began my process tracing with a review of the secondary historical literature and journalistic reporting on each case. In most cases, this provided limited insight into the question at issue, because these materials tend to focus on the actions of the state and the international community rather than the subordinate group. (As in the theoretical literature, the journalistic and historical accounts appear to have a post-hoc presumption that tragic challenges by subordinate groups are all but inevitable, even though they actually are quite rare.) Written primary documentation of the decision-making of the subordinate groups typically was unavailable, either because the groups at the time were sub-state actors who did not keep written records or because they chose not to release such records. As a result, the best means of gathering the required information was interviews. Accordingly, I conducted field trips to Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and elsewhere to interview individuals who had been leaders of the relevant subordinate groups during the periods under examination.

I interviewed at least a dozen top leaders of each subordinate group. These officials included the eventual Presidents of Bosnia and Kosovo, other political party leaders, rebel army chiefs of staff and other senior rebel officers, officials in charge of clandestine weapons procurement, and diplomats in charge of external relations. A major concern in interview research is the possibility that subjects will misrepresent facts to make themselves look better in retrospect.⁴⁹ To mitigate this risk, I strove also to interview officials who are or were political opponents of the subordinate-group leaders at the time, and who therefore would be less likely to lie to protect these leaders' reputations. I also cross-checked interview testimony against concurrent journalistic accounts, where available, to make sure that officials were not revising their positions in retrospect, whether intentionally or not. In each case a fairly consistent account emerged of the subordinate group's decision-making. If these accounts were merely self-serving

⁴⁹ Harff and Gurr, "Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides," p. 365.

⁵⁰ As noted by Lebow and Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," pp. 220-21, "the reconstructions of participants after the fact . . . [are] subject to well-known biases." Accordingly, they "look for convergent evidence from several participants from each side, and for historical documentation as well."

conspiratorial fabrications, one would expect they would portray the subordinate-group leaders in an artificially positive light. For example, if top subordinate group officials were going to lie, one would expect they would claim to have had no idea that launching a challenge would provoke the state to retaliate by killing thousands of innocent members of their own communal group. Fortunately, this type of account did not emerge in any of the cases, which suggests that the testimony was not fabricated to be wholly self-serving. Interestingly, the subordinate group officials generally regard themselves as national heroes, and are very proud of their roles in the launching of these challenges, despite the fact that the challenges provoked massive violent retaliation against their own people. Such pride – and lack of shame, embarrassment, or guilt – may account for the apparent frankness of their testimony.

CHAPTER 2

THREE RECENT CASES – BOSNIA, RWANDA, KOSOVO

This chapter summarizes the findings of the three cases examined in this dissertation: Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. For each, I present a historical synopsis followed by the main results of employing the case to test the theory proposed in Chapter 1. The main overall finding, discussed at the end of this chapter, is that in all of the cases, the presence or absence of a violent challenge to state authority, and the timing of such challenge, is explained by the third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory. The case histories and theory testing are fully documented and elucidated in the next six chapters. Finally, the concluding Chapter 9 explores the implications of these findings for policies of humanitarian intervention.

Bosnia

In retrospect, many commentators speak and write about Bosnia's 1992 unilateral secession from Yugoslavia – which triggered a bloody civil war that introduced the term “ethnic cleansing” into the modern political vernacular – as if it was inevitable. However, even a cursory reading of history suggests that it was not. In fact, Bosnia's Muslim leadership actively engaged in negotiations on two alternative options prior to seceding unilaterally in March - April 1992. The first alternative was to remain in a rump Yugoslavia. The second alternative was to negotiate an ethnic cantonization (or soft partition) of Bosnia itself prior to the republic seceding from Yugoslavia, so that secession would have been by mutual agreement of Bosnia's three main ethnic groups and Yugoslavia's central authorities, and thus less likely to trigger war. Ultimately, Bosnia's Muslim leaders rejected these alternatives in favor of unilateral secession – “unilateral” in the sense that it was opposed by Bosnia's substantial Serb minority and by Yugoslav central authorities, although it was supported by Bosnia's smaller Croat community. In response, Bosnia's Serbs, in conjunction with Yugoslav central institutions that were dominated by Serbs, immediately launched a brutal military campaign to capture most of Bosnia's territory and purge it of non-Serbs. Within weeks, the Serbs killed thousands – and displaced hundreds of thousands – of Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, taking control of approximately 70 percent of the republic's territory. Over the course of the full three and a half

years of war, an estimated 150,000 Bosnians were killed, mostly Muslims.¹ Remarkably, despite all of the literature on the Bosnian war, no previous account has provided an adequate explanation of the immediate trigger for this terrible violence: the decision by Bosnia's Muslim leaders to opt for unilateral secession.

Background

From the summer of 1991 through spring 1992, Bosnia's Muslim leadership confronted a fateful decision – whether or not to secede from Yugoslavia. During the preceding year, their preference clearly had been for staying within the federation of Yugoslavia if it remained unitary in one form or another. So long as the federation's two largest rival republics, Serbia and Croatia, remained in Yugoslavia, the Muslims believed Bosnia could play the role of balancer between them and thus likely retain its territorial integrity and existing autonomy. However, in June 1991, Croatia and Slovenia unilaterally seceded from Yugoslavia, prompting Belgrade's Serb-dominated central institutions, including the Yugoslav army, to respond with force. In Slovenia the war was relatively short for two reasons: the Slovenes had armed themselves heavily for war; and the republic contained few Serbs. Belgrade decided it was not worth enduring heavy casualties to recapture territory that contained so few residents seeking to stay in Yugoslavia. By contrast, Croatia contained a significant Serb minority (13 percent) and had not been able to arm itself as adequately, so Belgrade's cost-benefit calculus for war was much more favorable. The Yugoslav army, in conjunction with Serb irregulars, launched a brutal campaign that in a few weeks recaptured all major Serb-inhabited areas of Croatia – comprising about one-third of the republic's territory. The Serb offensive killed thousands, and displaced tens of thousands, of Croatian civilians.

¹ A good summary of published death estimates is contained in Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 169-71. They cite low estimates of the total death toll in the Bosnia conflict, in the range of 25,000 to 60,000, by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and by former State Department official George Kenney. By contrast, they also cite an "unclassified" CIA memorandum, which estimates 156,500 civilian deaths and 81,500 troops killed (in addition to 8,000 to 10,000 missing Bosnian Muslims from the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves) for a total of almost a quarter-million fatalities. A former Serb general in the Muslim-dominated Bosnian army provided the following death estimates: 154,000 Muslim; 72,000 Serb; 71,000 Croat; 13,000 other; for a total of 310,000. Jovan Divjak, interview with author, Sarajevo, Bosnia, October 15, 1999. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, in its 1997 Annual Report, estimated "more than 160,000 deaths, and 2.5 million refugees and displaced persons." <http://www.ihf-hr.org/ar97bos.htm> [downloaded December 17, 2001.] The International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway, estimates 150,000 civilian and military deaths. Dan Smith, personal communication, December 18, 2001.

Based on this immediately preceding history, Bosnia's Muslim leaders in summer 1991 had reason to believe that if they seceded unilaterally, their republic would suffer a fate still worse than that of Croatia. Serbs represented at least 31 percent of Bosnia's population – more than twice their proportion in Croatia – and the Bosnian government had not armed itself even as well as Croatia, let alone Slovenia. Thus, if Bosnia should secede unilaterally, Belgrade would have even greater incentive to launch a military campaign – and the republic's forces would be even less able to defend territory and civilians – than had been the case in Croatia. In other words, unilateral secession appeared a recipe for military defeat and civilian bloodbath. Accordingly, Bosnia's Muslim president sponsored negotiations with top Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav officials in mid-July 1991 to arrange the terms under which the Muslims would commit to Bosnia remaining within a rump Yugoslavia. Ten days later, the Muslims seemingly agreed briefly to the conditions of the so-called "Belgrade Initiative," but within days they renounced the agreement. Soon after, the Bosnian Muslims began clandestinely to arm themselves in preparation for possible civil war.

In the fall of 1991, a European Community panel (commonly known by the surname of its chairman, French jurist Robert Badinter) indicated that Bosnia could qualify for international recognition as an independent state if its voters approved a referendum on secession from Yugoslavia. However, Bosnia's Serbs declared they would not accept peacefully Muslim attempts to declare the independence from Yugoslavia of a unitary, centralized Bosnian state. Instead, the Serbs insisted that Bosnia be divided internally along ethnic lines prior to any secession. In January 1992, Bosnia's Muslim president briefly agreed to postpone a referendum on independence until such a constitutional reorganization could be negotiated, but soon after he withdrew his commitment. At the same time, the European Community belatedly awoke to the danger that Bosnia's unilateral secession could lead to violence worse than had just occurred in Croatia.

Accordingly, the EC sponsored negotiations among the leaders of Bosnia's three main ethnic groups to forge agreement on an ethnic division of the republic into cantons prior to the republic's secession from Yugoslavia, in order to avert armed conflict. The Bosnian Muslim leadership participated in several rounds of these negotiations and appeared to agree at least twice – in February and March 1992 – to a framework agreement for such a negotiated cantonization. (The agreement is known as the Cutileiro Plan, or Lisbon Plan, after its chief

negotiator and the site where it was first agreed.) In both cases, however, the Bosnian Muslims renounced the agreement within days. At the end of February 1992, the republic's Muslims and Croats overwhelmingly approved an independence referendum, which was boycotted by the Serbs, and in early March the Muslim-dominated government declared Bosnia independent of Yugoslavia. A week later, the United States and the EC agreed to recognize Bosnia on April 6. In the days preceding recognition, Bosnia's simmering tensions exploded into full-scale war, the brunt of which, as noted, was borne by the republic's Muslim civilians. Indeed, in the first few months of fighting, the Serbs captured more territory and killed and displaced many more civilians in Bosnia than they had in Croatia – as could have been predicted based on the Serbs' relatively greater motivation and military superiority in Bosnia. The war ultimately lasted for 3 ½ years and was only settled in November 1995 by the U.S.-mediated Dayton accords, which divided Bosnia internally along ethnic lines into a contiguous Serb republic and a Muslim-Croat federation. Ironically, this was a harder form of ethnic partition than originally had been proposed by the EC and the Bosnian Serbs as a means of averting war, but which had been rejected at the time by Bosnia's Muslims.

Testing the Theory

The tragic challenge by Bosnia's Muslims comprised two main actions: (1) rejection of the Belgrade Initiative to stay within a rump Yugoslavia; and (2) rejection of the EC's plan for ethnic cantonization of Bosnia prior to its secession from Yugoslavia, in favor of acquiring arms and unilaterally declaring independence. Process tracing reveals that these actions are explained by the third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory presented in Chapter 1. A subordinate group in Yugoslavia (Bosnia's Muslims) expected that it could attain its goal of secession at the cost of retaliatory killing against a portion of its population, and it was willing to accept that cost to attain its goal. By contrast, the first two hypotheses appear not to explain the tragic challenge in Bosnia. (These findings are summarized in Figure 2-1.)

The first hypothesis (absence of a credible deterrent threat) is ruled out because the Serbs did threaten clearly that a violent secession would be met by massive retaliation, and the Bosnian Muslims not only heard this threat but perceived it as credible. For example, during parliamentary debate on October 15, 1991, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, explicitly warned the Bosnian Muslims against unilaterally seceding from Yugoslavia: "You want to take

Bosnia down the same highway of hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are traveling. . . . the Muslim people may disappear, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war – How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia?”² Similarly, in March 1992, Karadzic publicly warned Bosnia’s Muslim-led government that if it unilaterally declared independence prior to a negotiated cantonization, it would cause “a civil war between ethnic groups and religions with hundreds of thousands dead and hundreds of towns destroyed.”³ All of the Bosnian Muslim officials interviewed for this study recall these warnings, and one official is typical in recalling that “a chill ran up my spine” when he heard the threat in parliament. Clearly, a deterrent threat was issued and received.

In addition, most Bosnian Muslim officials interviewed said they perceived the threat as credible because they knew, from the precedent of Croatia, that Serb forces were willing to target civilians. Typical is Bosnia’s first army chief of staff, Sefer Halilovic, who says he expected that unilateral secession would trigger a major Serb offensive, which he knew his own rudimentary forces were woefully unprepared to defend against. Only a few Muslim officials claim they did not expect massive Serb retaliation; interestingly, they say this was because they perceived the Serb forces to be so much stronger that they could occupy the republic without resort to much violence. This claim lacks credibility, however, because the Muslims had organized and armed militias dedicated to preventing a Serb occupation of Bosnia, which meant that the Serbs had to resort to force to take the territory. Several other Muslim officials say they hoped the Serbs would be deterred from attacking by fear of international reaction, but this was mainly a hope rather than an expectation, as discussed below in relation to the third hypothesis. By far, the prevailing consensus among the Bosnian Muslim leadership prior to secession was that the Serb threats were credible.

The second hypothesis (absence of credible reassurances) is ruled out, at least as an explanation for the first part of the challenge, because only two of all the Bosnian Muslim officials interviewed for this case attribute their rejection of the Belgrade Initiative to an expectation that the Serbs would attack regardless of whether the Muslims agreed to keep Bosnia in a rump Yugoslavia. Even if these two officials are being frank, rather than just offering a

² Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 215. A slightly different translation is contained in Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 78.

³ David Binder, “U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10.

post-hoc rationalization for their decision, such a minority viewpoint cannot account for the Muslims leadership's collective rejection of the initiative. A few other Bosnian Muslim officials say they were motivated by a lesser fear – that if they stayed in Yugoslavia the Serbs would completely disenfranchise them, as occurred in 1989 to Kosovo's ethnic Albanians, who were mainly fellow Muslims – but again this was a minority viewpoint.

Instead, most Bosnian Muslim officials say they rejected the initiative on two grounds: fear of becoming (or remaining) second-class citizens in a rump Yugoslavia; and the desire to seize a historic and fleeting opportunity to establish an independent Bosnia in which Muslims would be the largest group (and soon a majority based on demographic trends). Although this involved an element of fear, it was by no means the fear of death or forced migration, as required for the second hypothesis to be confirmed. Put simply, the Muslims did not want to be an ethnic minority in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia when they had the chance to be the dominant ethnic group in an independent Bosnia. As the scholar Vladimir Gligorov has summed up this pervasive Balkans viewpoint: "Why should I be a minority in your state when you can be a minority in mine?"⁴ Bosnia's Muslims believed the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia presented a temporary window of opportunity for Bosnia to do the same, which if not taken might be sacrificed forever. They perceived the international community as uncharacteristically and temporarily open to changes in international borders, due to the Cold War's sudden end, but expected this openness to be fleeting. Thus, the Belgrade Agreement was rejected not because Bosnia's Muslims feared violence if they stayed in Yugoslavia but rather because they sought to increase their political power by controlling a sovereign state.

By contrast, the Bosnian Muslims' subsequent rejection of the EC cantonization plan of early 1992 appears at first glance to be attributable in part to fear of impending violence. A number of Muslim officials say that by early 1992, they believed war and ethnic cleansing to be likely even if they accepted the principle of cantonization. They feared that Bosnia's Serbs would use cantonization merely as a starting point to launch ethnic cleansing and establish a contiguous, ethnically pure Serb zone that would secede from Bosnia and be annexed by Serbia. Still, most Bosnian Muslim officials also expected that cantonization might be able to avert war and yet they nevertheless rejected it. They explain this by saying that they wanted keep Bosnia whole and under Muslim political control, and believed this was achievable, albeit at the cost of

⁴ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 108.

war (as discussed below in relation to the third hypothesis). Their grounds for wanting to keep Bosnia whole, as opposed to accepting a negotiated Muslim mini-state, were varied and included the following: maximizing their future state's power, ensuring its survivability, preserving its historical borders, and maintaining its multi-ethnic character. Regardless of the Muslims' precise motivation for wanting to keep Bosnia whole, however, the second hypothesis cannot explain why they willfully rejected cantonization, which they believed offered a chance for peace, in favor of a unilateral secession that they expected to guarantee war.

Rather, the primary explanation for the tragic challenge by Bosnia's Muslims is the third hypothesis – they expected that by arming and unilaterally seceding they could achieve the independence of a unitary Bosnia at a cost in retaliatory mass killing that they found acceptable. As noted above, this hypothesis has two requirements: the subordinate group must expect that victory can be achieved at some cost in retaliatory killing; and the group must be willing to accept such killing as the cost of victory. At first blush, it may seem absurd that the Bosnian Muslims expected to prevail, given the overwhelming military superiority of Bosnian Serb forces – who were supported by Belgrade and the Yugoslav army – compared to the ragtag militia forces possessed by the Muslims in 1992. *However, the Bosnian Muslims' calculus was tipped by their hope and expectation of foreign intervention on their behalf.* They believed that if they could win international recognition of Bosnia's independence, then the international community would defend Bosnia's territorial integrity. This would completely change the power balance, because Bosnia's Serbs (even with Yugoslav support) would be no match for Bosnia's Muslims backed up by the entire international community.

Based on this calculus, Bosnia's Muslims in 1991-92 pursued international recognition of the republic's independence as the holy grail of their grand strategy. All other considerations were subordinated, which explains the nature and timing of their decisions throughout the period. For example, they refrained from declaring independence in 1991, even though Slovenia and Croatia had done so, because the international community signaled it was not yet prepared to recognize Bosnia. They engaged in EC-sponsored negotiations on cantonization of Bosnia in early 1992, despite harboring a fundamental aversion to such a compromise, because they feared that refusing to do so would label them as intransigent and thereby endanger international support for Bosnia's independence. They declared independence in March 1992, even though their preparations for war were months away from fruition, because the international community

signaled it was ready to recognize such a declaration and they feared the offer would be withdrawn if they failed to accept it immediately.

Interestingly, however, there was no consensus among Bosnia's Muslim officials on precisely how international support would tip the balance in Bosnia. A few of these officials appeared to believe that international recognition of Bosnia would deter the Serbs from resorting to violence. For example, Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic declared in an internal meeting of the ruling Muslim party, prior to the declaration of independence, that the Serbs "would never dare" to attack after Bosnia received international recognition.⁵ If this had been the prevailing view among the Muslim leaders, their tragic challenge would be explained by the first hypothesis – that is, the Serb threat lacked credibility because the Muslims expected the Serbs to be deterred by the prospect of international intervention. However, most Bosnian Muslim officials say that although they hoped the Serbs would be deterred, they did not expect this. Rather, these officials expected that their Bosnian Muslim constituents would have to fight and die against the Serbs before the international community would come to their aid.

Thus, the other essential requirement for Bosnia's tragic challenge was the *a priori* willingness of its Muslim leaders to absorb retaliatory killing of their people as a cost of attaining the independence of a unitary Bosnia. Indeed, most Bosnian officials believed that only by fighting – and initially losing – a war against the Serbs would they attract the support of the international community that was essential to victory. They declared independence in full awareness that it would trigger a war in which their populace would suffer killing and ethnic cleansing, because they expected such suffering to prompt international intervention on their behalf. Put simply, they had to lose the war initially in order to attract the international intervention necessary to ultimately win the war and establish real sovereignty.

It has long been documented that after the war began, the Bosnian Muslims persisted in fighting a losing battle in the hopes of attracting international intervention on their behalf. For example, the first commander of UN peacekeepers in Bosnia, Canadian General Lewis MacKenzie, told EC representative Lord Carrington on April 23, 1992 – barely two weeks into the war – that the Muslim-led "Bosnian Presidency was committed to coercing the international community into intervening militarily." His successor, British General Michael Rose likewise reported that Bosnia's Muslim-led government refused a cease-fire because, "if the Bosnian

⁵ Anonymous, interview with author. Sarajevo.

Army attacked and lost, the resulting images of war and suffering guaranteed support in the West for the 'victim State.'" Even James Gow, who is overtly sympathetic to the Muslims, concedes that the Muslim-led Bosnian army broke cease-fires "in the hope of provoking a U.S. intervention."⁶

However, it has not heretofore been documented that this strategy – intentionally engaging in a losing war in order to attract the international intervention necessary to win it – was Bosnia's grand strategy even before the outbreak of fighting. When the Serbs launched their military offensive in April 1992, following Bosnia's unilateral declaration of independence, the international community appeared to be shocked. But most Bosnian Muslim officials were not shocked that the superior Serb forces launched a retaliatory attack. Indeed, these early losses were all part of the Muslims' grand strategy, which the international community did not realize at the time and still has not acknowledged.

Nevertheless, there was also a major element of miscalculation by the Bosnian Muslims. They expected international intervention to be much quicker and robust than it turned out to be. As a result, the war dragged on for three and a half years – during which tens of thousands of Muslims were killed – before international military assistance and direct intervention tipped the power balance in favor of Bosnia's Muslim-led government. Even then, the Bosnian Muslims had to swallow the *de facto* partition of Bosnia in the Dayton accords because the United States threatened otherwise to withdraw its military support. In effect, despite much fighting and dying, they ultimately were compelled to accept, at least temporarily, a harder partition than they had rejected in the EC cantonization plan prior to the war.⁷

⁶ Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper: The Road to Sarajevo* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), pp. 159, 308. Mackenzie was deputy commander of UNPROFOR, but the commanding officer of the UN peacekeepers in Sarajevo. Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace: Bosnia 1994* (London: Harvill Press, 1998), p. 141. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 13. James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 96.

⁷ The Dayton accords provided for a loose confederation between two Bosnian entities, each of which is contiguous: the Muslim-Croat "Federation" and the Serb "Republika Srpska." To date, relatively few of the refugees created by "ethnic cleansing" campaigns during the war have crossed between the entities to return home, so that the war-induced ethnic homogeneity of each entity has been sustained. Moreover, the nominal joint institutions that encompass both entities under the Dayton accords have failed to function. Thus, the effect of Dayton so far has been to create a *de facto* ethnic partition. This contrasts sharply with the EC's proposed pre-war cantonization plan, which did not envision population movements, contiguous ethnic statelets, or elimination of all republic-wide institutions. Still, it remains possible that the partition-like impact of the Dayton accords gradually will be reversed. In July 2000, Bosnia's constitutional court ordered both entities to amend their constitutions to ensure the full equality of all citizens. In spring 2002, the two entities reached a compromise agreement to implement this order but so far have failed to implement it. Even if the agreement is fully implemented, Bosnia will remain less unitary administratively than it would have been under the EC's pre-war cantonization plan. For details

The Bosnian Muslims launched their tragic challenge in full awareness that it would lead to the killing of their own civilians, but they expected the political gains to be greater and the death toll to be smaller. It is impossible to know what these officials would have done had they known in advance of the higher than expected costs and lower than expected benefits of declaring independence unilaterally. In retrospect, they all say they would have made the same decision. But even if this is their sincere belief, they cannot know for sure what they would have done if they had not expected to benefit from timely humanitarian military intervention. Interestingly, the main thing these officials do say in retrospect that they would have done differently, in light of the international community's tepid and belated intervention, is to arm themselves better and nurture more international support prior to declaring independence. Thus, if not for the false hope of timely intervention, the Muslims still might have launched their challenge, but its consequences might not have been so tragic.

Figure 2-1
Bosnia: Testing Rational Deterrence Theory

Rational Hypothesis	Possible Cause of Deterrence Failure	True?	Evidence
1	Subordinate group does not expect its violent challenge to provoke retaliatory mass killing.	No	Karadzic made explicit threats, which Muslims found credible due to Serb actions in Croatian war.
2	Subordinate group expects mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge.	No	Bosnian Muslims did not expect mass killing if Bosnia remained in a rump Yugoslavia.
3	Subordinate group expects violent challenge to achieve its goal at acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.	Yes	Bosnian Muslim grand strategy was to ensure international intervention by accepting early losses.

on implementation of the agreement, see International Crisis Group, "Implementing Equality: The 'Constituent Peoples' Decision in Bosnia & Herzegovina," ICG Balkans Report No. 128, April 16, 2002, <http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=618> [downloaded April 21, 2002].

Rwanda

Because of the massive victimization of Tutsi in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, it commonly is not understood that the conflict actually was triggered by a violent challenge launched by some Tutsi against Rwanda's Hutu-controlled government. The tragic challenge was launched in 1990 by a group of Tutsi refugee warriors who invaded from Uganda and fought for more than three and a half years to seize effective control in Rwanda. The rebels knew in advance that their invasion would trigger a violent backlash against Tutsi civilians within Rwanda, as it did from the start. Moreover, as the Tutsi rebels advanced, they received increasing threats and indications that if they did not relent, a massive retaliatory killing campaign would be launched against Tutsi civilians. Nevertheless, the Tutsi rebels persisted in their military offensive and their demands for political power, refusing to make compromises with the Hutu government that might have averted massive retaliation. When the rebels finally reached a point where they were poised to seize control of the country, the Hutu government retaliated with the most efficient genocide in history – killing more than three-quarters of Rwanda's domestic Tutsi population in barely three months. Ironically, the Tutsi rebels did ultimately defeat the Hutu government by the end of those three months, but they gained control of a country whose Tutsi population largely had been exterminated. Remarkably, despite the obviously disastrous consequences of this tragic challenge, there has been no previous adequate investigation of what caused it.

Background

In colonial and pre-colonial times, Rwandan politics were dominated by the Tutsi, a group that made up only 17 percent of the population just prior to independence. Virtually all the rest of the population was Hutu, and less than one percent were aboriginal Twa. During the transition to independence starting in 1959, however, the Tutsi were abandoned by their Belgian colonial sponsors, and the Hutu seized control, mobilizing around the idea of throwing off hundreds of years of Tutsi oppression. The new Hutu rulers targeted former Tutsi officials and their supporters for retaliation, thereby compelling several thousand Tutsi to seek refuge in neighboring states.

Starting in 1961, a group of these Tutsi refugees calling themselves *inyenzi* (or “cockroaches,” to signify their persistence) attempted to return to power in Rwanda by launching attacks from bases in Uganda and Burundi. Rwanda's hard-line Hutu nationalist government

retaliated by escalating oppression of, and attacks against, Tutsi within the country. The most successful of the inyenzi attacks occurred in 1963 – when Tutsi from Burundi came within ten miles of the Rwandan capital, Kigali – but this also triggered the most intense outburst of reprisal killing against Tutsi in Rwanda. Ultimately, the government's tactics, though horrific, proved effective in reducing the incidence of inyenzi attacks, which ended in 1967. Overall, from 1959 to 1967, some 20,000 Tutsi were killed and another 200,000 Tutsi – half their population in Rwanda at the time – were driven from the country as refugees. As a result, the Tutsi percentage of Rwanda's population dropped from about 17 to 9 percent.

After the inyenzi invasions, the remaining Tutsi population of Rwanda was spared further significant outbursts of violence for the next 23 years. The only exception was one small campaign in 1973, organized by the failing regime of Rwanda's first President, who was attempting to win popular Hutu support by scapegoating the Tutsi. This renewal of ethnic hostility was short-lived, however, because the regime was overthrown in July 1973 by a Hutu army officer from northwestern Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana.

After Habyarimana seized power, Hutu from his northwestern region came to dominate Rwanda's political, military, and economic life, engendering resentment from other Hutu as well as from the Tutsi. In addition, Tutsi were subjected to quotas for education and other government benefits, in proportion to their percentage of the population, as part of an affirmative action program on behalf of the historically deprived Hutu. Furthermore, Habyarimana refused to permit the return of any of the Tutsi refugees (whose population eventually grew to many hundreds of thousands) apparently because he feared they would constitute a power base that could challenge his authority. However, Habyarimana did ensure the safety of Tutsi within Rwanda. Indeed, in the absence of any further attempted invasions by Tutsi refugees, Habyarimana prevented any significant violence against domestic Tutsi for 15 years.

In the late 1980s, Habyarimana caught wind of plans by Tutsi refugee rebels to invade from Uganda, and he sought to defuse the movement by offering to accept the return of refugees from that state. Instead of accepting or even testing that offer, however, the armed Tutsi refugees invaded from Uganda on October 1, 1990, under the banner of a party called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its military wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). The rebels were led by battle-tested soldiers who had fought with the Ugandan guerrilla Yoweri

Museveni to overthrow Uganda's government in 1986 and now were turning their efforts toward home.

Although Habyarimana previously had been a protector of the Tutsi in Rwanda, he reacted to the invasion much as his Hutu extremist predecessor had done decades earlier, by arresting politically active Tutsi in the capital, Kigali, and permitting intermittent massacres against Tutsi in the countryside. With assistance from France, Belgium, and Zaire, his army initially managed to beat back the rebels, who were poorly organized because they had not been able to form units in Uganda and then lost their top commanders in the first days of fighting. But the rebels soon regrouped and began to make steady progress in the war against the government. A repetitive pattern was established: the rebels would make military advances; a cease-fire would be agreed and negotiations initiated; the government would reject demands to hand over the bulk of political power to the rebels and their domestic allies; the government would attempt to intimidate the rebels by sponsoring a local massacre against Tutsi in Rwanda; and the rebels would react by resuming the war.

Peace talks did make progress on matters such as refugee return but bogged down over two crucial issues of power-sharing: Which parties would be represented in a transitional government before new elections? And how would the rebel and government troops be integrated into a combined army? Habyarimana and his Hutu cronies from northwestern Rwanda feared that, if the Tutsi rebels and their allies within the Rwandan opposition were allowed to dominate the transition government and army, the outcome would be essentially a negotiated coup. Under this scenario, the Hutu elite feared they would at best lose the privileges of rule, and at worst suffer deadly retribution for their violence against Tutsi during the war and their years of corruption and favoritism.

In February 1993, with negotiations stalled, Rwandan Hutu extremists perpetrated another of their periodic massacres against the Tutsi. In retaliation, the RPF launched yet another offensive. Fortified by more than two years of training and battlefield experience, the rebels had become formidable, and they made their deepest advances of the war, appearing poised to capture the capital. However, France responded by deploying a small reinforcement, which deterred the rebels from further advances and compelled another cease-fire.

Habyarimana then came under mounting international pressure to share power. Sanctions were applied or threatened by the international community, including French officials who

warned the Rwandan President that they would soon withdraw French troops, which he correctly viewed as his only protection against the rebels. In August 1993, seeing little other choice, he finally caved in on the two power-sharing provisions and signed the comprehensive Arusha accords. The RPF and its political allies – opposition parties within Rwanda that were mostly Hutu-dominated – were to be given the majority of seats in the interim cabinet and legislature preceding elections. Moreover, the rebels were to be granted 50 percent of the officer positions (and 40 percent of the enlisted ranks) in the combined army. In light of the superiority of the rebels on a man-for-man basis by this time, the military integration protocol was tantamount to a negotiated surrender of the Hutu army to the Tutsi rebels. Habyarimana's cronies felt betrayed and terrified. They immediately set out to undermine the implementation of the accords, working in conjunction with Habyarimana.

Although Habyarimana's motivation and intent at the time still remain somewhat clouded, he was clearly walking a political tightrope. He apparently perceived that it would be political suicide – if not literal suicide – either to refuse to sign the accords or actually to implement them. If he refused to sign, the international community including France had threatened to suspend economic and military assistance, which would leave his regime at the mercy of the militarily superior Tutsi rebels. But if he actually started implementing the accords, he risked being killed either by the entrenched Hutu elite, which sought to block implementation in order to preserve its power and physical security, or by the Tutsi rebel elite, which would be taking over key positions in the army and government, whence they might seek revenge for past offenses. Thus, he pursued a third, middle path: signing the accords but doing everything possible to avoid implementing them as originally intended.

UN peacekeepers arrived in late 1993 to replace French forces, as called for in the accords, but this switch only exacerbated the paranoia of the governing Hutu elite, which felt it was losing its last line of defense. Habyarimana hoped to retain power by splitting the alliance of convenience that had formed between the Tutsi rebels and the domestic Hutu opposition, attempting to persuade the latter to support him in a pan-Hutu alliance against the Tutsi. Ironically, Habyarimana was helped in this effort by the February 1993 Tutsi rebel offensive, which proved to be a tactical military success but a strategic disaster. The rebels, by advancing so close to the capital, renewed fears among the Hutu that the RPF's real goal was to conquer Rwanda exclusively for the Tutsi.

Through ethnic appeals and bribery, Habyarimana successfully coopted most of the domestic Hutu opposition and thereby obstructed implementation of the transitional power-sharing government called for in the Arusha accords. Further complicating matters, the President insisted that the power-sharing framework be modified to add an extreme Hutu nationalist party to the transitional government, the *Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique* (CDR), which the RPF refused to consider. Indeed, the Tutsi rebels resisted all demands for compromise, and instead prepared for a possible final military offensive to conquer the country.

At the same time, extreme elements within the ruling Hutu clique prepared their own "final solution" to retain power and block what they perceived as a Tutsi attempt to re-conquer Rwanda after thirty-five years of Hutu emancipation. These Hutu extremists apparently believed that by preparing to kill all of the Tutsi civilians in Rwanda they could prevent the country from being conquered by the rebels. Accordingly, they imported thousands of guns and grenades and hundreds of thousands of machetes, and transformed political party youth wings into fully fledged armed militias. To foment Hutu fear and anti-Tutsi hatred they also created a new private radio station as an alternative to the existing, somewhat more moderate government channel. Apparently they also established a clandestine network of extremists within the army to take charge when the time came. As the Tutsi rebels became aware of these activities in early 1994, they responded by training in earnest for the resumption of war, which only fed Hutu fears. This crescendo of fear was exacerbated still further in February 1994 by a wave of mutual political assassinations.

Finally, on April 6, 1994, as President Habyarimana was flying back to Rwanda from a conference in Tanzania, he was killed when his private plane was shot down by surface-to-air missiles during the approach to Kigali. Hutu extremists quickly blamed the Tutsi rebels for the attack and seized effective control of the government. Within hours, they commenced the genocide of Tutsi. Within two weeks, approximately 200,000 Tutsi were killed. The RPF turned all its energies to conquering Rwanda, refusing cease-fire offers on grounds that the genocide had to be stopped first, while the government replied that civil violence could not be stopped until there was a cease-fire in the war. Accordingly, the genocide persisted until the RPF eventually conquered most of the country after more than three months of fighting (and a belated French-led intervention gradually pacified the remaining southwest sector of the country by

letting Hutu soldiers and militia escape to neighboring Zaire). The Tutsi rebels had finally achieved their desired return to power in Kigali, but the price was a half-million dead Tutsi.

Testing the Theory

The tragic challenge by Rwanda's Tutsi rebels had two main components: (1) in 1990, the initial decision to invade from Uganda; and (2) from 1990 to 1994, repeated military offensives and refusal to compromise their demand for the lion's share of power in Rwanda, despite persistent reprisals and growing threats of retaliation against domestic Tutsi that eventually culminated in genocide. Process tracing reveals that these actions, like the tragic challenge in Bosnia, are explained by the third hypothesis: the subordinate group (the Tutsi) expected to achieve its goal (taking effective political control of the entire state) at an acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing of its population. As in Bosnia, the other two hypotheses do not appear to explain the tragic challenge in Rwanda. (These findings are summarized in Figure 2-2.)

The first hypothesis (absence of a credible deterrent threat) is ruled out because the Tutsi rebels say that prior to their invasion they anticipated their action would trigger large-scale reprisal killing against thousands of Rwandan Tutsi civilians. Indeed, the RPF even debated in advance whether this was an acceptable price to pay. Apparently, the historical precedent was so strong in Rwanda, based on the *inyenzi* experience of the 1960s, that the Tutsi rebels perceived a credible deterrent threat even before it was publicly voiced by the ruling Hutu. Subsequently, after the rebels made significant inroads into Rwanda by 1993, the Hutu regime explicitly communicated to the rebels – both via the media and in face-to-face negotiations – that it was ratcheting up significantly the extent of the threat. Most famously, after the Tutsi rebels compelled the Rwandan government to make key concessions at the Arusha negotiations, the senior Rwandan defense official and retired Hutu army colonel Theoneste Bagosora announced that he was going back home “to prepare the apocalypse.” (True to this threat, Bagosora did spearhead the genocide the next year.) As a result of these warnings, and the RPF's own intelligence gathering, the Tutsi rebels by late 1993 grew to expect that tens of thousands of domestic Tutsi civilians would be killed if they persisted in their uncompromising drive for power.

Also as in Bosnia, the second hypothesis (absence of credible reassurances) does not account for the tragic challenge in Rwanda. Tutsi had lived free of ethnic violence in Rwanda for 17 years prior to the RPF invasion, and there is no evidence they expected this to change if not for the invasion by Tutsi refugee rebels. Nor did the Tutsi refugees in Uganda, some of whom led the invasion of Rwanda, fear mass killing if they stayed in Uganda. Admittedly, the Tutsi were subject to some ethnic hostility in Uganda, but they were allies of the president Yoweri Museveni, whom they helped bring to power in 1986. This alliance meant that the late 1980s actually were the best period for Tutsi in Uganda since their arrival as refugees from Rwanda in the 1960s. Also, if the Tutsi refugees in Uganda had sought merely to return to Rwanda, they could have done so peacefully by accepting Habyarimana's belated invitation prior to the invasion. In reality, as Tutsi rebel leaders concede in interviews, they sought more than just a return to Rwanda, but also a significant share of political power there and the removal of the existing Hutu regime.

Thus, as in Bosnia, the tragic challenge is explained by the third hypothesis. The Tutsi rebels expected that their violent challenge eventually would compel the Rwandan government to cede them political power, if they were willing to accept the retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians as the cost, which they were. Indeed, the willingness to absorb large-scale killing of their own ethnic group as the cost of victory was an essential precondition for the challenge because even prior to the invasion the RPF expected that such retaliation would be the government's response. If the rebels had not been willing to absorb this cost, they would not have invaded. As noted, the RPF membership debated and voted on this precise question – whether an invasion was worth the deadly reprisals it would provoke against innocent Tutsi civilians in Rwanda – prior to launching the invasion.

Of course, the RPF did not have many members within Rwanda at the time, so that those Tutsi voting for invasion were distinct from the Tutsi civilians inside the country who would pay the price of government retaliation. Indeed, the relationship between these two groups of Tutsi was complex. Some of the refugee rebels resented or distrusted their brethren who had been able to remain behind in Rwanda for three decades and who largely refused to join the rebels during the more than three years of civil war that preceded the genocide. Meanwhile, many Tutsi in Rwanda resented their refugee brethren for invading the country and thereby provoking Hutu violence against them. However, the expatriate Tutsi were linked by family and cultural bonds

to the domestic Tutsi, whom they also viewed as their eventual base of political and military support in Rwanda. Thus, it is noteworthy that the Tutsi rebels decided consciously to sacrifice the lives of Tutsi civilians within Rwanda as the price of achieving their goals. Interestingly, a senior RPF official explained this decision matter-of-factly, stating: “You can’t make an omelet without breaking some eggs.”⁸

The third hypothesis also explains why the rebel challenge persisted even after late 1993, despite the escalation of the Hutu deterrent threat from sporadic massacres to a potential nationwide mass killing of Tutsi. The rebels were aware of this increased threat, and perceived it as credible in light of their intelligence about the Hutu regime’s acquisition of arms and training of militia. Nevertheless, the rebels persisted in their challenge because they believed that in the event of renewed hostilities, they could defeat the government more quickly than it could carry out its planned killing campaign, thus keeping the Tutsi death toll within acceptable bounds. In the event, the RPF’s offensive turned out to be slower – and the government’s genocide quicker – than the rebels had anticipated, resulting in a death toll several times higher than they had expected. Accordingly, leading rebel officials say in retrospective interviews that if they had known how events would transpire, they would have pursued an alternative strategy. Interestingly, however, all such officials say the alternative strategy should have been more aggressive, rather than more conciliatory towards the Hutu regime. The error, they say, was halting their military campaign in February 1993, when they were poised to capture the capital but chose to hold back due to French military intervention and international diplomatic pressure. In retrospect, they believe that if they had stayed the military course in early 1993, they could have conquered the country before the Hutu regime had time to organize and perpetrate the genocide. Moreover, the former rebels harbor deep resentment against the international community for urging them in 1993 to negotiate patiently with the Hutu regime rather than conquer it. This patience, they believe, gave the regime time to organize the genocide.

Thus, the role of the international community was important in Rwanda, but quite different than that in Bosnia. Unlike in Bosnia, the subordinate group leaders did not expect they would need international military intervention to defeat the government and to mitigate retaliation, because they had their own military expertise and weapons supply lines. However, the Tutsi rebels did believe they needed to stay in the good graces of the international community

⁸ C. M. Overdulve, *Rwanda: Un peuple avec une histoire* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997), p. 74.

to prevent it from intervening on behalf of Rwanda’s Hutu government. The West endorsed the rebels’ demands for the Hutu regime to give up power, which encouraged them to be uncompromising at the negotiating table, but the West also clearly conditioned this support on the rebels refraining from military conquest. Unintentionally, this combination of international pressures contributed to the eventual disastrous outcome. By lending support to rebel demands that amounted to *de facto* surrender of the government, international diplomats rendered the Hutu regime so vulnerable and terrified that it resorted to genocide in perceived self-defense. But at the same time, by pressuring the Tutsi to refrain from military solutions, the international community deterred the rebels from conquering the country in 1993, when they could have averted or at least mitigated significantly the extent of genocide. Thus, by trying to apply even-handed pressure in the name of averting ethnic violence, the international community instead drove the situation to the breaking point and helped cause the most violent outcome conceivable.

Figure 2-2
Rwanda: Testing Rational Deterrence Theory

Rational Hypothesis	Possible Cause of Deterrence Failure	True?	Evidence
1	Subordinate group does not expect its violent challenge to provoke retaliatory mass killing.	No	RPF expected 1000's killed in retaliation if it invaded, and by '93 expected up to 100,000 if it persisted.
2	Subordinate group expects mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge.	No	In Rwanda, Tutsi had been safe for 17 years, and in Uganda, Rwandan Tutsi were allied to the regime.
3	Subordinate group expects violent challenge to achieve its goal at acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.	Yes	Expected victory if French did not intervene, and voted to accept retaliatory killing as cost of victory.

Kosovo

Kosovo is a fascinating case of the dog that did not bark – or at least did not bark when it was expected to. From 1989 to 1997, Kosovo’s Albanians had far greater grievances and justification to launch a violent challenge against central authority than either the Bosnian Muslims or the Rwandan Tutsi, and yet they did not do so. Unlike in Bosnia and Rwanda, the subordinate group in Kosovo, ethnic Albanians, had been completely disenfranchised by central authorities – losing their political autonomy, being fired from state jobs *en masse*, and suffering persistent police harassment. Moreover, unlike the subordinate groups in Bosnia and Rwanda, the Albanians represented a clear majority of the population in Kosovo, some 80 to 90 percent. (By comparison, Bosnia’s Muslims were about 45 percent of the population; and Rwanda’s Tutsi were only 9 to 17 percent, depending on whether refugees were counted.) The fact that Kosovo’s Albanians refrained from violence during this period tends to disconfirm the implicit theory in the literature that discrimination and grievance are the most important determinants of tragic challenges.

In 1998, however, the Kosovo Albanians switched to violent tactics. Serbian authorities retaliated with disproportionate violence, but killed far fewer of the subordinate group (the Albanians) than had been the case in Bosnia or Rwanda. The relatively smaller retaliatory death toll is explained by two main factors: first, Serbia initially restrained itself in an effort to avoid triggering international intervention against it; second, after this self-restraint failed to forestall NATO intervention, the Serbian campaign was constrained and truncated by that intervention. (It is also possible that Serbia avoided mass killing of Albanians in favor of ethnic cleansing because it was attempting to use the outflow of refugees as a coercive weapon against neighboring countries and NATO.)⁹ Thus, the death toll in Kosovo never approached the threshold in my definition of a “tragic challenge” as set out in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, the case of Kosovo provides good cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence for when and why vulnerable subordinate groups do, or do not, launch violent challenges against dominant central authorities.

⁹ See Kelly M. Greenhill, “People Pressure: The Coercive Use of Refugees in the Kosovo Conflict,” presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, August 2000; Barry R. Posen, “The War for Kosovo: Serbia’s Political-Military Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Spring 2000).

Background

Kosovo, a province of Serbia, has been the scene of a power struggle between Serbs and Albanians for centuries, and whichever ethnic group has held power has oppressed the other. Early in the 20th century, each group represented nearly half of the province's population, but by World War II Serbs had declined to about 30 percent. After the war, Marshal Tito was generous to the ethnic Albanian portion of Kosovo's population, partly in an attempt to woo neighboring Albania to join Yugoslavia. In 1974, Kosovo was granted a high degree of autonomy within Serbia, and over time the province's ethnic demographics tilted sharply towards the Albanians for three main reasons: higher Albanian fertility rates; outmigration of Serbs caused by a combination of Kosovo's poor economy and discrimination by Albanian authorities; and immigration from Albania. As a result, by the mid-1980s, Serbs represented only about 10 percent of Kosovo's population. Where they remained, they were subject to harassment by extremist Albanians who pursued a three-part agenda: an ethnically pure province, secession from Yugoslavia, and ultimate unification with Albania.¹⁰

As Yugoslavia's central communist authority waned in the 1980s, Slobodan Milosevic came to prominence in Serbia largely on the nationalist issue of protecting Kosovo's Serbs. In 1989, he successfully pushed through reforms that revoked Kosovo's autonomy, required use of the Serbo-Croatian language in its government institutions, and removed Albanians from most government jobs, which were the only good ones in the centralized, socialist economy. In some cases, Albanians were fired immediately; in most others, they were dismissed after refusing to sign loyalty oaths to Serbia. In addition, a new Serb police force in Kosovo began to harass Albanians and commit human rights violations as it hunted separatists and re-imposed Serb dominance.

For nearly ten years under Milosevic, however, there were no attempts by Serbia either to ethnically cleanse or commit genocide against the ethnic Albanians, apparently because the province – unlike Croatia and Bosnia – did not attempt to secede forcefully from Yugoslavia, despite Belgrade's oppression being heaviest there. Instead, the Albanians, led by their charismatic leader Ibrahim Rugova and his Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) party, pursued

¹⁰ Marvine Howe, "Exodus of Serbians Stirrs Province in Yugoslavia," *New York Times*, July 12, 1982. David Binder, "In Yugoslavia, Rising Ethnic Strife Brings Fears of Worse Civil Conflict," *New York Times*, November 1, 1987.

an alternative course of passive resistance. They declared themselves independent of Serbia and established their own parallel government institutions, but refused to take up arms to establish true sovereignty. This parallel-institution strategy included boycotting Yugoslav and Serbian elections, refusing to pay taxes to Belgrade, and abandoning state schools because they required the Serbo-Croatian language and no longer taught Albanian history or culture. By 1991, Kosovo's Albanians held their own elections and established their own rudimentary institutions for education and health-care, funded by their own tax system that assessed Kosovo's Albanians in both the province and the diaspora. Though they lacked a police force or an army, and remained second-class citizens in a province where they predominated demographically, by the mid-1990s Kosovo's Albanians had re-established a degree of *de facto* autonomy.

This relatively stable situation changed in late-1997 when a fringe group of secessionist ethnic Albanians, calling themselves the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), rose to prominence by using more violent tactics.¹¹ After the rebels shot several Serb policeman, Belgrade responded by intensifying its counter-insurgency activities, including infamously the massacre in March 1998 of an extended family associated with the rebels. This crackdown backfired by galvanizing support for the rebels among both Kosovo's Albanians and international observers. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright immediately declared: "We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia."¹² In June 1998, NATO staged practice bombing raids in neighboring Albania and Macedonia, attempting to deter Milosevic from further brutalities. However, the main effect of the West's threats against Belgrade was to embolden the rebels to escalate their offensive, which only triggered an even greater retaliatory crackdown by Serb forces. Although NATO declared repeatedly that it would not serve as "the KLA's air force," the Albanian rebels believed that such

¹¹ Four possible causes for this escalation have been identified. First, during Albania's 1997 civil war, armories in that country were looted, liberating tens of thousands of small arms for the Kosovo rebels. Second, the 1995 Dayton accords which resolved the Bosnian civil war were silent on Kosovo, leading Kosovo's secessionists to grow increasingly frustrated with Rugova's pleas for patience. Third, peace in Bosnia also made available thousands of Albanian fighters, who had gone to Bosnia to fight with the Muslims, to fight in Kosovo. Fourth, the NATO air campaign against Bosnian Serb forces in Summer 1995 suggested that if the situation in Kosovo were militarized, the West would side against the Serbs. See, Stacy Sullivan, "From Brooklyn to Kosovo," *New York Times Magazine*, November 22, 1998, pp. 50-56. Chris Hedges, "Kosovo's Next Masters?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (May/June 1999), pp. 24-42. Hedges traces the KLA's first attack to May 1993, but the rebels did not emerge as a significant threat until 1997.

¹² R. Jeffrey Smith, "Yugoslavia Will 'Pay a Price,' Albright Warns," *Washington Post*, March 8, 1998.

military intervention on their behalf was inevitable if they could continue to escalate the fighting.¹³

The onset of winter and an interim agreement in October 1998 to insert international human rights monitors into Kosovo, negotiated by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke, temporarily curtailed fighting and permitted most Albanians displaced by the fighting to return home. However, by early 1999 the KLA renewed the fight and Serbian forces retaliated with major counter-offensives, which spurred the West to convene an international conference in Rambouillet, France to resolve the conflict. The United States drafted an agreement that clearly favored the Albanians and infringed on Yugoslav sovereignty in at least two ways: first, it set a course towards an independence referendum in Kosovo after three years (explicitly in initial drafts and subsequently implicitly through assurances to the Albanians); second, it granted NATO troops the right of free passage throughout all of Yugoslavia. American officials presented the agreement to Belgrade as an ultimatum, threatening to bomb Yugoslavia if it were responsible for “cratering” the negotiations by being the only side to reject the agreement.¹⁴ The rebels eventually signed the agreement but Belgrade refused. Living up to the American threat, NATO started bombing in late March 1999, expecting to compel Milosevic's quick acceptance. Instead, Belgrade responded to the bombing by unleashing a massive campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Within a few weeks, the Serbs expelled almost half of the province's Albanian population, internally displaced most of the rest, and killed thousands of rebels and Albanian civilians.

¹³ By March 1998, this phenomenon was noted by Richard Huckaby, director of the U.S. Information Agency office in Kosovo: “One of our main struggles is to convince them that we really don't support independence. . . . They just don't get it.” R. Jeffrey Smith, “U.S. Envoy Warns Serbs, Kosovo Rebels; U.S. Urges Restraint on Both Sides of Strife,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 1998, p. 21. By July 1998, a Western diplomat noted that successful Western efforts to compel Serb restraint had backfired: “Instead of calming things down and letting us figure out how to get everyone to the negotiation table, what we've done is give the Albanian fighters a feeling of euphoria. . . . This makes them bolder, and it also makes other Albanians want to join them.” Mike O'Connor, “Rebels Claim First Capture of a City in Kosovo,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1998, p. 3. In January 1999, another press report noted that “the guerrillas held onto the idealistic hope that America would inevitably support them because their struggle for independence was right and good.” An American official confirmed: “They think we support their goals.” See Michael Ignatieff, “The Dream of Albanians,” *New Yorker*, January 11, 1999. See also, Gary T. Dempsey, “Washington's Kosovo Policy,” CATO Institute, Washington, DC, October 8, 1998.

¹⁴ Charles Trueheart, “Kosovo Accord Proves Elusive,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 1998. For a critique of this strategy, see Alan J. Kuperman, “Rambouillet Requiem: Why the Talks Failed,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 1999.

After 11 weeks of NATO bombing that inflicted billions of dollars of economic damage and killed hundreds of civilians,¹⁵ Milosevic conceded to somewhat less demanding peace terms than he had rejected at Rambouillet.¹⁶ Surviving Albanian refugees returned home to Kosovo, where many of them took revenge on Serb civilians, thereby compelling most Serbs to flee the province. As a result, except for a small section in the north adjacent to the rest of Serbia, Kosovo has been transformed into a virtually pure ethnic Albanian province. Ironically, it was only with the help of NATO's humanitarian military intervention that Kosovo's extremist Albanian nationalists finally were able to achieve this, their longstanding, distinctly illiberal goal.

Testing the Theory

The third hypothesis is confirmed by events in Kosovo during both the period of passive resistance (1989-97) and that of violent challenge (1998-99). In the initial period, the causal variables for all three hypotheses of deterrence failure were absent, which is consistent with the lack of a violent challenge. In the latter period, only the causal variable for the third hypothesis had emerged, which correlates with the switch to a violent challenge. These findings are detailed below and summarized in Figures 2-3 and 2-4.)

During the initial period, the causal variable of the first hypothesis (absence of a credible deterrent threat) was not present because Kosovo's Albanians clearly perceived a credible Serbian threat to retaliate against any violent challenge. Serb authorities reinforced the credibility of this threat by cracking down disproportionately against even the smallest of

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, "New Figures on Civilian Deaths in Kosovo War," February 7, 2000. <http://www.hrw.org/press/2000/02/nato207.htm> [downloaded April 21, 2002], estimates that "about five hundred civilians died in ninety separate incidents as a result of NATO bombing in Yugoslavia." The Yugoslav government estimates the toll was between 1,200 and 5,000. NATO member states acknowledge civilian deaths in at least 20 to 30 of their attacks, but have not estimated the total number of such incidents or the total civilian death toll. See Bradley Graham, "Report Says NATO Bombing Killed 500 Civilians in Yugoslavia," *Washington Post*, February 7, 2000, p. A2.

¹⁶ The deal Milosevic signed was less demanding than that offered at Rambouillet in that it reaffirmed Yugoslavia's sovereignty over the province, abandoned the independence referendum, confined NATO troops to Kosovo, and provided for UN authorization of the occupation. The agreement was stricter than Rambouillet in demanding that all Serb forces initially depart the province – which was necessary to facilitate the return of Albanian refugees who had been cleansed during the bombing – and in permitting fewer Serb forces to remain in the long run. On this question, see a published interchange between the author and the U.S. assistant Secretary of State. Alan J. Kuperman, "Botched Diplomacy Led to War," *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 1999. James P. Rubin, "Milosevic Sabotaged U.S. Diplomacy," *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 1999. Alan J. Kuperman, "Albright Painted Milosevic Into a Corner," *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 1999.

Albanian protests. In interviews, Albanian officials report that they expected any violent challenge would be met with disproportionate retaliation by Serbian authorities. The causal variable under the second hypothesis (absence of credible reassurances) also was not present, because the province's Albanians believed they could avoid mass killing so long as they avoided violently provoking Serbian authorities. Indeed, many Albanian officials say they suspected that Serbian leaders secretly wanted them to launch a violent challenge so that Belgrade would have an excuse to retaliate massively by ethnically cleansing or killing them. Whether or not Serbian officials harbored such desires is unclear. However, this widespread belief among Albanian officials demonstrates clearly that the preconditions of the first two hypotheses initially were absent in Kosovo, just as they were in Bosnia and Rwanda.

Unlike in Bosnia and Rwanda, however, the causal variable of the third hypothesis also was absent during the initial period in Kosovo. The province's Albanian political leaders did not expect they could achieve their goal of independence by launching a violent challenge against Serbia; they did not expect they could mitigate retaliation by defeating the Serbs; and they were unwilling to absorb mass killing of their people as the cost of trying. These pessimistic expectations were driven in part by the Albanians' lack of access to weapons stocks or supply lines, in contrast to the Bosnian Muslims and the Rwandan Tutsi refugees of Uganda. Also in contrast to the Bosnian Muslims, Kosovo's lacked an offer of international recognition that they could interpret optimistically to imply protection against aggression. (The 1991 EC Badinter panel recommendations, which offered a pathway to recognition for Yugoslavia's republics, explicitly denied this pathway to Serbia's two formerly autonomous provinces, including Kosovo.) The only offer of military support was Croatia's proposal to form a military alliance against Serbia, floated in a secret 1991 meeting by a top Croatian army officer who was an ethnic Albanian from Kosovo. However, Kosovo's Albanian leaders suspected that this alliance would work only in one direction – that is, Albanians would fight and die for Croatia's independence but then be abandoned when it came time to fight for Kosovo's independence – so they declined the offer. Lacking weapons, Kosovo's Albanian leaders knew their populace was defenseless against potential Serb attacks. Accordingly, they calculated that the only way to avoid mass killing of their people was to eschew any violent challenge that might provoke the Serbs. Ibrahim Rugova succinctly explained this situation and the rationale for a passive resistance strategy in April 1992:

We are not certain how strong the Serbian military presence in the province actually is, but we do know that it is overwhelming and that we have nothing to set against the tanks and other modern weaponry in Serbian hands. We would have no chance of successfully resisting the army. In fact the Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out. We believe it is better to do nothing and stay alive than to be massacred.¹⁷

Interestingly, however, Rugova's parallel government, starting in late 1991, did secretly establish its own rudimentary defense structures and carry out some military training in neighboring Albania. By the following year, however, Serbian officials had caught wind of this effort, destroyed it, and arrested numerous implicated Albanian officials, which deterred Rugova from any further such initiatives. This episode indicates that the LDK's decision to eschew a violent challenge was not a principled pacifist stance, but rather a pragmatic strategic decision based on its lack of military resources. Had its effort to establish a clandestine military wing succeeded to the point of making independence appear attainable by force, at some human cost, it is possible that even the nominally pacifist LDK might have attempted such a violent challenge. Indeed, LDK officials say explicitly that they eschewed violence not due to any pacifist principles, but rather because they were completely unarmed and thus expected that any such challenge was doomed to fail. Thus, low expectations of success may have played a more important role in deterring Kosovo Albanians from launching a violent challenge than concerns about high human costs. If so, it would mean that the reason the conditions of the third hypothesis were unfulfilled during this period was because the goal of independence was deemed unattainable through violence at any cost, rather than because the cost of attaining it was deemed too high. However, subsequent events discussed below suggest that concerns about expected costs also may have played a role in deterring Rugova and some other LDK officials from a violent challenge. Significantly, many of these officials maintained their pacifist stance even after the violent path to independence became more plausible in 1998, apparently because of the expected civilian cost.

Rugova believed that, in the long run, demographic trends and international support could enable Kosovo's independence through peaceful means. Higher Albanian fertility rates and Serb

¹⁷ Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 264.

outmigration meant the Serb percentage of the population would continue to dwindle, gradually eroding Serbia's claim to, and interest in, sovereignty over Kosovo. The linchpin of Rugova's strategy was maintaining international support. Statesmen around the world received him with assurances of their sympathy for the plight of Kosovo's Albanians and their support for the restoration of Kosovo's autonomy, but also warned him against employing violence. In light of the weakness and vulnerability of Kosovo's Albanians, Rugova perceived this international support as his greatest asset in the drive for independence, and was convinced that such support depended on the Albanians remaining non-violent. Resorting to violence, he believed, would sacrifice the moral high-ground and thereby endanger the international support that was crucial to eventual independence. This appears to have been the primary reason he hewed to his pacifist strategy even after the violent pathway to independence became somewhat more plausible in 1997, when large numbers of inexpensive weapons suddenly became available from neighboring Albania.

Figure 2-3
Kosovo 1989-97: Testing Rational Deterrence Theory

Rational Hypothesis	Possible Cause of Deterrence Failure	True?	Evidence
1	Subordinate group does not expect its violent challenge to provoke retaliatory mass killing.	No	Albanians expected major retaliation for any violent challenge, based on past Serbian actions in Kosovo.
2	Subordinate group expects mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge.	No	Rugova and LDK believed they could avoid retaliatory mass killing by sticking to non-violent tactics.
3	Subordinate group expects violent challenge to achieve its goal at acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.	No	Did not believe they could win independence through armed conflict, and unwilling to risk high human cost.

In the second period, 1998-99, Kosovo's Albanians switched from passive resistance to a violent challenge-against Serbian authorities. Serbian deterrence, after working for nine years, suddenly failed. This switch is not explained by the first two hypotheses because their causal

variables still were not present. The first hypothesis (absence of a credible deterrent threat) cannot explain the Albanians' turn to violence because Serbia gave no indication of lifting its threat to retaliate disproportionately against such a challenge. If anything, Serbia reinforced the credibility of this threat by retaliating disproportionately in early 1998 to the first significant upsurge in attacks by the KLA. The second hypothesis (absence of credible reassurances) also cannot explain the Albanians' turn to violence because until early 1999 most Albanians still believed they could avoid Serbian retaliation by refusing to support the KLA. Although the Serbs retaliated disproportionately to KLA attacks in 1998, they targeted this retaliation relatively narrowly at villages that harbored the KLA. Such targeted retaliation credibly communicated both a deterrent threat and a reassurance: namely, entire Albanian villages would be held responsible for any violence emanating from them, but they could avoid Serbian violence entirely by refusing to harbor the KLA. This helps explain why most of Kosovo's Albanians still supported the pacifist LDK in 1998, even after the initial Serbian retaliation had killed hundreds of Albanian civilians.¹⁸

Rather, the switch to violence in Kosovo, like the tragic challenges in Bosnia and Rwanda, is explained by the third hypothesis. Albanian militants came to expect they could achieve their goal of independence through violence at an acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing of civilians. This new expectation was based on changes in three underlying variables – the expected chance of victory, the expected cost in retaliatory killing, and the willingness to accept such killing as the cost of victory.

The last of these variables (greater willingness to accept retaliatory killing as the cost of victory) was probably the least important, but nonetheless a contributing factor. After eight years of Serbian oppression, and perceiving little prospect of attaining full autonomy or independence, the Albanians had become frustrated by the LDK's pacifist strategy and thus more willing to incur the risks of a more assertive strategy. Such frustration was reinforced by the 1995 Dayton accords, which settled the Bosnian conflict and lifted some sanctions on Yugoslavia, but without relieving the plight of Albanians in Kosovo. The Albanians' willingness to pursue higher risk strategies manifested itself even before the KLA came to

¹⁸ An April 1998 poll by the US Information Agency "put Rugova's approval rating at 98 percent of the 2 million Kosovar Albanians." See, Justin Brown, "Kosovo Reacts to Serb Shells: A Tactic of Fight and Flight," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 4, 1998. Even as late as February 1999, one of the keenest observers of the Kosovo situation

prominence in 1998. First, in October 1997, a radical Albanian student movement led a confrontational protest against Serbian occupation, the first such protest in Kosovo in seven years,¹⁹ despite pleas from Rugova to call it off for fear of Serbian retaliation. Soon after, in early 1998, a major faction of the ruling LDK that favored more confrontation with Serbia attempted to seize control of the party from Rugova. When this failed, the faction quit the party rather than adhere to his pacifist line. Clearly, the growing frustration of many Albanians had made them more willing to risk violent retaliation.

However, the first two variables cited above were more decisive in the Albanians' switch to outright militancy. The Albanians came to expect that by launching a violent challenge they could defeat the Serbs, thereby attaining their goal of independence, while containing Serbian retaliation within acceptable limits. The first group of Albanians to harbor this expectation was the KLA, which came to prominence at the end of 1997, but was founded in 1993, and rooted in precursor groups stretching back to the early 1980s. Previous analyses have attributed the emergence of violence in Kosovo to the sudden availability of cheap weapons in 1997, when neighboring Albania's arsenals were flung open during that country's civil war.²⁰ The resulting flood of weapons did play a key role in the switch to violence by Kosovo's Albanians, but not in the simple way implied by such analyses. These earlier studies suggest the KLA began using the newfound weapons to kill Serbian policemen either as an act of revenge for years of oppression or because they thought they could defeat the Serbian forces with these weapons. However, interviews with KLA officials reveal the actual explanation to be far more complex. Rebel

at the time. Guy Dinmore, "Balkan mix at Kosovo peace talks," *Financial Times*, February 6, 1999, reported that despite opposition from the KLA, Rugova "enjoys wide support among his people."

¹⁹ Such confrontational mass protests had ended in early 1990, at the urging of Rugova's party and others, because they were seen as fruitless and costly. The first subsequent mass protest was in late April 1996, when 10,000 Albanian women gathered to decry the killing of an Albanian student, but this gathering was peaceful rather than confrontational. See Shkelzen Maliqi, "Broken April," reprinted in Shkelzen Maliqi, *Kosovo: Separate Worlds* (Dukagjini: Dukagjini Publishing House, 1998), pp. 143-47.

²⁰ See, for example, Chris Hedges, "Kosovo's Next Masters?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (May/June 1999), pp. 24-42, which states that "the KLA probably has 30,000 automatic weapons, made available at bargain prices after Albanian military arsenals were looted in the chaos after the spring 1997 economic meltdown." Stacy Sullivan, "From Brooklyn to Kosovo, With Love and AK-47's," *New York Times Magazine*, November 22, 1998, reports that, "people stormed military arms depots, taking anything they could get their hands on. Suddenly there were guns everywhere." She also quotes one Albanian from Kosovo as saying that, "Kalashnikovs were going for \$10 each. The villagers were giving us ammunition for free." On January 27, 1998, a NATO official was quoted as saying that the KLA was benefiting from the "wholesale transfer of weapons to Kosovo" from Albania. See, Stefan Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo: Failure of Prevention? An Analytical Documentation, 1992-1998*, ECMI Working Paper #1 (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 1998), fn 151.

leaders were not merely taking revenge, nor did they imagine that access to light weapons such as AK-47s would enable them to defeat Serbian forces equipped with tanks, heavy weapons, and combat aircraft. The rebels knew that if they fought against Serbia by themselves, they would be doomed to fail and to provoke massive retaliation against defenseless Albanian civilians in Kosovo.

The actual reason the KLA resorted to violence was that, by doing so, the rebels expected they could bring the international community into the fight on their side. Indeed, interviews reveal this had been their grand strategy for years prior to reaching prominence. The KLA's founders believed that the pacifist strategy of Rugova's LDK never could work, because the international community would not expend substantial resources to help a people who were unwilling to fight and die for their own freedom. Instead, the KLA calculated that the only way to garner international intervention to achieve Kosovo's independence would be for the province's Albanians to begin to fight and die against Serbian forces. The KLA was fully cognizant of Serbia's overwhelming military superiority and its policy of disproportionate retaliation, and therefore expected that Albanian civilians initially would bear heavy losses. But KLA officials were confident that when the international community received reports of Serbs massacring Albanians who were fighting for their freedom, it would intervene militarily on their behalf, thereby mitigating Serbian retaliation and enabling the Albanians to establish an independent Kosovo. As noted, the KLA envisioned this strategy long before 1997, but until that year lacked sufficient weapons to implement it by shooting enough Serbian police. The flood of weapons from Albania was decisive not because it raised the hopes of Kosovo's Albanians of militarily defeating the Serbs, but because it enabled the KLA rebels finally to put into action their longstanding plan to attract humanitarian military intervention on their behalf. Once they began implementing the plan in late 1997, it played out almost perfectly according to script – at least until the final act, following NATO's bombing campaign, when the international community proved reluctant to recognize formally the *de facto* independence it had created in Kosovo.

As noted, two intertwined expectations of the KLA were decisive in explaining its resort to violence: (1) independence could be achieved, and (2) retaliatory killing could be contained within acceptable limits. The first expectation clearly rested on the KLA's anticipation that it could attract international humanitarian military intervention on its behalf sufficient to defeat the

Serbs. The second expectation also was affected by the KLA's anticipation of intervention, although such anticipation may not have been crucial. In any case, given that the first expectation (victory) was an essential precondition of the violent challenge and that the KLA viewed victory on its own as impossible, its challenge clearly was rooted in the anticipation that it could, by provoking Serbian retaliation, attract humanitarian military intervention sufficient to defeat the Serbs.

Ironically, both the pacifist strategy of Rugova's LDK and the militant strategy of the KLA were predicated on the same assumption about the decisive role of the international community. Both assumed that the Albanians were too weak and vulnerable to achieve independence on their own, and could only achieve it through the intervention of the international community against Serbia. However, Rugova was convinced that the key to ensuring international support was to eschew violence, because the international community had asked him to. By contrast, the KLA believed that the key to obtaining such international support was to resort to violence, despite the rhetoric of the international community. The fact that the KLA's view proved correct has important implications for international policymakers, as discussed further in Chapter 9.

Figure 2-4
Kosovo 1998-99: Testing Rational Deterrence Theory

Rational Hypothesis	Possible Cause of Deterrence Failure	True?	Evidence
1	Subordinate group does not expect its violent challenge to provoke retaliatory mass killing.	No	Albanians still expected major retaliation for any violent challenge, and Serbs did so from first KLA attack.
2	Subordinate group expects mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge.	No	Until early 1999, Albanians expected they could avoid retaliation by not supporting the violent KLA.
3	Subordinate group expects violent challenge to achieve its goal at acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.	Yes	KLA expected its attacks to provoke Serb retaliation and thereby attract intervention, enabling independence.

As the above summary makes clear, Kosovo's Albanian political leadership was not unitary during the 10 years examined. However, this does not by itself negate the rational deterrence model, which is applicable wherever a collectivity responds *as if* it were a unitary rational actor, even if it is not. This was the case in Kosovo, where the behavior of the Albanians changed in the later period largely in response to changes in structural conditions – especially the availability of weapons but also the growing frustration with pacifism – rather than because of splits within the Albanian political community that existed throughout the decade. If weapons had not become available, it is unlikely that a full-blown violent strategy could or would have been implemented despite the existence of the KLA. Indeed, the KLA existed for many years without any appreciable impact on Kosovo's politics until the sudden flood of weapons from neighboring Albania in 1997.

Figure 2-5
Summary of Findings

Rational Hypothesis	Possible Cause of Deterrence Failure	Bosnia	Rwanda	Kosovo 1989-97	Kosovo 1998-99
1	Subordinate group does not expect its violent challenge to provoke retaliatory mass killing.	No	No	No	No
2	Subordinate group expects mass killing regardless of whether it launches a violent challenge.	No	No	No	No
3	Subordinate group expects violent challenge to achieve its goal at acceptable cost in retaliatory mass killing.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Did Violent Challenge Occur?		Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Summary and Analysis of Findings

The findings for the three cases are summarized in Figure 2-5. As is readily apparent, the causal variable of the third hypothesis is perfectly correlated with the incidence of violent challenges by vulnerable subordinate groups. In all three instances where the causal variable of this hypothesis was present, the subordinate group launched a violent challenge; in the one instance where the causal variable was absent, the subordinate group refrained from such violence. The causal variables for the other two hypotheses are not correlated with the incidence of violent challenges. Moreover, these variables were not present in any of the cases, so the two hypotheses offer no insight as to why there were any violent challenges. It is possible these hypotheses explain violent challenges in other cases, but they do not explain the three violent challenges examined in this dissertation.

The lack of evidence for the first two hypotheses in all three of the instances examined in which vulnerable groups launched violent challenges has important implications. It demonstrates that when subordinate groups launch violent challenges, they are well aware they are assuming grave risks. They expect the state to respond with massive violence, and they expect they can avoid such victimization by eschewing violence themselves. This undermines at least two popular explanations for tragic challenges. First, it belies the notion that subordinate groups rise up because they think they have nothing to lose, based on a purported expectation that the state is genocidal and eventually will kill them anyway. In reality, subordinate groups know they have much to lose by resorting to violence, yet they do so anyway because they perceive a chance to gain as well. Second, when combined with the findings on the third hypothesis, this evidence belies the implicit theory in the literature on mass killing – that subordinate groups rise up violently out of frustration, without calculating rationally their expected outcome. In reality, subordinate groups do engage in rational calculation, albeit without the benefit of perfect information, before they launch violent challenges. While the international community sincerely may be shocked when CNN broadcasts images of a subordinate group's civilians being slaughtered, the leaders of the group are not. They took actions that they expected to provoke retaliatory violence against their own people, because they decided in advance to accept such violence as the price of achieving their desired ends.

The third hypothesis clearly is confirmed, but further analysis is required to identify the specific underlying causes of the violent challenges in the cases examined. As noted in Chapter 1, the third hypothesis specifies two requirements for violent challenges: the subordinate group must expect it can win; and it must be willing to pay the expected cost of retaliatory mass killing. Process tracing of our cases, however, reveals that both factors were heavily influenced by expectations of international intervention. Indeed, in Bosnia and Kosovo, the subordinate group's expectation of victory was premised entirely on its expectation of forthcoming international humanitarian intervention, which also reduced the group's expected cost of retaliatory killing.²¹ Likewise, in Rwanda, the subordinate group's expectation of victory was premised at least in part on its expectation that the international community would support it by not intervening on behalf of the government. The second requirement – the acceptance of an expected level of civilian casualties – has two possible underlying causes: a willingness to sacrifice some number of civilians as the cost of victory; and false optimism about the number of civilians required to be sacrificed, possibly arising from false expectations about the timeliness and extent of forthcoming intervention.

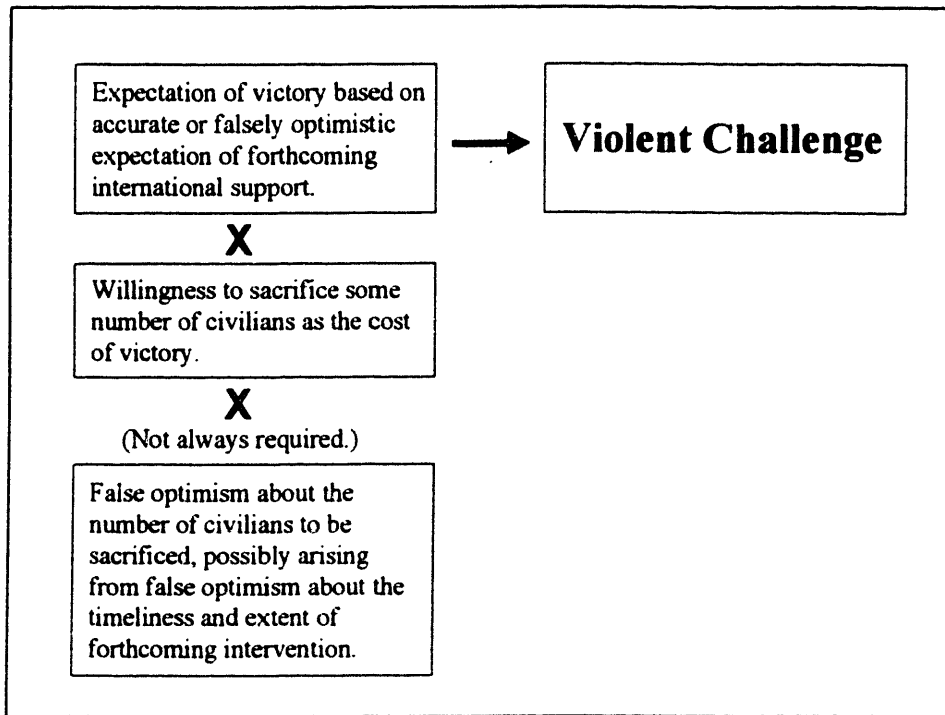
Thus, the third hypothesis can be re-framed in terms of three underlying causes of tragic challenges:

- (1) Expectation of victory based on accurate or falsely optimistic expectation of forthcoming international support (either military assistance to the subordinate group or withholding such aid from the state);
- (2) Willingness to sacrifice some number of civilians as the cost of victory; and
- (3) False optimism about the number of civilians to be sacrificed, possibly arising from false optimism about the timeliness and extent of forthcoming intervention.

The first two causes are necessary for tragic challenges, but sometimes not sufficient without the third cause, which otherwise is unnecessary, as explained below. The importance of expected international support is underscored by the fact that such expectations are essential for the first cause and potentially decisive for the third cause. Each of the causes is elaborated below based on the findings from the three cases.

²¹ One possible difference discussed later in the text is that in Kosovo the KLA intentionally provoked retaliatory killing as a tactic to attract intervention, whereas in Bosnia provoking such killing may have been viewed more as an acceptable cost than as a deliberate, instrumental tactic.

Figure 2-6
Causal Diagram of Third Hypothesis



The first cause may depend not merely on a passive expectation of international support but an active strategy by the subordinate group to win that support. Two such strategies are possible, both of which require the acquisition of arms. The choice of strategy depends on the group's military strength in relation to that of the state. If the subordinate group is much weaker, the strategy is to employ a media and diplomatic campaign to obtain international recognition of the group's right to independence, based on the claim that such recognition is the group's only hope of survival against a homicidal state. If the state is not initially killing enough members of the group to make this claim credible, the group's strategy must include forceful provocations against the state to prompt sufficiently large-scale retaliation to convince the international community of the state's malevolence. That is why acquiring arms is essential to this strategy.

On the other hand, if the subordinate group is militarily stronger than the state, it still may seek international support in order to avert foreign military intervention on behalf of the state. In this situation, the group's strategy to win international support is to pursue a negotiated outcome, using military strength as leverage in negotiations rather than as a means to outright military

victory. By so doing, the group maintains its international image as peace-loving and thereby avoids prompting the international community to intervene against it. Acquiring arms is obviously essential to this strategy as well, because the strategy presupposes that the subordinate group is militarily stronger than the state. Thus, acquiring arms is necessary under both strategies not merely to launch the challenge but also to win the support of the international community that is perceived to be essential to victory.

As noted above, the first two causes are always required for tragic challenges, while the third is required only in certain cases. This can be illustrated by a hypothetical example. Suppose a subordinate group expects that the price of achieving independence through violence will be retaliatory killing against one-thousand of its own civilians (perhaps because it expects international humanitarian intervention to limit the retaliatory killing), but it is willing to sacrifice up to 5,000 civilians, so it launches the violent challenge. Suppose further that the group does achieve independence through its violent challenge, but under three different retaliation/intervention scenarios in which the state kills either one-thousand, 5,000, or 100,000 of the group's civilians. In the first scenario there is no false optimism about casualties, so the failure of deterrence – i.e. the violent challenge – must be attributed exclusively to the first two causes. In the second scenario, there is some false optimism about casualties, but the failure of deterrence again must be attributed solely to the first two causes because even if the group had possessed perfect information about casualties it still would have launched the challenge. In the third scenario, the first two causes still are essential, because in the absence of an expectation of victory or willingness to sacrifice civilians to achieve that goal, the group would not have launched a violent challenge expected to provoke 1000 retaliatory killings. However, in this last scenario, a third important cause of the deterrence failure is the group's grossly false optimism about the ultimate civilian toll. Had the group known that the retaliatory death toll would exceed its tolerance, it would not have launched the challenge. This demonstrates that pinpointing the causes of tragic challenges requires not only identifying subordinate group expectations, but also determining the relation between those expectations and the ultimate outcome.

Unfortunately, the facts in the three violent challenges examined in this dissertation are not as clear as in the hypothetical example, so it is not possible in all cases to determine the causal importance of false optimism – about intervention, casualties, or victory. In Bosnia, Muslim leaders initially expected their armed secession to provoke up to about ten-thousand

retaliatory killings before international intervention would enable them to stop the killing and assert control over a unitary Bosnia. When the initial challenge triggered the expected retaliation but not the expected intervention, the Muslim leaders persisted in their violent challenge despite expecting this would cause still more thousands of retaliatory killings. Over the next three and a half years, they repeatedly made this decision to risk additional lives rather than concede to the more powerful Serb forces. Ultimately, the Muslim death toll climbed to approximately one order of magnitude higher than initially expected. However, it is not certain that the Muslim leaders ever viewed this ultimate toll as an acceptable cost to achieve independence, because throughout the conflict they based their decisions on expected marginal costs and benefits – that is, how many additional civilians would be killed before intervention arrived to enable victory. In addition, their perception of the plausibility and value of negotiated alternatives changed over time, so their willingness to pay additional costs fluctuated too. Moreover, the Muslims ultimately failed to achieve their expected goal – control over a unitary Bosnia – because the Dayton Agreement officially bifurcated (and unofficially trifurcated) the republic along ethnic lines, at least temporarily.

Clearly, Bosnia's Muslims initially harbored false optimism about forthcoming international intervention and therefore about both the costs and benefits of a violent challenge. However, it is impossible to know what they would have done in the absence of such false optimism. The evidence strongly suggests that in the absence of any expectation of foreign intervention, the Muslims would not have launched their violent challenge, because they would not have expected to achieve their goal. As noted above, their entire grand strategy was to wait until they obtained international support for independence before seceding unilaterally from Yugoslavia. In addition, it is possible, though less certain, that had they known intervention would come late and be insufficient to achieve their full goal, they also might not have launched the challenge. This would have depended on how such knowledge interacted with the two primary causes of tragic challenges – in other words, whether they would have been willing to view 100,000 retaliatory deaths as an acceptable cost of achieving the more limited goal of ethnic partition of Bosnia.

As noted, Muslim officials in hindsight claim that the only thing they would have done differently would have been to arm themselves better before seceding. However, even if this is now their sincere belief, they cannot know for sure how they would have acted if they had

possessed perfect information. Prior to the war the EC's Cutileiro plan offered the Muslims an ethnic division of Bosnia less harsh than what they ultimately accepted at Dayton and without the cost of tens of thousands of retaliatory deaths. Thus, it is quite plausible that the Muslims would have chosen this peaceful option over their violent challenge if they had possessed perfect information (or, more precisely, if they had not possessed over-optimistic expectations about forthcoming intervention). In sum, it would appear that false optimism played an important causal role in the Muslims' tragic challenge, but this cannot be proved definitively. Accordingly, there are only two definite causes of the tragic challenge by Bosnia's Muslim leaders. First, they expected to achieve their goal of controlling an independent unitary Bosnia, despite their military inferiority, because they expected international intervention on their behalf. Second, they decided in advance to accept the retaliatory killing of thousands of their own civilians as the cost of obtaining that goal.

In Rwanda, the Tutsi rebels likewise originally expected that their invasion would provoke retaliatory killing against approximately ten-thousand Tutsi civilians within Rwanda. However, by late 1993 and early 1994, the rebels became aware of Hutu government preparations for retaliation that the rebels expected would kill on the order of 100,000 Tutsi before they could stop it. Nevertheless, the rebels persisted with their challenge, which indicates that they viewed this higher toll as an acceptable cost to achieve their goal – at least in relation to their perceived alternative courses at this later date. As events transpired, the ultimate Tutsi death toll was a half-million, some 50 times higher than the rebels' initial expectations and five times higher than their revised expectations immediately prior to the genocide. Thus, as in Bosnia, the subordinate group clearly harbored false optimism. With the benefit of hindsight, all Tutsi leaders say they would have chosen an alternate strategy. Interestingly, however, this alternate strategy would not have been to eschew violence or concede more at the negotiating table, but rather to be more militant – launching an all-out military offensive in early 1993 to capture the country before the Hutu regime could carry out a full-blown genocide in 1994. Had the Tutsi rebels made such an earlier attempt to conquer the country, the Hutu retaliation probably would have been less organized but still likely sufficiently coherent to kill on the order of 100,000 Tutsi. The fact that the rebels' preferred strategy in retrospect would have been a violent challenge likely to provoke approximately 100,000 retaliatory killings of Tutsi is further evidence that they considered this level of retaliation an acceptable cost to achieve their goal.

Although false optimism may have affected Tutsi military strategy, and thereby contributed to an ultimately higher Tutsi death toll, such optimism does not appear to have caused the violent challenge itself. Rather, it appears that even if the rebels had possessed perfect information, they still would have launched their violent challenge, albeit with a slightly different strategy that might have reduced the ultimate death toll. Thus, the two causes of the tragic challenge were the Tutsi rebels' expectation that they could take power in Rwanda and their willingness to accept the retaliatory killing of up to one-hundred thousand Tutsi civilians as the cost of doing so.

In Kosovo, it is not clear what price the KLA expected to pay, or was willing to pay, in retaliatory violence against the province's Albanians when it launched its violent challenge against Serbia. Certainly, given the precedents in Croatia and Bosnia, and the fact that the KLA was less well armed than the secessionists in those republics, the KLA had reason to expect at least as many retaliatory killings. As events actually transpired in Kosovo, however, the Serbs initially eschewed ethnic cleansing in favor of counterinsurgency, apparently in an effort to avoid triggering NATO intervention. After the start of NATO bombing, the Serbs switched to a campaign of forced expulsion, but killed fewer civilians than in the two preceding Balkan wars. During the 11 weeks of NATO bombing, the Serbs ethnically cleansed about 850,000 Albanians (or about half their population in the province), mostly in the first few weeks, but killed only about 5,000 Albanians.²² Had the Serbs chosen to pursue mass killing rather than ethnic cleansing, they likely could have killed tens of thousands of Albanians during this same time period. There is no evidence or reason to believe that the KLA expected its violent challenge to provoke such a low death toll. Thus, false optimism about casualties does not appear to have played any role in their decision to launch the challenge. However, the KLA also did not achieve its expected goal of independence – falling short by obtaining only political autonomy secured by an international peacekeeping force – which indicates that the KLA did harbor some degree of false optimism about its victory. Nevertheless, this false optimism does not appear to have been decisive in their decision-making. The KLA probably would have launched its violent challenge even if it had known that the outcome would be not independence but only a high

²² The refugee figure is from Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), p. 241. As for deaths, by 2001, approximately 4,000 bodies had been found, and a Hague prosecutor said the confirmed count might go as high as 5,000 as mass grave sites were uncovered in Kosovo and elsewhere in Serbia. See Joanne Mariner, "Kosovo's unquiet dead," *CNN Findlaw Forum*, June 20, 2001, <http://www.cnn.com/2001/LAW/06/columns/fl.marincr.kosovo.06.20/> [downloaded November 11, 2001]; Gregory Piatt, "Kosovo death toll climbs as KFOR finds more graves," *Stars and Stripes*, August 27, 2000.

degree of autonomy, because its underlying goal was to remove Serbian domination. Thus, the KLA's violent challenge can be attributed exclusively to the first two causes – their expectation of victory (based on an expectation of international intervention) and their willingness to sacrifice several thousand civilians to achieve that goal. In Kosovo, there was no causal role for false optimism about intervention, casualties, or victory.²³

The findings for the third hypothesis in all three violent challenges are summarized in Figure 2-7. The significance of these findings, and the lessons they hold for humanitarian intervention policy, are explored further in Chapter 9.

Figure 2-7
Summary of Findings for Third Hypothesis

Cause		Bosnia	Rwanda	Kosovo
1	Expectation of victory based on accurate or falsely optimistic expectation of forthcoming international support.	Yes (Weak Group Strategy*)	Yes (Strong Group Strategy*)	Yes (Weak Group Strategy*)
2	Willingness to sacrifice some number of civilians as the cost of victory.	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	False optimism about the number of civilians to be sacrificed, possibly arising from false optimism about the timeliness and extent of forthcoming intervention.	? (False optimism existent but possibly not decisive in launching of violent challenge)	No (False optimism existent but affected only military strategy not launching of violent challenge)	No

* Weak Group Strategy – Pursue international intervention by claiming it is only defense against a homicidal central state. If necessary, provoke state retaliation to make claim credible.

* Strong Group Strategy – Use military force for bargaining leverage rather than military victory, in order to retain peaceful image and international support, and thereby block intervention on behalf of state.

** n.b.- Both strategies require acquisition of arms.

²³ It is not clear whether the KLA expected the speed and extent of the ethnic cleansing by Serb forces. However, there is no evidence that such an expectation would have deterred the Albanian rebels from launching their violent challenge.

CHAPTER 3

BOSNIA: HINT OF INTERVENTION FEEDS HUNGER FOR POWER

In retrospect, many commentators speak and write about Bosnia's 1992 unilateral secession from Yugoslavia – which triggered a bloody civil war that introduced the term “ethnic cleansing” into the modern political vernacular – as if it was inevitable.¹ However, even a cursory reading of history suggests it was not. Bosnia's Muslim leadership actively engaged in negotiations on two alternative options prior to seceding unilaterally in March-April 1992. The first alternative was to remain in a rump Yugoslavia. The second alternative was to negotiate an ethnic cantonization (or soft partition) of Bosnia itself prior to the republic seceding from Yugoslavia, so that secession would have been by mutual agreement of Bosnia's three main ethnic groups and Yugoslavia's central authorities, and thus less likely to trigger war. Ultimately, Bosnia's Muslim leaders rejected these alternatives in favor of armed unilateral secession. The secession was “armed” in that the Muslims spent six months clandestinely organizing a militia of 120,000 men – outfitted with at least 50,000 weapons – prior to seceding. The secession was “unilateral” in the sense that it was opposed by Bosnia's substantial Serb minority and by Yugoslav central authorities, although it was supported by Bosnia's smaller Croat minority. In response, Bosnia's Serbs, in conjunction with Yugoslav central institutions that were dominated by Serbs, immediately launched a brutal military campaign to capture most of Bosnia's territory and purge it of non-Serbs. Within weeks, the Serbs killed thousands – and displaced hundreds of thousands – of Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, taking control of approximately 70 percent of the republic's territory. Over the course of the full three and a half years of war, an estimated 150,000 Bosnians were killed, mostly civilian and mostly Muslim.²

¹ The formal name of the republic is Bosna i Hercegovina, or “Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Herzegovina is the area in the south and west of the republic, bordering Croatia and Montenegro. However, this dissertation uses the foreshortened “Bosnia” in its common usage to mean the entire republic. For consistency, I substitute the short form in all quotations that originally used one of the longer forms. This is not intended to slight the importance of the Herzegovina region of the republic.

² A good summary of published death estimates is contained in Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 169-71. They cite low estimates of the total death toll in the Bosnia conflict, in the range of 25,000 to 60,000, by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and by former State Department official George Kenney. By contrast, they also cite an “unclassified” CIA memorandum, which estimates 156,500 civilian deaths and 81,500 troops killed (in addition to 8,000 to 10,000 missing Bosnian Muslims from the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves) for a total of almost a quarter-million fatalities.

Remarkably, despite all of the literature on the Bosnian war, there has yet to be an adequate published explanation of the immediate trigger for this terrible violence: the decision by Bosnia's Muslim leaders to pursue armed unilateral secession.

This chapter provides background on the case and the details of the tragic challenge. The succeeding chapter then attempts to pinpoint the cause of the tragic challenge by testing the three proposed hypotheses of rational deterrence theory. In both chapters, I build on secondary sources and rely heavily on interviews with key Bosnian Muslim officials from the period, including: the eventual president (Alija Izetbegovic), vice-president (Ejup Ganic), and foreign minister (Haris Silajdzic) of independent Bosnia; the most influential member of the governing Muslim political party (Omer Behmen); a founder of the armed militias prior to independence and leading arms procurer (Hasan Cengic); the first chief of staff of the Bosnian army (Sefer Halilovic); the two men who negotiated a deal on Izetbegovic's behalf with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to stay within rump Yugoslavia in 1991 (Adil Zulfikarpasic and Muhamed Filipovic); the vice-president who negotiated a tentative cantonization deal with the Bosnian Serbs in early 1992 (Muhamed Cengic); and all three Bosnian Muslim officials who negotiated a tentative cantonization deal under European Community auspices in February 1992 (Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, in addition to Izetbegovic and Silajdzic). For additional perspective, I draw on interviews with non-Muslim officials, including the eventual president of the Bosnian Serb Republic (Biljana Plavsic) and its foreign minister (Aleksa Buha), a Croat member of the Bosnian Presidency (Stjepan Kljuic), and a Serb general in the Muslim-dominated Bosnian army (Jovan Divjak).

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five parts. First, I provide an overview of the case, including the history of Yugoslavia, its disintegration starting in the late 1980s, the initial secessions of Slovenia and Croatia, and finally Bosnia's secession and the resulting three and a half years of war. Second, I detail the Bosnian Muslims' grand strategy that steadily guided their decision-making throughout the tragic challenge, and I attempt to reconcile this with the seemingly erratic stances taken over time by their president, Alija Izetbegovic. Third, I detail

A former Serb general in the Muslim-dominated Bosnian army provided the following death estimates: 154,000 Muslim; 72,000 Serb; 71,000 Croat; 13,000 other; for a total of 310,000. Jovan Divjak, interview with author, Sarajevo, Bosnia, October 15, 1999. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, in its 1997 Annual Report, estimated "more than 160,000 deaths, and 2.5 million refugees and displaced persons." [<http://www.ihf-hr.org/ar97bos.htm>, downloaded December 17, 2001.] The International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway, estimates 150,000 civilian and military deaths. Dan Smith, personal communication, December 18, 2001.

the Bosnian Muslims' pre-independence military preparations, which were an integral part of their grand strategy. Fourth, I detail the first part of the tragic challenge: the Bosnian Muslims' rejection of an agreement in July 1991 that they themselves had initiated to stay within a rump Yugoslavia and that likely could have averted the outbreak of violence. Lastly, I detail the second part of the tragic challenge: the Bosnian Muslims' rejection in early 1992 of an EC-sponsored plan – which the Muslims initially had accepted and which might have averted war – to cantonize Bosnia along ethnic lines prior to secession, and their decision instead to pursue unilateral secession.

Historical Overview

Yugoslavia was created in 1918, in the wake of World War I, and initially dubbed the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The new state combined the kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro – which had gained its independence from the declining Ottoman empire in 1878 and grown to incorporate Macedonia in 1912 – with the south slavic lands that had been part of the now defunct Austro-Hungarian empire, including Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia. The two halves of the new state had fought on opposite sides in the war, and because the Serbs were among the victorious allies and represented the largest ethnic group in the new state, they came to dominate. The capital was established in the Serb capital of Belgrade, and in 1921 a new constitution established a centralized form of government that inherently favored the more numerous Serbs over the smaller minority groups. Resentment of Serb dominance grew, especially among the Croats, who were the state's second largest group and who demanded a federal system that would give them more autonomy. In 1928, Serb extremists assassinated the head of the Croatian nationalist party. The following year, the king (a Serb) attempted to end ethnic divisiveness by seizing unitary control, renaming the state the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and drawing new internal boundaries that cut across traditional national regions. To further this effort, two years later, he banned ethnic-oriented political parties. However, the effort failed, as dramatically underscored by the assassination of the king in 1934 at the hands of Croat and Macedonian extremists. Not until August 1939, ironically just on the eve of World War II, was agreement reached to satisfy the demands of the Croats by giving them greater regional autonomy. This deal created its own problems, however, because it left Yugoslavia's other

smaller minorities dissatisfied, and it facilitated Croatian discrimination against Serbs who were a quarter of that region's population.³

World War II gave rise to ethnic violence in Yugoslavia so intense that its memory played a powerful role five decades later. The axis powers occupied the country, partitioned it, and allied themselves with local ultra-nationalists who murdered and oppressed Serbs and other minorities. Most vicious were the *Ustashe* forces of the new Independent State of Croatia who murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbs and tens of thousands of Jews. (The Croatian state included most of Bosnia, and its forces included many Muslims.) Serb nationalist *Chetnik* forces retaliated, though to a lesser degree. In Bosnia, the fighting killed approximately 200,000 Serbs; 80,000 Muslims; and 80,000 Croats. Ultimately, successful resistance to the axis occupation was led by the communist partisan forces of Josip Broz Tito, who were predominantly Serb but included members of all ethnic groups, supported by the western allied powers.⁴

Following the war, Tito's communists established the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, comprising six republics: Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Serbia, the last of which contained the two semi-autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Tito's wartime rhetoric promised that communism would quickly end Yugoslavia's internecine ethnic conflict. In reality, over the next 35 years, Tito never fully succeeded in his strategy of forging a common Yugoslav identity by appeasing national aspirations, despite experimenting with a variety of federal constitutional structures, ranging from highly centralized to virtually confederal. Complicating these efforts was Yugoslavia's intermingled ethnic demography. All of the republics and provinces except Slovenia contained significant populations of more than one ethnic group, so that ethnic tensions existed not just between the various republics and provinces, but also within them. Accordingly, any effort to appease one republic's national aspirations by devolving power to it from the center inevitably sparked opposition from that republic's minorities who depended on central authority to assure their rights.⁵ Nevertheless, Tito somehow managed to hold Yugoslavia together by a combination of his enormous legitimacy, intolerance for suspected secessionists, and constraints on Serbia and

³ Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 13-19. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 20-21, characterize the 1939 arrangement as a *de facto* partition of Yugoslavia into Croatia and greater Serbia.

⁴ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 21-23.

⁵ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 24-27.

the Serbs, which as the largest republic and ethnic group always potentially threatened to intimidate the other republics and ethnic minorities.

A series of events in the 1980s exacerbated Yugoslavia's inherent centrifugal tendencies. First, Tito died in 1980. Because no other individual duplicated his legitimacy and reputation as an even-handed broker between the republics, he was replaced by a rotating presidency and key decisions were based on the votes of eight representatives – one from each republic and province. This raised risks of either gridlock or domination of some republics by others.⁶ Second, Yugoslavia's economy declined rapidly in the mid-1980s, exacerbated first by its large foreign debt and subsequently by the domestic fiscal constraints imposed by international financial institutions.⁷ Declining levels of absolute prosperity triggered increasing focus on the relative wealth of the republics. Slovenia and Croatia were the most industrialized and wealthy republics in Yugoslavia, and they increasingly resented having to subsidize the other republics, which needed such transfer payments more than ever.⁸ Third, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequent disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union gave rise to democratization and nationalism throughout Eastern Europe.⁹ In Yugoslavia, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic exploited this new potential for populist nationalism in order to take political control of Serbia's smaller sister republic, Montenegro, and Serbia's two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo, including revoking the autonomy of the provinces. (For more detail on this process in Kosovo, see Chapter 7.) This gave Milosevic control over four of the eight votes in Yugoslavia's collective presidency, which resurrected fears of Serbian dominance. Such fear led to gridlock of the federal government and a constitutional crisis.¹⁰

⁶ Milosevic summed up the situation in July 1989: "Even before his death the system didn't function, Tito functioned. After his death, nothing has functioned, and nobody has been able to reach agreement on anything." Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 53.

⁷ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995).

⁸ For example, Slovenia had 8 percent of the population but contributed over a quarter of the federal budget and 17 to 19 percent of the Federal Fund for Underdeveloped Regions. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 59.

⁹ James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 20, argues that the fall of the Berlin Wall also lifted the lid on nascent ethno-nationalism in Yugoslavia because "during the Cold War the threat of Soviet annexation might always discipline fractious republican leaders."

¹⁰ He successfully installed allies in Vojvodina following the Yogurt Revolution of October 5, 1988; Kosovo in November 1988; and Montenegro in January 1989. In March 1989, Serbia enacted constitutional amendments that formally revoked the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo, giving Milosevic *de jure* control of three votes in the Yugoslav presidency, while his allies in Montenegro provided a dependable fourth. In December 1989, Milosevic formally became president of Serbia. However, Milosevic was no nationalist, but rather "he was instrumentalizing the Serbian issue for authoritarian and careerist ends." Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*

Slovenia and Croatia Opt for Secession

By 1990, Slovenia and Croatia began to consider the option of secession. They resented the economic drain of the other republics, could no longer turn to Tito for help, and saw little chance for federal redress so long as Milosevic controlled half the votes in the presidency. In September 1989, Slovenia changed its constitution to explicitly establish a right of secession from Yugoslavia, and republic officials harshly criticized Serbia for its revocation of Kosovo's autonomy. Serbia retaliated in December 1989 by imposing an economic boycott on Slovenia. In January 1990, at the 14th congress of Yugoslavia's communist party, the Slovenian branch walked out when its demands for greater regional autonomy were rejected, and the Croatians followed, effectively ending the federation-wide party. In April 1990, Slovenia and Croatia held the first democratic elections in Yugoslavia since 1938, and the victors ran on pledges to establish the sovereignty of their republics and transform Yugoslavia into a loose confederation. Soon after, Slovenia halted most of its transfer payments to the federal government. Then, in December 1990, Slovenia held a plebiscite that supported secession if necessary to establish sovereignty, and Croatia adopted a new constitution with an explicit right of secession. In February 1991, both republics annulled all federal laws pertaining to them.¹¹

At the same time, a tense competition was raging for control of military forces in Slovenia and Croatia that potentially could enable, or prevent, armed secession. The Yugoslav army was a federal institution dominated by Serbs and thus committed for several reasons to the preservation of a unitary state, but each republic also had its own "territorial defense forces" (TDF) – reserve militia originally established as part of Yugoslavia's defense-in-depth strategy against invasion. As early as April 1990, the army sought to preempt armed unilateral secession by secretly collecting the weapons belonging to the two republics' militias. In Slovenia, however, republic officials caught wind of the plan and interrupted it, and also began secretly to import arms. Belgrade responded in September 1990 by reasserting federal control over Slovenia's militias and sending federal police to occupy their headquarters, but Slovenia took back full control in December 1990. Croatia did not act quickly enough to prevent the federal

(New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 59-64, 73, 78. Svetozar Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), p. 120.

¹¹ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 62, 84, 88-102, 178. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 78-80, 90.

takeover of its militias, and so instead converted its police into a defense force; it also clandestinely imported weapons, although less rapidly than Slovenia. The federal presidency responded in January 1991 by demanding that all non-federal troops be disbanded and their weapons surrendered to the army. Croatia formally agreed but failed to comply.¹²

The struggle for Yugoslavia's future was epitomized by three competing constitutional proposals that became the focus of debate in late 1990. Slovenia and Croatia proposed transforming Yugoslavia into a loose confederation tied together by little more than a customs union and common market – *de facto* independence for all republics.¹³ Serbia and Montenegro favored continuation of a centralized federation. Bosnia and Macedonia, in the wake of their own republic-wide democratic elections in late fall 1990, supported a compromise intended to keep Yugoslavia together while avoiding civil war: an “asymmetric federation” in which each republic would decide how much federal authority to accept.¹⁴ The hope was that Serbia could be satisfied by fairly strong federal control over only four republics, while the other two republics (Slovenia and Croatia) would be willing to accept nominal federal authority so long as they could reduce it to a bare minimum. Bosnian officials especially were eager for this compromise in order to avert the tough decision they would face if Croatia and Slovenia seceded – that is, whether Bosnia too should secede and risk war or stay part of rump Yugoslavia and risk

¹² Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 184-90. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 105-109. Slovenia began secretly importing small arms in May 1990 and heavy weapons in December 1990.

¹³ Stipe Mesic, the Croatian representative on the Yugoslav presidency, later admitted: “Tudjman did not propose a confederation because a confederation was our objective. Of course not, a confederation was for us a means to achieve a state.” Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 117.

¹⁴ By February 1992, Macedonian president Gligorov was less enthusiastic than Bosnian president Izetbegovic for the strong federal control that would remain on their republics under the compromise. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 201-202.

Serbian domination in the absence of the counter-balance provided by Croatia.¹⁵ However, the compromise proved unacceptable to either of the other contending camps.¹⁶

Slovenia and Croatia moved inexorably toward secession. As late as March 1991, Milosevic still had some hope that the federal army would preempt this outcome by forcibly disarming the two republics. However, because the army repeatedly proved unwilling to do so, he had begun by January 1991 to view some sort of dissolution of Yugoslavia as likely unavoidable.¹⁷ Milosevic insisted, however, that secession would be acceptable only if republic borders were redrawn to account for ethnic demography. Of most immediate concern were Croatia's minority Serbs, who feared oppression if the republic became independent, because they no longer would enjoy protection from Belgrade.¹⁸ These fears were exacerbated by the

¹⁵ Izetbegovic compared the choice between seceding and staying within a rump Yugoslavia to "the choice between leukemia and a brain tumor." Ejub Stitkovic and Jasminka Udovicki. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Second War" in *Yugoslavia's Ethnic Nightmare* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1995), p. 166. According to some reports, Izetbegovic urged the international community not to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia as late as November 1991, in a meeting with German officials in Bonn. See, John Newhouse, "The Diplomatic Round – Dodging the Problem," *New Yorker*, Aug. 24, 1992. However, this is disputed by Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 1999), pp. 173, 176, which claims that Izetbegovic did not follow through on his plans to express such opposition in that meeting with German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. However, Zimmermann confirms that Izetbegovic told him in October 1991 that the West must not recognize Slovenia and Croatia.

¹⁶ Slovenia and Croatia were unwilling to surrender any of their sovereignty to Serbia, and Serbia was unwilling to surrender Yugoslav sovereignty over Serb regions of Croatia. Ironically, the proposal for an asymmetric federation originally was made in 1989 by Slovenia. It was immediately rejected in September 1989 by Serbia. By 1991, the proposal was no longer acceptable to Slovenia. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 75-76, 148.

¹⁷ Milosevic had first tentatively arranged for federal army intervention in Slovenia as early as September 1989, in response to the republic's constitutional amendments asserting a right of secession, but the army demurred at the time. Subsequently, the federal defense minister, General Kadijevic, threatened publicly in April 1990 to intervene in Slovenia to prevent secession, but failed to do so. In December 1990, Kadijevic likewise threatened that the federal army would disarm Croatia's police force, but he did not, in part because U.S. Ambassador Warren Zimmermann warned Belgrade not to. In March 1991, Kadijevic once more tentatively agreed with Serbian leaders to intervene preventively in Slovenia, but again backed down when he failed to win support of the Yugoslav presidency for the declaration of a state of emergency. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 75-76, 88-89, 108-109, 112-17, 126-27. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 203-204.

¹⁸ On March 18, 1991, he told a public meeting of mayors that: "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." The federal army also began to come around to this position, as described by Borisav Jovic, the Serbian representative to the Yugoslav presidency: "The army started changing its opinion. It realized that the only role that it had at that time, was to protect that part of Yugoslavia where the people saw it as their own army, where they did not have to fight with the people. Basically that is the line of the Serb territory in Croatia." Yugoslav Defense Minister Kadijevic later wrote that the army's mission switched to preserving a "new Yugoslavia composed of those peoples who wanted to live together in it and who would not allow the disintegration of such a Yugoslavia." Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 131, 145. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 33. Jovic reveals in his own memoirs that Milosevic had settled on this strategy by January 1991: "He [Milosevic] suggests

new Croatian government's provocative policies, which included resurrecting the symbols of the *Ustashe* regime that had killed hundreds of thousands of Serbs during World War II. In addition, in late 1990, the Croatian authorities forced Serbs to sign loyalty oaths and in some cases fired them *en masse*.¹⁹

As Croatia moved towards secession, its Serbs armed themselves with assistance from local army barracks, declared autonomy in regions where they were highly concentrated, and skirmished with the republic's forces, sometimes spurring the intervention of the federal army. In May 1991, Croatia's voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum on independence, but its Serb regions boycotted and instead approved their own referendum to secede from the republic and unite with Serbia. Milosevic's stance likewise was that Croatia was free to secede, but only if its Serb areas remained part of Yugoslavia, which was unacceptable to Croatian President Franjo Tudjman. On May 15, Serbia blocked the scheduled rotation of Yugoslavia's presidency to its Croatian representative – alleging that he sought to destroy the federation – and directed the army to protect Serbs in Croatia. Despite their disagreements about Croatia, however, Milosevic and Tudjman apparently shared a vision for Bosnia. Meeting in March 1991 on their border in Karadjordjevo, the two leaders reportedly agreed secretly that if Yugoslavia disintegrated, Bosnia should be divided between Serbia and Croatia.²⁰

that we should take action as soon as possible. but only in Croatia, leave Slovenia alone, and in Croatia only where Serbs live, if there is conflict, and there will be conflict. [He also suggests] that we limit things territorially and avoid spreading [our] activities all over the 'democratized' territories but we should render them incapable of fighting against the Serbian people who do not wish to tolerate the [Croatian Fascist] Ustasha regime." Quoted in Filip Svarm, "Kill, Then Tell," *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (February 1998), p. 28.

¹⁹ Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 90. Croatian officials also "changed the names of places, institutions, streets, etc., in the spirit of nationalistic, even Ustashi [sic], tradition; Serbs were dismissed from their jobs; their expulsion from Croatia ('ethnic cleansing') was tolerated and even encouraged;" attempts were made to change the composition of police forces in Serbs areas; and plans were designed for the cleansing or killing of the Serbs in Croatia.

²⁰ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 203-15. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 92-104, 108, 117, 132, 137-46, 172. Adil Zulfikarpasic, in dialogue with Milovan Djilas and Nadezda Gace, *The Bosniak*, (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1998), p. 157. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 51. Milosevic denies that a deal on Bosnia was struck at Karadjordjevo. After EC intervention in late June, Milosevic agreed to permit Mesic to assume leadership of the presidency and to return the army to its barracks, on condition that the declarations of independence were suspended for three months. However, Mesic could not be appointed as planned on June 29, because Slovenia refused to send its representative to attend the meeting, claiming no longer to be part of the federation. Mesic finally was allowed to take up the post of president in July, but when the war in Croatia started soon after, he was replaced by Montenegro's representative to the presidency.

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia and Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia.²¹ The federal army responded with force, but in Slovenia it conducted only a half-hearted, ten-day, unsuccessful war because of two factors: the wealthy Slovenians had armed themselves heavily; and the republic contained few Serbs or other minorities opposing secession, so Yugoslavia's dominant Serbian republic had little motivation to fight to retain it in the federation.²² Croatia was a different story. It contained 13 percent Serbs, who had armed themselves and voted virtually unanimously to remain in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Croatia had been less successful than Slovenia in importing arms and converting its militia and police into a true defense force. Thus, in the wake of Croatia's declaration of independence, the federal army joined with local Serb forces and within five months captured control of essentially all areas of Serb demographic concentration – approximately one-third of the republic's territory – at a toll of 10,000 dead, 30,000 wounded, and hundreds of thousands displaced, mostly ethnic Croats. The military offensive was notorious internationally for its barbarity – especially in Vukovar where both sides committed atrocities and victorious Serb paramilitaries succeeded in carrying out extensive ethnic cleansing, and in the medieval coastal city of Dubrovnik where the army shelled historic buildings.²³

²¹ The two republics formally used the term "disassociation" rather than secession, based on their claim that Yugoslavia had always been a voluntary union of nations. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 167.

²² The army had prepared a back-up plan for a full-blown war against Slovenia, but decided against it. Instead, the army deployed minimal forces in the hopes the Slovenes would permit them to retake control of border crossings, a seaport, and an airport. However, Slovene forces attacked the army. On the third day of the war, Milosevic and Jovic decided against escalating to pursue victory, because there were no Serbs or others in Slovenia who wanted to remain in Yugoslavia. The war was over in 10 days, and the army withdrew within a month. Yugoslav commander Veljko Kadijevic later wrote that the army switched its goal to fighting for the borders of a "new Yugoslavia composed of those peoples who wanted to live together in it and who would not allow the disintegration of such a Yugoslavia." Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 154-61. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 33.

²³ Tudjman seceded – even though he knew his forces were not yet prepared to take on the federal army and local Serb forces – in order "to avoid being left behind" when Slovenia seceded, according to Silber and Little. Subsequently, during the first two months of the army offensive, Tudjman refused to fully mobilize his forces because he argued that, again in the words of Silber and Little, "Croatia's future depended not on defeating the Serbs militarily, but on winning international recognition; a declaration of war would bring universal condemnation from the democratic world; it would be suicide for his fledgling state." In addition, the EC had negotiated a 90-day moratorium on further independence declarations, which was not set to expire until October 8, 1991. (Tudjman later revealed that this grand strategy of courting international support had been his plan since 1990. In that year, he rejected a proposal from his defense minister to forcibly disarm the federal army in Croatia because "it would be political suicide for democratic Croatia. . . . [W]e would have been condemned by the world as outlaw secessionists who wanted to overthrow the constitutional system.") In the 1991 Croatian war, Milosevic halted the federal army offensive after capture of the Serb territories, rather than attempting to capture all of Croatia, because by this point he had reduced his goals to redrawing republic borders, primarily to include Serb areas seeking Belgrade's protection. One exception was Dubrovnik, which the Serbs targeted probably either because it was seen as a valuable coastal city or in retaliation for Croatian blockading of Yugoslav army barracks, rather than to protect Serbs, who were only seven percent of the city's population. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp.

Throughout the second half of 1991, the European Community failed in several attempts to broker a comprehensive peace in Yugoslavia, because its approach required Serbia to consent to the dissolution of the federation along existing republic borders, which Belgrade had ruled out from the start. By the first weeks of 1992, however, the international community did successfully employ two major initiatives to formally halt Croatia's fighting, which already had diminished considerably after Serb and federal army forces gained control of Serb-concentrated areas and cleansed them of ethnic Croats.²⁴ First, the European Community, at German insistence, recognized the independence of both seceding republics. The legal rationale for this step ostensibly was established by the EC's hastily organized Badinter panel, which laid out a series of guidelines for recognition of the independence of the Yugoslav republics, depending in part on whether they had held referenda on independence.²⁵ Second, the United Nations agreed to deploy peacekeepers to Croatia that would freeze the *de facto* partition between Serbs and Croats. Croatia acquiesced to the deployment as a means of preventing any further territorial losses. Serbia and the federal army acquiesced due to international pressure and the expectation that UN peacekeepers would effectively lock in their gains in Croatia, at least temporarily, and

109, 165, 170, 182, 186-88. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 229-30. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 56. Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, pp. 167-68, 171, 195, 199, 236, asserts that Croatia's strategy was to provoke the Yugoslav army into abuses in order to win international recognition and support for Croatia as the perceived underdog. As evidence, he claims that most cease fires in the Croatian war were broken by the Croatian side, which perceived that peace would undercut prospects for international recognition. He claims that Croatian forces ignited old tires inside the walls of Dubrovnik to produce black smoke and give the impression that the town was burning due to the Yugoslav army assault. By this logic, the Croats had to lose in the short run in order to win in the long run: "The battle for Vukovar went a long way towards swinging international opinion in Croatia's favour. In losing the town, Croatia came much closer to winning independence." He estimates that the Croatian war killed 6-30,000 and wounded 25-100,000.

²⁴ Yugoslavia's former ambassador to the EC, Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, p. 172, confirms that the Yugoslav army's successful military campaign in Croatia, which established Yugoslav control over all major Serb areas and a *de facto* partition of the province, is what enabled Belgrade to agree to a cease-fire.

²⁵ The Badinter commission was established in November 1991. The European Community voted in mid-December to invite each of the former republics to apply for recognition within a week, planning to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia the following month. Germany preemptively recognized the two republics on December 18, 1991. Four republics applied to the EC for recognition: these two plus Bosnia and Macedonia. (The EC rejected applications from Kosovo's Albanians and Croatia's Serbs on grounds they did not represent republics.) In January, the Badinter commission reported that of the four republics, only Slovenia and Macedonia met its standard for recognition. (Despite this, it recommended Croatia for recognition, noting with reservation that the republic had failed to enact promised legal protections.) However, the EC then recognized only Slovenia and Croatia, as it originally had planned. Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 199-201. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 238-40. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 96. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 77-78.

thereby free Serb and federal forces for other tasks, including potential coercion or warfare in Bosnia.²⁶

Bosnia

With Slovenia fully independent and Croatia temporarily resolved, the attention of Belgrade and the international community now turned to Bosnia. In reality, however, Bosnia's leaders had been anguishing and maneuvering over their republic's fate for more than a year. The republic held its first democratic elections in late 1990 with the populace voting closely along ethnic lines. The republic's population was 44 percent Muslim, 31 percent Serb, 17 percent Croat, and 6 percent Yugoslav (a self-identification adopted by those either of mixed parentage or who wished to make a strong statement favoring the federation's continued unity).²⁷ In the elections, the three leading ethnic nationalist parties captured 84 percent of the seats – the Muslim SDA 34 percent, the Serb SDS 30 percent, and the Croat HDZ 18 percent. The other, pan-ethnic parties won support mainly from the minority of Muslims who opposed the SDA's ethno-nationalist tilt, as well as from self-identified "Yugoslavs" (who were heavily Serb). Building on the federal model, a seven-member "presidency" was established comprising two members each from the ethnic parties, and a "Yugoslav" (who actually was also a Muslim nationalist who later joined the SDA). The head of the Muslim party, Alija Izetbegovic, was named President of Bosnia, while a Serb was named speaker of the parliament, and a Croat prime minister.²⁸

²⁶ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 197-98, 204. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 91. Milosevic decided in principle to accept UN peacekeepers in October 1991. The rump Yugoslav presidency sent a letter to the UN on November 9, 1991, indicating support for a peacekeeping force. Jovic recalls: "We saw the danger – when Croatia would be recognized, which we realized would happen, the JNA would be regarded as a foreign army invading another country. So we had better get the UN troops in early to protect the Serbs." UN negotiator Cyrus Vance struck a deal with Tudjman and Milosevic in early December 1991; the UN Security Council authorized resolution 743 on February 14, 1992; and the peacekeepers began deploying on March 8, 1992. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 65, notes that another incentive for Milosevic was the promise that the rump Yugoslavia would be recognized as the legal successor state of the disintegrating Yugoslavia.

²⁷ These figures are from the 1991 census. Until the late 1960s, Serbs had been the majority in Bosnia. For example, in 1953, the figures were Serbs 44%, Muslims 31%, and Croats 23%. After that, the proportion of Serbs and Croats declined steadily due to a combination of outmigration of these groups and the higher fertility of the Muslims. Serbs tended to be rural, and Muslims urban, so that even in 1991, the minority Serbs inhabited 56 percent of the land of Bosnia. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 26-8.

²⁸ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 210-11. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 139, 146-47. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 48. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, pp. 146, 156. Robert M. Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," *Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1998), p. 55. Cabinet ministries were also divided – ten for the SDA, seven for the SDS, and five for HDZ. The three nationalist parties made an informal

Figure 3-1
Bosnians Vote Along Ethnic Lines in First Democratic Election

1991 Census		1990 Elections	
Nationality	Percentage		Political Party
Muslim	44	34	Muslim SDA
Serb	31	30	Serb SDS
Croat	17	18	Croat HDZ
Yugoslav	6	18	Other

From the summer of 1991 through spring 1992, Bosnia's Muslim leaders confronted a fateful decision: whether or not to secede from Yugoslavia and, if so, how and when. During the preceding year, their preference clearly had been for staying within the Yugoslav federation if it remained unitary in one form or another. The Muslims believed that so long as the federation's two largest rival republics, Serbia and Croatia, remained in Yugoslavia, Bosnia could play the role of balancer between them and retain its territorial integrity and existing autonomy. By July 1991, however, this option was ruled out, as Belgrade conceded the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, and the federal army fought only to ensure that Serb areas of Croatia (cleansed of most ethnic Croats) remained in Yugoslavia.

Based on these facts, Bosnia's Muslim leaders in summer 1991 had reason to believe that if they seceded unilaterally, their republic would suffer a fate still worse than that of Croatia. Serbs represented at least 31 percent of Bosnia's population – more than twice their proportion in Croatia – and the Muslim-led Bosnian government had not armed itself even as well as Croatia, let alone Slovenia. Moreover, Bosnian Serbs lived in rural rather than urban areas, so they were the predominant ethnic group on half or more of the republic's territory. Thus, if Bosnia should secede unilaterally, Belgrade would have even greater incentive to launch a military campaign to redraw borders and perpetrate ethnic cleansing – and the republic's forces would be even less

agreement prior to the election to support each other in the vote – by urging voters to support the nationalist party of their choice rather than any of the pan-ethnic parties – and then to divide power afterwards. Even in the absence of such an agreement, however, it is likely that the ethnic parties would have triumphed. Interestingly, in Bosnia's only previous competitive elections, in 1910 and the 1920s, ethnic nationalist parties similarly garnered most of the vote. In 1990, the two main non-nationalist parties were the reformed communists (the League of Communists – Social Democratic Party) and the Alliance of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia, which supported efforts to democratize but preserve the Yugoslav federation.

able to defend territory and civilians – than had been the case in Croatia.²⁹ In other words, unilateral secession appeared a recipe for military defeat and civilian bloodbath.

Accordingly, Bosnia's Muslim leaders explored two alternatives to unilateral secession from July 1991 to March 1992. First was the option of staying within Yugoslavia despite the secession of Slovenia and Croatia. Contrary to many published reports, these negotiations were initiated by the Bosnian Muslims – not the Serbs in Bosnia or Belgrade – with the full authorization of President Izetbegovic, as detailed below. After ten days of negotiations in Belgrade in late July 1991, a tentative agreement was forged between Izetbegovic's Muslim representatives, Bosnia's Serbs, and Serbian President Milosevic. Initially, Izetbegovic embraced the agreement. Within days, however, he reversed himself and rejected it. Milosevic tried to revive the negotiations the following month, but the Bosnian Muslims refused to attend.³⁰ Thus the so-called Historic Agreement Between Serbs and Muslims, or "Belgrade Initiative," died in August 1991.³¹

After the Muslims rejected the option of keeping Bosnia within Yugoslavia, debate turned to the second alternative to unilateral secession: the negotiation prior to independence of an ethnic cantonization plan acceptable to the republics' three main ethnic groups and Belgrade, so that secession would be by mutual agreement and thus less likely to spark war. Several versions of this option, which was originally proposed by Bosnia's Serbs, were considered prior to independence, but all ultimately were rejected by the Muslims (as summarized briefly in the following bullets and detailed later in the chapter):

- In October 1991, the Muslims pushed for a vote in Bosnia's parliament on their proposal to declare immediately the republic's sovereignty from Yugoslavia – a key step on the road to independence – but the Serbs threatened to respond by seceding from Bosnia. The Muslims, rather than negotiate with the Serbs to find a compromise, instead illegally reconvened

²⁹ Bosnia also was home to many of the factories that produced equipment and supplies for the Yugoslav army, providing further incentive for the army not to permit the republic to secede. Ultimately, when the Yugoslav army formally left Bosnia in May 1992, it disassembled many of these factories and took them to Serbia. Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, p. 180.

³⁰ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 71. Milosevic tried to revive the four-republic plan – which he labeled the "Belgrade Initiative" – on August 12, 1991, but the representative from Bosnia was a Serb, Momcilo Krajisnik, rather than a Muslim, so this was not a true negotiation between Serbian and Bosnian authorities

³¹ Marcus Tanner, "Milosevic Woos 'Loyal' Republics," *Independent*, August 13, 1991, p. 9.

parliament in the middle of the night, while Serb delegates were absent, and voted to approve the declaration of sovereignty.

- In January 1992, Izetbegovic briefly agreed to a compromise worked out between his Muslim vice-president and the Bosnian Serbs to postpone a referendum on independence until all the sides had agreed on a division of the republic into ethnic cantons, or some equivalent constitutional reorganization. However, Izetbegovic then renounced the deal even as it was being explained in parliament. Instead, the Muslims again reconvened parliament in the dead of night to pass a resolution – this time scheduling the referendum despite the absence of an agreement with the Serbs.

- In February 1992, one week prior to the referendum, Izetbegovic agreed to another version of the plan, this time proposed by the European Community in Lisbon and embraced by both Bosnia's Croat and Serb leaders. However, once again he renounced the deal within days, just prior to the referendum, which then was approved by Muslim and Croat voters but boycotted by the Serbs.

- Finally, in March 1992, following the referendum and less than three weeks prior to planned international recognition of Bosnia's independence, Izetbegovic agreed to a further revision of the EC plan hammered out in Sarajevo. Within days, however, he renounced this version too, this time joined by the Croats.

Meanwhile, Bosnia's three dominant ethnic groups and Belgrade also were pursuing military and administrative steps intended to safeguard their perceived interests. For example, each of the three nationalist parties conducted ethnic purges of the republic ministries and municipal authorities under their control.³² Throughout Bosnia, these steps increased the insecurity of local minorities, and in Sarajevo it gave the impression that the Muslims were seizing control of the republic's central government. In response to these concerns, and in light of the precedent in Croatia, four Serb areas in Bosnia declared themselves autonomous during Sept 12-20, 1991. The Muslims responded in October by pushing their declaration of sovereignty through parliament despite Serb opposition, as described above. The Serbs responded in kind on November 9-10, by approving a referendum calling for establishment of a

³² Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 63-64. Robert M. Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," *Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1998), p. 55. Robert M. Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993," *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 22 (May 28, 1993), pp. 4-5, includes a copy of the

greater Serbia that should incorporate Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia. The Bosnian Croats soon followed suit, in mid-November, when two of their areas likewise declared themselves autonomous. The European Community exacerbated this cycle on December 17, when it invited Yugoslavia's republics, including Bosnia, to apply for recognition of independence. In reaction, on December 18, one of Bosnia's Serb autonomous areas (Bosanska Krajina) declared itself to be part of Yugoslavia rather than Bosnia. Despite this, on December 20, the Muslim and Croat members of Bosnia's presidency applied to the EC for recognition of Bosnia as a unitary, independent state. Responding to this, on December 21, the Bosnian Serbs' rump assembly declared its own republic, and on January 9, it announced that the "Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina" would encompass the majority of Bosnian territory.³³

Military preparations in Bosnia began as early as 1990, when Belgrade started transferring weapons to Bosnia's Serbs.³⁴ Efforts on all sides escalated significantly in the latter half of the following year. In the summer of 1991, Bosnian Serbs and Croats started fighting on opposing sides in the neighboring Croatian war. In October 1991, the Yugoslav army ordered the mobilization of northwest Bosnia for the war in Croatia, and some of its reservists from Montenegro crossed into Bosnia *en route* to their attack on Dubrovnik and skirmished in Bosnia with Herzegovina Croats. On December 5, 1991, Milosevic ordered a reorganization of the Yugoslav army to withdraw from Bosnia troops who were born elsewhere and to return to the republic troops who were born there. Drawing on the lessons of the Croatian war, where the Yugoslav army suffered international criticism and initially performed poorly, Milosevic was attempting to ensure that the Bosnian Serbs would have an army that was indigenous – and thus more willing to fight and less vulnerable to accusations of being an invading force. By the end of December 1991, 85-90 percent of the federal army in Bosnia consisted of troops born there.³⁵

Serbs' initially proposed map for cantonization of Bosnia in late 1991, the Croats' response, and the EC's subsequent proposal in early 1992.

³³ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 215. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 64, 73, 97, 99.

³⁴ Stitkovac and Udovicki, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Second War," p. 172. The early flow of arms to Bosnia's Serbs was revealed by Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic in September 1991, based on tapped conversations between Milosevic and Karadzic.

³⁵ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 62, 74, 82-83, 101-102. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 217-18. Burg and Shoup claim the 85-90% figure was reached by the end of December 1991, citing Yugoslav Defense Minister Kadijevic; Silber and Little say only that it was reached prior to recognition of independence in April 1992, citing Milosevic's close ally, Borisav Jovic. In the Croatian war, Serb soldiers from Serbia who were in the federal army had proved not very willing to fight outside their home republic.

Meanwhile, Bosnia's Croats armed themselves during the war in Croatia, and Bosnia's Muslims began arming in the fall of 1991, as detailed below. Despite this arms race, until March 1992, there was no fighting in Bosnia except for minimal spillover from the war in neighboring Croatia.

The spread of fighting in Bosnia came only after the republic's Muslim and Croat voters approved an independence referendum on March 1, and the fighting did not intensify into war until a month later, after the EC and United States announced they would be recognizing Bosnia's independence on a date certain. The chronology is illuminating. As noted, on December 17, 1991, the EC invited all of Yugoslavia's republics to apply for recognition within a week. Three days later, the Muslim and Croat members of Bosnia's presidency voted to apply for recognition over the objection of its Serb members. This raised the question of a referendum on independence, because the EC's Badinter panel had not recommended recognition of Bosnia, but did say a referendum could "possibly" show the will of Bosnia's peoples to establish an independent state. On January 23, the EC president removed this ambiguity by declaring a willingness to recognize Bosnia if its voters approved an independence referendum.³⁶ Two days later, Muslim and Croat legislators authorized the referendum despite Serb opposition, thereby violating Bosnian constitutional requirements, as detailed below. On March 1, the referendum was approved with the overwhelming support of Muslim and Croat voters, but was boycotted by virtually all Serbs.³⁷

The day after the referendum, on March 2, 1992, the Serbs set up barricades across Sarajevo, apparently preparing to partition the city by force. They also demanded that final agreement be reached on their cantonization plan prior to any declaration of independence, but Izetbegovic spurned the request and on the following day declared independence, which the parliament then ratified over Serb opposition.³⁸ By mid-March, barricades between Serbs and

³⁶ Robert M. Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," *Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1998), p. 58. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 200, 217. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 99. At the time, Izetbegovic explained the December 20, 1991 decision to seek recognition by saying that the only alternative, living in a Greater Serbia, was unacceptable.

³⁷ The referendum received 62.68 percent support, "almost precisely the outcome one would expect if all the Muslims and Croats supported the referendum." Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 117.

³⁸ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 205-206. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 118. The Serbs claimed to be retaliating to an attack over the weekend against a Serb wedding party that had been held, perhaps provocatively, in the old Muslim section of Sarajevo. Aleksa Buha, a senior official in the Bosnian Serb nationalist party, still insists that the barricades were a spontaneous local reaction, which was then quelled by his party. Aleksa Buha, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000.

Muslims had spread to the eastern Bosnian city of Gorazde, which was in a state of emergency. Skirmishes also broke out in March between Croats and Serbs in the central Bosnian town of Kupres, in the southern city of Mostar and elsewhere in Herzegovina, and in the northern towns of Doboij, Derventa and Bosanski Brod, where Croats tried to prevent the entry of federal troops from Croatia.³⁹

Still, full-blown war and “ethnic cleansing” did not break out until the international community, at the urging of the United States, announced its intention to recognize Bosnia’s independence by a date certain, regardless of whether cantonization had been agreed. As detailed below, on March 5, 1992, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker sent a letter to the EC urging recognition of Bosnia, based on his department’s belief that recognition might deter fighting in the republic. Five days later, Baker reached private agreement with EC officials to recognize Bosnia on April 6, regardless of the status of cantonization negotiations and assuming only that the republic would by that date have adopted constitutional guarantees for minorities. The following day, March 11, Baker leaked this private decision to Bosnia’s Muslim foreign minister, Haris Silajdzic, thereby undermining severely any remaining chance that the Muslims would agree to cantonization.⁴⁰

Ethnic cleansing began on April 1, when the Serb paramilitary leader Arkan entered the northeast Bosnian town of Bijeljina from neighboring Serbia, launched attacks on Muslim civilians, and engaged the Muslim militia known as the *Patriotska Liga*. Interestingly, Izetbegovic initially appealed to the federal army for assistance to stop the violence, but when the army’s mainly Serbian troops rolled into the town on April 3, they instead supervised the cleansing, as they had done in Croatia. Accordingly, on April 4, Izetbegovic declared the mobilization of the republic’s territorial militia, putting Bosnia on a war footing against the rest of Yugoslavia. This prompted the immediate resignation of both Serb members of Bosnia’s presidency, Nikola Koljevic and Biljana Plavsic. On April 6, the EC recognized Bosnia’s independence, and the Serbs responded by declaring independence of their own Bosnian Serb republic, thereby sparking the eruption of war in Sarajevo between Serb and Muslim forces. The

³⁹ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 64, 119-20.

⁴⁰ James A. Baker, III, with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995), pp. 641-42. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 100-101. As part of the proposal, the United States also was to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, which the EC had done long before.

next day, April 7, the United States added its recognition of Bosnia. On April 8, the Yugoslav army entered the war in Sarajevo.⁴¹

As noted by a rare pairing of Yugoslav co-authors, one Serb and one Muslim, “The international recognition of Bosnia marked the point of no return. Immediately, the slaughter began.”⁴² Likewise, an American analyst observed that, “recognition triggered the outbreak of full-scale war: just as they had said they would, the Serbs proclaimed their own independence from the independent Bosnia and Herzegovina and began to establish it militarily.”⁴³ Within two months, the Serbs had seized control of 70 percent of Bosnia’s territory – significantly greater than the approximately half of the republic in which they predominated during peacetime, and even exceeding some of the expansive territorial claims in their cantonization proposal several months earlier. In the process, Serb regular and paramilitary forces killed thousands of Muslims and compelled hundreds of thousands more to flee their homes. Croat forces seized control of another 15 percent of the republic’s territory, leaving the Muslims squeezed mostly into a small region in the republic’s center and another pocket in the West.

At independence, Bosnia’s territorial defense force still was multi-ethnic and dominated by Serbs, at least on paper. For example, on April 8, 1992, Sarajevo’s first corps nominally contained 60 percent ethnic Serbs and 12 percent Croats. On April 15, however, Izetbegovic created a new territorial defense force by merging the remnants of its predecessor with the Muslim militias that, as detailed below, his party had established clandestinely prior to independence. Five weeks later, this new territorial force was officially renamed the Army of Bosnia, and by July 1992, Muslims represented 70 percent of its personnel, with the remainder comprising urban or inter-married Serbs and Croats who favored a unitary republic. By 1994, no Serb officer even commanded a brigade in the Bosnian army.⁴⁴ On the opposing side, the Yugoslav army officially withdrew from Bosnia on May 21, 1992. In reality, however, it left

⁴¹ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 224-28. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 119-20. Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 642. The American recognition was delayed for a day, out of sensitivity to the fact that April 6 was the anniversary of Hitler’s bombing of Serbia.

⁴² Stitkovac and Udovicki, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Second War,” p. 175.

⁴³ Hayden, “The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993,” p. 7.

⁴⁴ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Jovan Divjak, former vice-commandant of the Bosnian army, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 15, 1999. Stjepan Kljuic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 11, 1999.

behind most of its forces – now staffed virtually exclusively with Bosnian-born Serbs – to become the new army of the self-declared Bosnian Serb republic.

The initial military success of the Bosnian Serbs was hardly surprising given their overwhelming advantage in armaments. In 1992, the republic's Serb forces had approximately 300 tanks and 100 armored personnel carriers, compared to virtually none for the Bosnian army. Even by the following year, the Muslims had leveled the playing field only marginally, with the Serbs continuing to enjoy advantages in tanks of 330 to 20; in APCs of 400 to 30; and in artillery pieces of 800 to 500. (It is noteworthy that both sides were able to build up their forces substantially despite the imposition of a UN arms embargo, although the Muslims were unable to acquire much armored equipment such as tanks.) Only in manpower did the Muslims eventually dominate, because their population was larger and became highly mobilized in the wake of the initial Serb atrocities. Upon the outbreak of war, the numbers of soldiers on each side were roughly equivalent. By the following year, however, Bosnian army troop levels had tripled, while Serb numbers stagnated – leading to a three-to-one manpower advantage for the Muslim-led army that it retained for the remainder of the war.⁴⁵ (This enormous manpower advantage reflected a much greater rate of mobilization among the Muslims because they enjoyed only a 4:3 population advantage over the Serbs in Bosnia.)

Figure 3-2
Early Order of Battle: Serbs Predominate in Hardware, but Muslims in Troops

Category	April 1992		1993	
	Serb Army (RS)	Bosnian Army	Serb Army (RS)	Bosnian Army
Tanks	300	~ 0	330	20
APCs	100	~ 0	400	30
Artillery	230	~ 30	800	500
Combat Air	25	0	25	0
Troops	80,000	120,000 (< 60,000 armed)	80,000	261,500

The complicated course of the 3 ½-year war can be summarized only briefly here. After the initial Serb offensive in Bosnia, the sympathies of the United States and most of the international community went to the Muslims. Accordingly, in May 1992, the United Nations

imposed economic sanctions against Yugoslavia for its involvement in the Bosnian Serb offensive. Still, the UN also felt compelled that month to withdraw its peacekeepers from Bosnia – where they were headquartered for the peace operations in neighboring Croatia – because they had no mandate in the Bosnia conflict.⁴⁶ As Bosnia’s humanitarian crisis worsened in the summer of 1992, however, the UN reversed itself and authorized the return of peacekeepers to Bosnia to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, mainly to Sarajevo and other besieged Muslim areas.⁴⁷ Serb officials in Bosnia and Belgrade acquiesced to this limited UN assistance to the Muslims, apparently in hopes of lifting the sanctions against Yugoslavia, averting any more significant UN military intervention, and locking in the Serb military gains in Bosnia, as the UN presence had done in Croatia. Bosnia’s Serb forces did manage to hold their gains after the UN deployment, although the Serbs did not crush remaining pockets of Muslim resistance that they surrounded – mainly small cities in eastern Bosnia – either because they could not or because they chose not to bear the casualties and diplomatic costs of doing so. In early 1993, however, the Muslims suffered another blow when their erstwhile allies, the Bosnian Croats, turned against them. During the next year, all three ethnic groups engaged in fighting and ethnic cleansing against each other – with especially vicious fighting between the Muslims and Croats – but without any significant, lasting shifts in territorial control.

Throughout the war, the United Nations and subsequently a “contact group” of major world powers tried to broker several versions of a peace agreement. Initially, the plan was based on cantonization of Bosnia into 7 to 10 non-contiguous ethnic areas, similar to the pre-war EC proposal. Subsequently, it evolved into a harder partition, which granted the Serbs control of a single contiguous region that included about half of Bosnia’s territory. Despite Milosevic’s

⁴⁵ Richard Merle Wilcox, *The politics of transitional anarchy: Coalitions in the Yugoslav civil wars, 1941-1945 and 1991-1995*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000), Chapter 7. Also, documentation provided by Jovan Divjak, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 15, 1999.

⁴⁶ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 92-94. The European Community also withdrew its monitoring mission. Despite the lack of a mandate, the peacekeepers did conduct *ad hoc* peace operations throughout the first weeks of the Bosnian war. Even after their formal withdrawal, a few UN peacekeepers remained to foster peace efforts. For a fascinating account, see Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper: The Road to Sarajevo* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), the memoirs of the first UNPROFOR deputy commander, who also was its commander in Sarajevo.

⁴⁷ The sanctions were authorized in UN Security Council Resolution 757 on May 20, 1992. The humanitarian airlift, authorized June 29, 1992 in UNSCR 761, was started on July 2, 1992. David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), pp. 45, 49.

support, however, these agreements were stubbornly resisted by Bosnia's Serbs, who would have had to surrender substantial areas that their forces already had captured and ethnically cleansed.

The turning point of the war came in February 1994, when the United States repaired the alliance between the Muslims and Croats by brokering the so-called "Washington Agreement," which created a Muslim-Croat Bosnian federation that also nominally was confederated with Croatia. Later that year, the United States began to facilitate the arming and training of Croatian and Bosnian government forces despite the continuing UN arms embargo on Bosnia.⁴⁸ Bolstered by this military aid, the Croatian army in May 1995 launched an offensive that quickly recaptured and ethnically cleansed Western Slavonia, one of three areas of its republic that had been controlled by Serbs since 1991. Soon after, in July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces crushed remaining Muslim strongholds in eastern Bosnia that had resisted capture for three years, including Srebrenica, where they massacred thousands of Muslim men. In August 1995, the Croatian army launched another lightning offensive, quickly recapturing and ethnically cleansing the second Serb-held region of its republic, the Krajina, and appearing poised also to take the last Serb enclave, Eastern Slavonia. Meanwhile, in Bosnia, the bolstered Muslim and Croat forces launched their most successful offensives of the war, pushing Serbs back from positions they had held for three years. At the end of August 1995, NATO also launched its first substantial air strikes of the conflict – against Serb positions in Bosnia – which further accelerated the gains of the Muslim and Croat forces.⁴⁹

By mid-September 1995, the Bosnian Serbs had been reduced from holding 70 percent of the republic's territory to approximately the half they had been offered in previous peace proposals, and their grip was slipping even on these remaining holdings, including their capital of Banja Luka. At this point, the United States succeeded in brokering a cease-fire, and then codifying it in the Dayton Agreement of November 1995, by threatening to oppose whichever side rejected the deal.⁵⁰ The agreement codified an internal partition of Bosnia into two halves – a contiguous Serb republic and a contiguous Muslim-Croat federation. Nominally, U.S. and

⁴⁸ The arms embargo originally had been imposed on all of Yugoslavia in September 1991. Beginning in 1994, U.S. forces that ostensibly were to police the UN arms embargo against Bosnia instead looked the other way as arms were imported from Iran and other suppliers to Croatia and thence to Bosnia. In addition, the United States financed the training of Croatia's army by the private firm MPRI, which was led by retired U.S. military officers. See Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 308-309.

⁴⁹ The bombing campaign, Operation Deliberate Force, was conducted from August 29 to September 14, 1995.

⁵⁰ See Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

Muslim officials claimed that Bosnia remained an integral state, but Sarajevo's authority effectively ended at the federation's border with the new Bosnian Serb republic, which enjoyed almost complete political autonomy and maintained closer economic and cultural ties to Serbia than to the federation. Dividing Bosnia internally along ethnic lines, which had been proposed originally by Bosnian Serb officials in late 1991 in response to Muslim insistence on unilaterally seceding from Yugoslavia, and which the Muslims and the United States had vehemently rejected at the time, was now a reality. However, the cost of achieving this outcome through war, rather than negotiation, had been huge – including approximately 150,000 dead, mostly Muslim and mostly civilian.

The Grand Strategy of Bosnia's Muslims

Process tracing of the Bosnian Muslims' tragic challenge reveals a grand strategy that guided all of their key decisions for more than a year prior to the outbreak of war in the republic. Under this strategy, their first preference was to take political control of an intact Bosnia within a Yugoslavia that still included Croatia. Only this outcome could satisfy their desire for political power without risking the war they sought to avoid. Bosnia's Muslims believed that as long as both Croatia and Serbia stayed within Yugoslavia, these two republics would want to preserve Bosnia intact as a balancer between them and be content to let the Muslims dominate the republic's politics. However, if Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, the Muslims' second preference was to take control of an independent Bosnia rather than stay within a rump Yugoslavia that would be dominated politically by Serbia and deprive them of the political power they sought. Izetbegovic made no secret of these preferences, stating them clearly at least as early as September 1990.⁵¹

Equally clear is that the Muslims sought political domination in Bosnia, not merely inter-ethnic power-sharing as they often claimed to Western audiences. In September 1990, before Bosnia's first democratic elections, Izetbegovic declared that his party opposed "national parity" – a system that would give each of Bosnia's three main ethnic groups an equal voice. Instead, his party insisted on a system of one-man, one-vote, which in light of Bosnia's rapidly increasing Muslim population – that was expected to grow to be a majority – would soon give the Muslims

⁵¹ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 47.

absolute control over the republic, regardless of Serb and Croat opposition.⁵² The moderate co-founder and original vice-president of the party, Adil Zulfikarpasic, abandoned the party in September 1990 on grounds that it was increasingly dominated by Muslim nationalists who “seemed to be under the illusion that they would impose their rule over the whole of Bosnia.”⁵³

After the Muslim’s first preference became unattainable, upon the success of Croatia’s secession in fall 1991, the Muslims were fully cognizant that pursuing their second preference risked war against Yugoslavia’s much stronger Serbs. Accordingly, they embraced a secret four-part plan designed to achieve independence while reducing the risk of a disastrous war against the Serbs. The plan was explicitly premised on the Muslims’ military weakness and their expectation of international support. The first part of the plan was for the Muslims to avoid provoking Serb attacks prior to independence by eschewing violence themselves. This point was rooted in the Muslims’ fear that they could not defend themselves against Serb forces without international intervention, and their expectation that the international community would perceive hostilities prior to independence as civil war rather than cross-border aggression and thus not fit for intervention. As one of the architects of the strategy recalls, “We knew we were very very very weak and not capable of defending ourselves. . . . We wanted independence before war to make clear that the others were international aggressors. . . . By contrast, if it’s an internal war, no one around the world will care.”⁵⁴

The second part of the plan was to pursue western recognition of Bosnia’s independence. The Muslims believed that such recognition would guarantee them assistance in defending against a Serb attack, and might even deter the Serbs from launching aggression. The plan’s third part, to be implemented after recognition, was to declare that Yugoslav army troops on Bosnian territory were a foreign occupying force and to appeal to the international community to insist they be withdrawn. The Muslims adapted this part of the strategy from former Warsaw Pact states, such as East Germany, which had just used it to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The fourth part of the plan, initiated in the second half of 1991, was clandestinely to build up a defense capability in case Serb forces launched hostilities prior to independence or

⁵² Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 209.

⁵³ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 141. He also notes the party “was using well-worn religious and nationalist slogans to mobilize the masses.” Also, Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999.

⁵⁴ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

refused to leave Bosnia after independence.⁵⁵ (These military preparations are detailed in the next section of this chapter.)

The vice-president of Izetbegovic's party at the time, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, underscores that the party viewed international recognition of Bosnia's independence as its holy grail. This was especially true after the Muslims learned through secret channels, in the last quarter of 1991, of the discussions earlier in the year between Milosevic and Tudjman about dividing Bosnia between their two republics. As he summarizes the strategy: "We had to avoid the explosion of war prior to recognition – because it would be an internal war – and in the meantime strengthen the institutions of territorial defense, police, etc. . . . Once we were recognized, we could say that we are defending our own territory. Otherwise we would be the aggressor, rebelling against the federal army."⁵⁶

Seeking international support was integral to the party's strategy from the very start. Indeed, at its founding meeting in February 1990, the party's leaders decided that future foreign minister Haris Silajdzic should be sent overseas to make their case in the United States and Europe. They also decided at the same time that permanent channels should be established to the United States through an expatriate there, Nagib Sacirbegovic, whose son Muhammed Sacirbey later became Bosnia's foreign minister and ambassador to the United Nations.

The Muslims hewed steadfastly to this grand strategy for more than a year prior to the outbreak of war, which explains the content and timing of their key decisions. First, the grand strategy explains why, in April 1991, Izetbegovic rejected the advice of a leading Muslim intellectual, Muhammed Filipovic, to secede from Yugoslavia at the same time as Slovenia and Croatia. Filipovic argued for such early coordinated secession because there would be power in united action and because the Serbs were not yet fully mobilized to launch a retaliatory war.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Cengic was a founder of the party – and earlier had been imprisoned with Izetbegovic in 1983 – and identifies these four key points of its strategy. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had announced plans to withdraw Soviet troops from Eastern Europe in 1988, but details for final withdrawal were hammered out in a series of subsequent agreements. In July 1990, in anticipation of German reunification, the Soviets signed an agreement to withdraw 17 divisions from East Germany, totaling more than 360,000 troops, by 1994. <http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/cfe/cfebook/chrono.html> [downloaded January 13, 2002].

⁵⁶ Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Among other key early roles, he was a co-founder of the main Muslim militia force, the Patriotska Liga, which evolved into the Bosnian Army. He also was one of three Muslim representatives at the EC negotiations in Lisbon in February 1992.

⁵⁷ Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. Filipovic argued that this was the ideal moment for Bosnia to secede because the republic's Serbs were not yet ready to fight and Europe would be more willing to recognize three republics that seceded simultaneously, especially if they then confederated with the remainder of Yugoslavia.

However, under the grand strategy, this step was deemed premature because Bosnia did not yet have the promise of recognition from the international community, so the Muslims would have to fight against the Serbs without international backing. Though Filipovic was correct that Serb forces in Bosnia were getting progressively stronger, the grand strategy hinged not on the Muslims themselves being able to defeat the Serbs, but rather on the Muslims garnering sufficient international support to defeat or deter the Serbs.

Second, the grand strategy explains why, in July 1991, Izetbegovic ultimately rejected the Belgrade Initiative. The compromise agreement would have violated a key tenet of the strategy, which dictated seeking independence if Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, in order to avoid becoming part of a greater Serbia. As detailed below, it appears that Izetbegovic initially lent his support to this initiative without the knowledge of other key members of his party, based on his personal inclination to compromise. In addition, he apparently held out hope that the initiative between Yugoslavia's Serbs and Muslims could grow into a broader agreement encompassing Croatia and the Bosnian Croats as well. However, when the dominant hardliners in Izetbegovic's party learned that the agreement did not include Croatia, and thus would fix Bosnia in a rump Yugoslavia that they viewed as tantamount to a greater Serbia, they insisted he reject it immediately.

Third, the grand strategy explains why Bosnia's Muslims generally did not raid federal army weapons caches in the republic prior to independence, as had occurred in Slovenia and Croatia, to prepare themselves for war against the Serbs. The Muslim leadership assessed such raids as feasible, because army depots in the republic were not well protected. However, the grand strategy militated against such raids, because they might provoke war with the Serbs prior to international recognition, which would not only subject the Muslims to retaliation but potentially jeopardize their goal of attaining international recognition because it would make the Muslims appear to foreign audiences as aggressors in a civil war.⁵⁸ As summarized by Mahmutcehajic, the Muslims had to "prevent violence from breaking out because it would obstruct recognition."⁵⁹

Fourth, the grand strategy explains why the Bosnian Muslims, starting in late November 1991, sought international recognition, held an independence referendum, and then declared

⁵⁸ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

⁵⁹ Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

independence in March 1992, even though their military preparations for war against the Serbs were still months away from completion. Until mid-November 1991, Izetbegovic had opposed international recognition of any of the Yugoslav republics, because he still was hoping to keep Yugoslavia intact in some form. Once it became clear that the EC was moving inexorably towards recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, however, he reversed himself on November 30, 1991, urging the recognition of all six Yugoslav republics and the preventive deployment of international peacekeepers to Serb areas of Bosnia.⁶⁰ When the international community invited Bosnia to apply for recognition in December 1991, the Muslims felt they had no choice but to apply, even though they had barely begun their military preparations, because their strategy dictated doing everything possible to obtain recognition. Likewise, when the EC indicated the following month that it would recognize Bosnia's independence if a referendum were approved, the Muslims' strategy dictated that they schedule the referendum as quickly as possible. They did so, despite still being woefully unprepared to defend themselves against the expected Serb retaliation, because they feared that the long-sought offer of recognition could be withdrawn at any moment, compelling them to act while it was still on the table.

Fifth, the grand strategy explains why, from late 1991 to March 1992, Izetbegovic ultimately rejected all proposals to divide Bosnia into ethnic cantons prior to independence, because they would have contravened his party's goal of asserting Muslim political control over all of Bosnia. Party hardliners permitted Izetbegovic to participate in negotiations under EC auspices in February and March 1992, even though they had no intention of accepting such an agreement, because they feared that rejecting the EC invitation might endanger recognition of Bosnia's independence. Similarly, Izetbegovic initially agreed to the Lisbon proposal in February 1992 because the tough tactics of EC mediator Jose Cutileiro convinced him that rejecting the agreement might endanger recognition. Izetbegovic reversed himself within days, in part because U.S. officials told him they would recognize Bosnia's independence even if he rejected cantonization. The following month, Izetbegovic temporarily accepted a revised version of the EC plan, but it appears this was a wholly insincere gesture intended only to sustain international support for recognition scheduled to occur three weeks later.

⁶⁰ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 216.

As President Izetbegovic later admitted, "Our tactics were to buy time. . . . [we pursued] a zig-zag line for independence . . . so the international community would defend this country."⁶¹ His foreign minister, Haris Silajdzic, is even blunter: "All the negotiations were just a farce to buy legitimacy." Silajdzic also recalls that, "My strategy was to get Bosnia independent so that it would be granted rights by the international community."⁶² Initially, during the first half of 1991, this appeared to be a daunting task, because both the EC and United States declared that they did not support unilateral secession from Yugoslavia. When U.S. Secretary of State James Baker communicated this to Milosevic during a visit to Yugoslavia in June 1991, it was interpreted by some in the media as a "green light" for Serb force, even though Baker simultaneously said that the United States would not support the use of force to keep Yugoslavia together. Further impeding secession, in September 1991, the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia that, although not perfectly enforced, tended to freeze the military inferiority of the Bosnian Muslims.⁶³ Silajdzic says that, "My main priority in the whole strategy was to get Western governments and especially the United States to get involved, because [Serbs] had the whole Army and if not the green then the yellow light from the West."⁶⁴

The final question is whether the Bosnian Muslims' grand strategy assumed that obtaining international recognition of independence would actually prevent war in Bosnia, by deterring the Serbs from attacking, or merely guarantee the Muslims international assistance after the Serbs attacked in retaliation to the Muslims' unilateral secession. As detailed below, a few Muslim officials claim they hoped or expected that recognition would deter the Serbs from attacking. However, most Muslim officials say they expected to have to endure Serb retaliation before the international community would intervene. As revealed by Omer Behmen, perhaps the most influential official in the ruling party,⁶⁵ the key to the grand strategy was for the Muslims to "put up a fight for long enough to bring in the international community."⁶⁶

⁶¹ Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁶² Haris Silajdzic, phone interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁶³ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 80, 85.

⁶⁴ Haris Silajdzic, phone interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁶⁵ Behman is characterized by Adil Zulfikarpasic, a co-founder of the party, as "the most important figure in the SDA after Alija Izetbegovic," and "along with Izetbegovic one of the most important leaders of the SDA, in charge of its fundamentalist wing." Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, pp. 124, 184.

⁶⁶ Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. However, because this was a retrospective comment, it does not confirm beyond doubt that this strategy was anticipated prior to the outbreak of violence.

Previous accounts have documented the Muslims' use of this strategy following the outbreak of war. For example, the first commander of UN peacekeepers in Bosnia, Canadian General Lewis MacKenzie, told EC representative Lord Carrington on April 23, 1992 – barely two weeks into the war – that the Muslim-led “Bosnian Presidency was committed to coercing the international community into intervening militarily.” On July 21, 1992, MacKenzie told reporters he was unable to arrange a cease-fire in Bosnia because, “I can't keep the two sides from firing on their own positions for the benefit of CNN.” His successor, British General Michael Rose, likewise reported that the Muslim-led Bosnian army refused a cease-fire because, “if the Bosnian Army attacked and lost, the resulting images of war and suffering guaranteed support in the West for the 'victim State.'” Additional confirmation is provided by Burg and Shoup, who cite “evidence that the Muslims were not beyond deliberately inflicting casualties on their own civilian population in order to gain the sympathy of the international community.” Even James Gow, whose book is overtly sympathetic to the Muslims, concedes that it was the Muslim-led “Bosnian army which was sometimes responsible for breaking those ceasefires – in the hope of provoking a U.S. intervention which the ‘American Club’ in the Bosnian leadership was sure to come.”⁶⁷

However, it has never before been documented that the Muslims formulated this strategy – of intentionally engaging in a losing war in order to attract the international intervention necessary to win it – even before the outbreak of war. When the Serbs launched their brutal military offensive in April 1992, following Bosnia's unilateral declaration of independence, the international community appeared to be genuinely shocked. But most Bosnian Muslim officials were not shocked. Indeed, these early losses were all part of their grand strategy, which the international community did not realize at the time and still has not acknowledged.

Explaining Izetbegovic's Repeated Flip-Flops

As discussed briefly above, and in greater detail below, Bosnia's Muslim President, Alija Izetbegovic, in the year prior to the outbreak of war in Bosnia, repeatedly embraced

⁶⁷ Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper: The Road to Sarajevo* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), pp. 159, 308. Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace: Bosnia 1994* (London: Harvill Press, 1998), p. 141. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 13. James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 96. Gow identifies the “American Club” members as four top Bosnian Muslim officials who had spent time living in the United States: Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic, UN Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey, vice-president Ejup Ganic, and opposition leader Zlatko Lagumdjia.

compromises intended to avert war, but then rejected them within hours or days in favor of pursuing the unilateral secession that triggered Bosnia's terrible civil war. In July 1991, following the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, he announced his support for the Belgrade Initiative to stay within Yugoslavia – which had been proposed and negotiated by his own envoys in meetings with Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic – but then reversed himself. In January 1992, he gave his support to a proposal to postpone a referendum on independence until details could be worked out to divide Bosnia into ethnic cantons – an approach that had been negotiated by the vice-president of his own party, with his permission, in meetings with Bosnian Serb leaders – but then reversed himself even while the compromise was being explained in the Bosnian parliament. In February 1992, Izetbegovic endorsed a plan to divide Bosnia into ethnic cantons prior to seceding from Yugoslavia, which was proposed by the European Community, but he then rejected it several days later, on the eve of Bosnia's independence referendum. Finally, in March 1992, he embraced a revised version of the EC plan, but then rejected it too several days later, on the eve of the international community's recognition of Bosnia's independence. In the absence of a cantonization plan, that recognition triggered the onset of full-blown war and ethnic cleansing against Bosnia's Muslims.

There are three keys to understanding these repeated flip-flops by Izetbegovic. First, Bosnia's Muslim leadership was not unitary. Izetbegovic sincerely was inclined toward compromise with the Serbs, but he was beholden to hardline ethnic nationalist leaders of his party, because they generated the grassroots support for him and his party through a network of mosques around the country. This is not to suggest that Izetbegovic was less of a Muslim nationalist than his comrades. Indeed, Izetbegovic wrote in his famous 1970 *Islamic Declaration*: "There can be neither peace nor coexistence between the Islamic Faith and non-Islamic social institutions."⁶⁸ But in 1991-92, Izetbegovic was more willing than the hardliners to compromise with the Serbs, in the hope of averting retaliatory violence.⁶⁹ Whenever he publicly endorsed such a compromise, however, the party hardliners immediately confronted him in private meetings and forced him to reverse himself publicly. As detailed below, this occurred

⁶⁸ Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 118. Izetbegovic was imprisoned for the publication of this document.

⁶⁹ As explained by Husein Zhivalj, who has known Izetbegovic for 30 years, was imprisoned with him (as one of 12) in 1983, and later served as his deputy minister of foreign affairs: "Izetbegovic is always ready for compromise, in full knowledge that you're gaining and losing something. Later, he explains it to others" in the party and tries to convince them. Husein Zhivalj, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

in all four of the instances cited above. The best documented instance of Izetbegovic being reproved by his party leadership occurred in late February 1992 after he endorsed the EC's cantonization proposal in Lisbon. A large meeting of party faithful was held in Sarajevo, and many of his lifelong allies verbally assaulted him, compelling him to withdraw his commitment, as detailed below.⁷⁰

The second explanation for these flip-flops is Izetbegovic's style of decision-making, which was prone to long debates, frequent changes of mind depending on who had spoken to him most recently, and eventual reliance on consensus. According to Ismet Kasumagic, a close associate for many decades who was imprisoned with Izetbegovic in 1983 and later became one of his cabinet ministers, "Izetbegovic weighs everything three times. So you have to tell him three times." A somewhat less charitable characterization is that of Adil Zulfikarpasic, who helped found the ruling Muslim party with Izetbegovic and later negotiated the Belgrade Initiative on his behalf: "I had experienced numerous situations where he claimed, said or swore one thing, and then did another." According to Biljana Plavsic, one of two Serb members of Bosnia's pre-war collective presidency, Izetbegovic once explained his erratic positions by asking her: "Do you ever wake up in the morning and think one thing, and then later think something else?" (She says she replied, "No. Not on important issues.") Husein Zhivalj, who also was arrested with Izetbegovic in 1983 and later became his deputy foreign minister, concedes that Izetbegovic had a "hard adjustment" from philosopher to political leader.⁷¹

⁷⁰ A similar meeting of about 400 party leaders in late March 1992 rejected Izetbegovic's agreement to the revised EC proposal. Several attendees of these meetings confirm these accounts. In addition, others who were not there confirm that the party's prevailing Muslim nationalist stance would not accept such a compromise. "If he hadn't retracted, he would have been removed," says Bosnia's first army chief of staff, Sefer Halilovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999, regarding the Lisbon proposal. "It was absolutely clear that any Bosnian politician that accepted Lisbon was dead," concurs a leading Bosnian Muslim reporter at the time, Zlatko Dizdarevic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999. Izetbegovic's "hand was forced by Muslim nationalists," according to his close adviser Mirza Hajric, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. However, the prospect of Izetbegovic being removed was never seriously considered, because he was committed to consensus decision-making and quickly acceded to the prevailing will of his party. On important decisions, his standard operating procedure was to gather approximately 40 top party officials, typically at a restaurant, to debate and forge a consensus, which he then would adopt as his own position. He himself reports that he had "autonomy" to negotiate internationally so long as he stayed within the confines of the grand strategy set by his party, which is a restricted form of autonomy. Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Izet and Ismet Serdarevic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 17, 2000. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁷¹ Ismet Kasumagic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 15, 1999. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 142. Biljana Plavsic, interview with author, Banja Luka, July 24, 2000. Husein Zhivalj, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. In addition, Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 67, notes that Izetbegovic was "notoriously indecisive and prone to change his mind when dealing with international negotiators."

A third explanation may be most important, especially with regard to the EC's final effort to avert war through its revised cantonization proposal of March 1992. In this instance, at least, it appears that Izetbegovic initially embraced the compromise even though he had no intention of honoring his commitment. He did so to give international audiences the appearance that he was committed to a peaceful resolution, in order to retain their support for recognition of Bosnia's independence, as dictated by the Muslims' overall grand strategy.

Bosnian Muslim Military Preparations

Preparation for war, prior to its outbreak, was an integral part of the Bosnian Muslims' grand strategy. As noted, under the strategy formulated in 1990, the Muslims decided that if Croatia did not remain in Yugoslavia, they would pursue the secession of a unitary Bosnia from Yugoslavia despite Serb opposition. Ideally, they hoped to achieve this goal without resort to war by using their plan, detailed above, of avoiding any violent provocation and delaying independence until they had the support of the international community, which they hoped would deter the Serbs from retaliating. However, the Muslims realized from the beginning that they might not be able to achieve independence without fighting for it, and so initiated military preparations as soon as their Muslim nationalist party was elected in Bosnia's first democratic elections in late 1990. As Omer Behmen recalls, prior to the election he anticipated becoming cabinet minister for the economy and construction because he was a civil engineer, but afterwards he dedicated himself instead to "organization of a resistance, to mobilize our men and organize weapons purchases."⁷² Over the next 16 months preceding the outbreak of war, the Muslims' preparations included converting the republic's police force into a proto-army, clandestinely deploying police to Croatia for military training, stealing weapons from police armories, importing weapons in contravention of the UN arms embargo, creating militias of more than 100,000 men, organizing the militias into units up to the battalion level, recruiting officers from the federal army to lead the Muslims' forces, combining the various police and militia into a single integrated command, and drafting a war plan.

However, these preparations for war, combined with the Muslims' refusal to compromise on cantonization, provoked violent Serb retaliation and thereby transformed the Muslims' pursuit

⁷² Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. He says that the tensions experienced in Slovenia and Croatia, as those republics moved towards secession in 1990, indicated to him that war was likely in Bosnia too as the Muslims pursued their goal of independence.

of secession into a “tragic challenge.” The Muslim military preparations communicated clearly to the Serbs that the Muslims were intent on pursuing unilateral secession and, if opposed, fighting to retain control of as much territory as possible. By contrast, as detailed in Chapter 7, when Kosovo’s Albanians declared independence in 1991, they did not take the military preparations necessary to pursue this goal by force. As a result, the Serbs did not respond to Kosovo’s unarmed secession in 1991 with the same violent retaliation that they did in response to the armed secessions of Croatia and Bosnia in 1991 and 1992, respectively.

The spiral of arms racing that led to war in Bosnia is interpreted by some as stemming from a classic security dilemma between the Muslims and Serbs.⁷³ However, the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that the Muslims originally were seeking more than mere security. Otherwise, they could have opted either to stay in a rump Yugoslavia or to pursue more seriously the negotiations on ethnic cantonization prior to independence. They did not do so because they were seeking, rather than mere security, to maximize the territory under their political control. This goal impinged on Serb preferences, which arose in part from security concerns but mainly from their desire to maximize power by keeping all Serbs in one state. It was these competing, and mutually incompatible, desires for increased power – not mere security – that gave rise to the initial acquisition of arms on each side. The formation of armed Muslim militias did heighten fears of attack among nearby Bosnian Serbs, just as the earlier arming of Serbs had frightened nearby Muslims. However, the Bosnian Serbs had opposed secession and started arming well before the formation of Bosnian Muslim militias, so it cannot be said that a security dilemma caused the Serb arming. The original Serb military preparations were offensive and intended to coerce the Muslims into staying in Yugoslavia, not defensive and inadvertently threatening, as required for the security dilemma to be the root of the conflict. Once the arms race began, it did lead to a security-dilemma dynamic, in which defensive preparations were perceived by the opposing side as offensively threatening. However, it is crucial to understand that the security dilemma was not the cause of the conflict but merely an intervening variable.

Bosnia’s Muslims did not act quickly enough to commandeer the republic’s territorial defense force (TDF), as Slovenia had. The Yugoslav army collected most of the territorial militia weapons in mid-1990, prior to Bosnia’s first democratic elections, specifically to preempt

⁷³ Barry Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27-47.

any attempt at armed secession. To further inhibit such attempts, the communist authorities also drastically downsized Bosnia's territorial militia, from the 1988 total of 330,000 to a 1991 level of only 130,000, most of whom were ethnic Serbs. Accordingly, the Muslims decided to focus their initial defense efforts on utilizing the republic's police force as the kernel of a new army. After the elections of 1990, when the three ethnic parties divided cabinet posts among themselves, the Muslims insisted on heading the interior ministry, which controlled the republic's police forces. By mid-1991, they reached consensus with the other ethnic parties to replace the republic's communist-era police force with new recruits chosen by local police chiefs, which enabled each party to solidify authority in the territories it dominated. The Muslims then directed the police chiefs in municipalities under their party's control to recruit only fellow Muslims, in order to form the core of an army that could fight the Serbs if that proved necessary to attain Bosnia's independence. A small number of these new recruits, designated "special police forces," were sent to Zagreb, where the Croatian interior ministry provided them paramilitary training starting by the fall of 1991, when Croatia was in the midst of a war with Serbia. This demonstrates that a Croat-Muslim alliance had formed at least six months prior to the outbreak of war in Bosnia.⁷⁴

Despite this training, the Bosnian Muslims realized their police forces were grossly outmatched by Bosnian Serb forces that were being reinforced by the federal army. Accordingly, in the fall of 1991, the Muslims began to establish new institutions that would enable a general mobilization of the republic's Muslims if war broke out. The most important of these new institutions was the "*Patriotska Liga*," or Patriotic League, which had the structure of a civilian militia, although initially it had no weapons. The founding documents of the League were authored in September 1991 by Hasan Cengic and Rusmir Mahmutcehajic. The latter, then vice-president of Izetbegovic's party, says the initial goal of the League was to convey to Bosnia's Muslims that they might soon need to fight to defend the republic's independence. The League, he says, was not dedicated to breaking up Yugoslavia (which still officially was intact because none of the seceding republics had yet been recognized internationally), but if Yugoslavia disintegrated, it was dedicated to defending Bosnian independence. Sefer Halilovic, a Muslim officer in the Yugoslav army, retired from his federal post to become the Bosnian militia's military commander on September 13, 1991. The League also recruited other Muslims

⁷⁴ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

who were former or reserve army officers to manage small local units of 20 to 100 people, which were then combined, at least on paper, up to battalion level. Beginning in late 1991, some elements of the League also joined the republic's reserve police force, which provided the new militia its first access to weapons. (Although members of the reserve police did not normally carry weapons, the republic's Interior Ministry maintained weapons stocks for them, which had not been confiscated by the federal army.) In addition, other Muslim militias arose spontaneously. Most prominently, a small force in Sarajevo's old city started wearing green hats to signify a Muslim nationalist version of the federal army's "red berets." Before long, copycat "green beret" units sprang up in cities across the republic, eventually totaling about 3-4,000.⁷⁵

The next step in preparing for war was to acquire weapons, which the Muslims started to do in earnest in early 1992. As noted above, the Muslims chose not to raid federal army barracks for weapons prior to the outbreak of war, in order to avoid sparking war prematurely or appearing to international audiences as aggressors, which they feared might endanger foreign support for Bosnia's independence. The Muslims eschewed such raids even though they had obtained intelligence – for example, about the location of minefields protecting the barracks – that would have facilitated success. Instead, they sought to import weapons clandestinely, which was a considerable challenge for several reasons. First, Bosnia had only two land borders – one with Serb-controlled Yugoslavia and the other with Croatia, which itself was partially occupied by the Yugoslav army. Second, as mentioned, the United Nations had imposed an arms embargo on all of former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia and Croatia, in September 1991. Third, Bosnia was replete with federal army soldiers and Bosnian Serb police, who had good intelligence networks and were conducting joint patrols with Muslim police. Hasan Cengic, a leader of the Muslim efforts to acquire weapons, credits the survival of Bosnia during the first months of the war to early arms imports through Slovenia and Croatia. Sefer Halilovic, the first commander of Bosnia's army, says the weapons originated in East Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Albania. Omer Behman reports that the funding to purchase the weapons came 95 percent from Bosnian Muslim expatriates in Germany. To supplement these imports, as war approached in February and March of 1992, the Muslims also cooperated with Bosnia's Croats to distribute weapons from the republic's Interior Ministry stocks to their respective ethnic police forces. Cengic

⁷⁵ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999.

claims they “did it all legally and tried not to provoke” the Serbs, by announcing that the weapons were being distributed to reserve police as an emergency measure in light of the “pre-war” insecurity gripping the republic. Many of the Muslim reserve police who were armed in this manner were also members of the Patriotic League militia.⁷⁶

In the first months of 1992, the Muslims also attempted to unify their various forces into a coherent army that would be able to fight if necessary, as seemed increasingly likely when the Muslims rejected cantonization and declared independence. In January and February 1992, the leaders of the Patriotic League and Green Berets met and agreed that in case of war the two militias would merge into a new army controlled by President Izetbegovic. In addition, prior to the outbreak of war, the Muslims established contacts with ten to 15 federal army officers – mainly Muslim, but also Croat and Serb – who were sympathetic to the goal of establishing an independent and unitary Bosnia and who might join their army if war broke out. Upon the outbreak of war, the Muslims divided their interior ministry police forces into two parts – one serving as a true police force to maintain civil order, and the other joining the army. Halilovic reports that even before the war started, the new Bosnian army structures already were fully mobilized and centralized under his control, with a total manpower of 120,000. However, he reports that fewer than half – about 50-60,000 – were armed, including those with personal, vintage weapons. According to Izetbegovic, the armed units included about 30-40,000 members of the Patriotic League, and 10-15,000 individuals who had armed themselves, such as the green berets and interior ministry police. The unarmed majority of the new army consisted mainly of members of the Patriotic League for whom weapons had yet to be procured.⁷⁷

On March 7-8, 1992, several weeks prior to the first large-scale Serb attacks, Halilovic briefed his war plan to officials in a village outside Travnik. The next month, on April 15, 1992, following international recognition and the outbreak of full-blown war, the Bosnian presidency (which the Serb members had abandoned on April 4 in response to Izetbegovic’s initial

⁷⁶ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Sefer Halilovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Ejup Ganic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999. The Interior Ministry weapons were taken by Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban to Herzegovina, where they were divided between the Muslim and Croat police forces. After the outbreak of war, the Bosnian army also captured weapons from opposing forces and eventually began to produce weapons domestically.

⁷⁷ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Sefer Halilovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Alija Izetbegovic.

mobilization of the republic's military forces) formed a new Territorial Defense Force, and asked all of the republic's unofficial Muslim militias to join it. Remarkably, despite going to war against Serb forces and the Yugoslav army, Izetbegovic tried for several weeks to persuade the army to switch sides and support his government. As could be expected, the army refused unless a political compromise first were struck with the Bosnian Serbs, which Izetbegovic refused to do. Finally, on May 20, 1992, Izetbegovic formally renamed his territorial defense forces the "Army" of Bosnia, having given up hope of persuading the Yugoslav federal army to support Bosnia's independence. He then implemented the final element of the Muslims' long-planned grand strategy – declaring the Yugoslav army a foreign occupation force on Bosnian territory.⁷⁸

Tragic Challenge, Part 1 – Muslims Reject Staying in Yugoslavia

The "Belgrade Initiative" was the brainchild of two Bosnian Muslim intellectuals, who proposed in July 1991 that the republic's Muslims should avoid a disastrous war by agreeing to keep Bosnia within a rump Yugoslavia despite the secession of Croatia and Slovenia the preceding month. The leader of this effort, Adil Zulfikarpasic, was a Bosnian Muslim who had fled Yugoslavia in the 1940s, made a fortune in Switzerland, and then four decades later co-founded Bosnia's first post-communist political party with Izetbegovic.⁷⁹ In September 1990, two months before the republic's first elections, he left the party because of its increasingly Muslim nationalist stance and took with him many of its secularist intellectuals, including Muhammed Filipovic, to found a new party, the Muslim Bosniak Organization. In the election, the hastily formed MBO garnered barely one percent of the vote, but Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic stayed active in politics and maintained their relationship with Izetbegovic. In April 1991, when

interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993, based on *Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, 2140 GMT, February 13, 1993.

⁷⁸ Wilcox, *The politics of transitional anarchy*. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 130-31. Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia 1992-94* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 44-45.

⁷⁹ Zulfikarpasic proposed establishing the party during a meeting with Izetbegovic in Paris in 1989. The name of the party, Party for Democratic Action (SDA), was chosen in a meeting between these two and Omer Behmen in Switzerland during the first two months of 1990. The non-ethnic name was chosen because a new Yugoslav law had barred parties having a national or ethnic affiliation. Each man brought something different to the table: Zulfikarpasic brought wealth and international connections; Izetbegovic brought populist appeal among Bosnia's Muslims because of his famous imprisonment for his ethno-political writings; Behmen brought the potential for grassroots mobilization because of his contacts with a network of Muslim preachers in Bosnia. Zulfikarpasic wanted to exclude Behmen's religious wing from the party but says Izetbegovic told him, "Behmen with his five hundred imams has direct contact with people, so they'll play an important role in organizing our party." Adil

it became clear that Slovenia and Croatia were seceding from Yugoslavia, Filipovic urged Izetbegovic to join them, arguing that this moment was the “best, lowest-cost” chance for secession on two grounds: the Serbs were not yet fully mobilized for war, and the international community would be more likely to recognize three republics seceding simultaneously as a single federation willing to confederate with the rest of Yugoslavia. Zulfikarpasic also supported the proposal on grounds that Serbia would be less likely to confront a coalition of three republics acting together. However, Izetbegovic rejected this initial proposal on grounds that it violated his grand strategy of postponing secession until international recognition was guaranteed.⁸⁰

After Slovenia and Croatia seceded in June 1991, however, Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic switched their prescription, because they judged that Bosnia’s window of opportunity for secession had passed. If the Muslims now pursued secession, they believed, even with support from Bosnia’s Croats, they would have little chance against the much more powerful Serbs, who were backed by the Yugoslav army. Moreover, Zulfikarpasic believed that the republic’s Croats were an unreliable ally because they and Croatian President Tudjman ultimately wanted Croatia to annex Bosnia’s ethnic Croat areas of Herzegovina. Thus, Zulfikarpasic feared that allying with the republic’s Croats to pursue secession would result in a bloody war against the Serbs that would kill many Muslims and still not avert the dismemberment of Bosnia. On the other hand, he believed that the Serbs, in contrast to the Croats, wanted to keep Bosnia whole, albeit within Yugoslavia. He realized that allying with the Serbs might trigger a war against Bosnia’s Croats, but viewed that war as winnable and less bloody for the Muslims, who would have the Yugoslav army on their side. For Zulfikarpasic, the choice was obvious, and in his memoirs he recites the arguments he made in 1991: “It is not dangerous for our survival if the Croats feel threatened. . . . But our lives are in danger if the Serbs feel threatened. . . . so nothing should be done against the Serbs.”⁸¹ He also recalls the fears and expectations that led him to propose a compromise with the Serbs: “I saw that the impending war was . . . between the Serbs and the Muslims. Since I had experience from the Second World War, I knew the kind of horrors that could take

Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999. Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 136.

⁸⁰ Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999.

⁸¹ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 138.

place. . . . I saw that there was nothing left for us to do but go to the enemy camp and try to negotiate. . . . ”⁸²

In separate interviews years afterward, Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic, who no longer belong to the same political party, relate virtually identical accounts of the origins and fate of the Belgrade Initiative, and their account is substantially corroborated by Izetbegovic. On July 13, 1991, the two met with Izetbegovic, who said he agreed with their assessment that Bosnia’s Muslims were heading toward conflict with the Serbs. They asked him if he had received any guarantee of protection from either the Yugoslav army or a foreign power, or if he had taken steps to enable Bosnia to defend itself, but he said that he had not. They responded that in the absence of such guarantees it was too late for Bosnia to pursue independence because it had missed the opportunity to secede with Slovenia and Croatia. As Filipovic recalls saying, “it would be too hard to leave now without great damage to Bosnia.” The only hope, they said, was to negotiate a deal between Bosnia’s Muslims and the Serbs to preserve a unitary sovereign Bosnia in exchange for keeping the republic within Yugoslavia. Croatia and the Croats should not be part of the negotiations, they said, and would simply have to deal with the agreement as a *fait accompli*. Izetbegovic agreed but said that he personally could not lead the negotiations for two reasons. First, the Serbs did not trust him. Second, he already had come under criticism from Muslim hardliners in his party for proposing that Yugoslavia become an asymmetric federation in which Bosnia would have closer ties to Serbia than would Slovenia and Croatia. Thus, he could hardly be the one now to propose an exclusive association between Bosnia and Serbia, without any connection to Croatia. Instead, Izetbegovic asked Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic to negotiate with Milosevic. They replied that they would agree only if Izetbegovic gave them his mandate to negotiate on behalf of all Bosnia’s Muslims, not merely for themselves or their small party. Izetbegovic agreed, saying they could negotiate on his behalf.⁸³

⁸² Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 150.

⁸³ In addition, Muhamed Cengic, who was vice-president of Izetbegovic’s party, confirms that the proposal was initiated by Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic, not Belgrade. Another close associate of Izetbegovic, Hasan Cengic (no relation), who is considered a hardline Muslim nationalist, confirms that “we sent them” to negotiate with the Serbs. Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000. Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, pp. 171-78. Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. Previous accounts, including Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 214, have stated incorrectly that the Serbs originated the proposal and that Zulfikarpasic pursued it behind Izetbegovic’s back.

The following morning, Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic had a meeting with the top three leaders of the Bosnian Serbs – Radovan Karadzic (President of the Bosnian Serb nationalist party), Momcilo Krajisnik (Speaker of the Bosnian Parliament), and Nikola Koljevic (one of two Serb members of the Bosnian presidency) – in the office of the last. The Serb leaders agreed that in exchange for an agreement keeping Bosnia within Yugoslavia they would suspend their creation of autonomous Serb areas within the republic, but they demanded proof that Izetbegovic supported the proposal. The five men then walked to Izetbegovic's office, where the Muslim president confirmed that he backed the proposal. He was leaving that day for the United States, but told them to negotiate the details while he was away and he would sign it upon his return. That night, Koljevic expressed relief on TV: "We have come to an agreement that will resolve the question of Bosnia in the best way. We are no longer in danger of coming to blows with our neighbors."⁸⁴

Zulfikarpasic proposed that Filipovic and Koljevic draft the agreement but insisted on negotiating its final details directly with Milosevic. The next day, he and Filipovic flew to Belgrade to start negotiations with the Serbian leader. Milosevic said he would agree to suspend creation of autonomous Serb zones in Bosnia (although not in Croatia). He also offered that a Bosnian Muslim could be the first president of the new Yugoslavia, and that Muslim officers could command Yugoslav army forces in Bosnia. Despite this, both sides understood that Milosevic and the Serbs would retain ultimate authority in such a renewed federation. Filipovic says there were two fundamental premises of the negotiations: (1) Bosnia would remain within Yugoslavia; and (2) Bosnia would remain whole and be sovereign, although not independent. After ten days of negotiations, the two sides reached general agreement on which government functions would be centralized in Belgrade and which devolved to Sarajevo. Filipovic says the remaining disagreements centered on the question of whether the new Yugoslavia would be a "federated state" or a "federation of states," which was more than a semantic difference, as elucidated below.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, pp. 176.

⁸⁵ Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. Aleksa Buha – a close colleague of Karadzic, influential member of his party's executive board, and eventually foreign minister of the Bosnian Serb republic – confirms that the Serbs offered Izetbegovic the opportunity to be the first president of the new rump Yugoslavia under the agreement. Aleksa Buha, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 72, cite two competing drafts prepared by Zulfikarpasic's MBO party and the Bosnian SDS party.

When Izetbegovic returned from the United States, he declared publicly that he had been behind the talks and that, "We are about to reach a very good agreement." Zulfikarpasic briefed a meeting of several thousand Muslims in Sarajevo's old city on the agreement and initially received a warm reception. He claims that Izetbegovic then proposed, "let's sign the agreement together" on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims. Zulfikarpasic went on TV to tout the agreement, but during the show he received a fax from Izetbegovic's party opposing the agreement. He says that Izetbegovic initially denied being associated with the fax. However, after Izetbegovic met with the hardline leadership of his party, who strongly denounced the agreement, Izetbegovic went on television to declare that, "I reject the agreement and the idea of the agreement."⁸⁶ The powerful Behmen later explained the reversal by saying that Izetbegovic initially had had too much respect for Muslim "intellectuals" like Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic. By contrast, he said, the hardline leadership of the party, as well as average Bosnian Muslims, "were disappointed with our intellectuals, who were quislings or servants of the [Milosevic] regime."⁸⁷

It is clear that Izetbegovic reversed himself after the hardliners in his party opposed the agreement, but he subsequently offers other explanations. In a retrospective interview, Izetbegovic claims that his initial positive reaction was before he had seen the actual text of the agreement, and was based on inaccurate press accounts of its content. Specifically, he says, he initially thought the agreement incorporated Slovenia and Croatia into a revitalized Yugoslav federation. He claims that once he read the agreement and realized it would leave Bosnia in a rump Yugoslavia without Slovenia and Croatia, he rejected it because his party had long before decided that Bosnia would only stay in Yugoslavia if Croatia remained as well. "Sticking to this strategy, I had to reject it."⁸⁸

Izetbegovic's explanation appears to be only half true. His party indeed had a longstanding position that it would not stay in Yugoslavia unless Croatia stayed as well. Party

although it is not clear these are the final drafts that emerged from the Belgrade negotiations on July 24, 1991. They cite four differences in the MBO draft: 1) Bosnia would have equal status with Croatia and Slovenia, if those republics joined the new federation; 2) Bosnia would be a state within a Yugoslav federation of states, not merely a republic within a single federated state of Yugoslavia; 3) Bosnia would have a unitary government without regionalization or cantonization; 4) If the Krajina Serbs seceded from Croatia, the border of Bosnia should be expanded to include both the Serb-dominated Krajina region of Croatia and the Muslim-dominated Sandzak area of Serbia and Montenegro.

⁸⁶ Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

⁸⁷ Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999.

hardliners reminded Izetbegovic of this when they met with him after he praised the agreement. However, it is not credible that Izetbegovic originally believed the agreement included Slovenia and Croatia. Filipovic says the explicit strategy discussed with Izetbegovic from the start was for the Muslims alone to negotiate a deal with the Serbs about the future of Bosnia within Yugoslavia.⁸⁹ The Muslims did hope that the republic's Croats would acquiesce to the deal but realized this was doubtful, which is precisely why the Croats were not included in the negotiations in the first place. The Muslims obviously also would have preferred if Slovenia and Croatia subsequently rejoined this newly reconfigured Yugoslav federation, so they left open this possibility in the agreement, but no one expected this to happen given the longstanding opposition of these two republics to staying in a federation with Serbia.⁹⁰ Most importantly, there were no Croatian or Slovenian representatives in the negotiations, as Izetbegovic well knew. Thus, it is not plausible that Izetbegovic initially thought the agreement included Slovenia and Croatia.

Zulfikarpasic says that Izetbegovic offered him a slightly different explanation of his reversal by arguing that the Muslims simply couldn't break faith with the Bosnian Croats because that would lead to a Muslim-Croat war.⁹¹ The Bosnian Croats did indeed denounce the agreement at the time as a *casus belli*. Even the relatively moderate Bosnian Croat leader, Stjepan Kljuic, who favored the republic's unity, declared that "to the extent that a four-member federation is formed by force, although we are for a confederation of Bosnia with Croats, we would consider this an occupation and organize an uprising."⁹² However, Izetbegovic had known the Croats probably would oppose an agreement to keep Bosnia in Yugoslavia at the time he originally endorsed the negotiation of such an agreement, so apparently he did not always have such qualms about breaking faith with the Croats.

The real explanation appears to be that Izetbegovic initially strayed from his party's position after being persuaded by Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic of the danger of pursuing unilateral

⁸⁸ Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁸⁹ Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

⁹⁰ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, in some instances also somewhat disingenuously characterizes the agreement as preserving the six republics of Yugoslav within a confederation. Such an outcome conceivably could have transpired if the agreement had been implemented, but it was far from guaranteed and probably unlikely.

⁹¹ Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999.

⁹² Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 73.

secession and the merits of staying within a rump Yugoslavia. He hoped they could negotiate such an agreement with the Serbs and then persuade the rest of Bosnia's Muslims to accept it. After the agreement became public, however, the hardliners who controlled his party were furious and insisted that Izetbegovic stick to the party's previously formulated grand strategy. They also reiterated to him the reasons they had adopted the strategy – most importantly, to avoid joining a “greater Serbia,” but also to avoid war with Bosnia's Croats. It is not clear whether Izetbegovic personally was persuaded by these substantive counter-arguments, including the one he subsequently cited to Zulfikarpasic, or merely acceded to the will of his party's dominant hardliners. However, given the power dynamics of his party, he probably could not have defied the hardliners even if he had wanted to. Thus, the key decision that must be explained in this initial part of the tragic challenge is why the party's leadership rejected the compromise of the Belgrade Initiative – that might have averted war or at least mitigated its consequences – and instead pursued unilateral secession despite Serb threats that it would bring war. The answer is provided in Chapter 4.

Tragic Challenge, Part 2 – Muslims Reject Cantonization Prior to Independence

After the Muslims rejected the Belgrade Initiative in July 1991, the focus of proposed compromise turned to negotiating a division of Bosnia into ethnic cantons prior to its becoming independent. This was because the Serbs, throughout the pre-war period, held to a remarkably consistent stance – insisting from the time of the first elections that the Serb areas of Bosnia would have to remain politically connected to Serb-controlled Yugoslavia. When the Muslims rejected keeping Bosnia in Yugoslavia, the only other acceptable option for the Serbs was to divide Bosnia along ethnic lines prior to independence, so that the Serb areas could be autonomous and associate themselves with Yugoslavia. This proposal actually was first broached with the Muslims a month prior to the Belgrade Initiative, when Milosevic, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic discussed it at a summit in Split, Croatia on June 12, 1991.⁹³ However, it was not until the Muslims rejected the Belgrade Initiative and began aggressively to pursue Bosnia's independence that the question of cantonization came to dominate the debate in Bosnia.

On October 14, 1991, the Muslims introduced resolutions in Bosnia's parliament to declare the sovereignty of the republic and to boycott the Yugoslav federal government so long

⁹³ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 148.

as Slovenia and Croatia did so. Previous Muslim resolutions in February and May 1991 to declare sovereignty had failed in the face of Serb opposition, but this time the Muslims were intent on pushing through the resolutions, with the support of the Croats and despite the Serb objections. The Muslims wanted to put Bosnia explicitly on the path to independence and to remove permanently the prospect of joining a rump Yugoslavia. In order to pass their resolutions over Serb opposition, the Muslims claimed that the question of sovereignty should now be decided by a simple majority vote of the legislature, which they were sure to win, despite constitutional provisions that provided each ethnic group an effective veto over legislation to avoid such ethnic out-voting. Under the constitution's relevant provision (clause 10 of Amendment LXX), any group of 20 legislators (the Serbs had three times this many) could refer a parliamentary resolution to Bosnia's independent council on ethnic equality, which was to be composed of equal numbers of the republic's three main ethnic groups and a few representatives of its smaller ethnic groups. Once referred, a resolution could not return to parliament unless it was approved by "agreement of the [council] members from the ranks of all of the nations and nationalities." Even in the unlikely event that the council could reach such consensus, the constitution then required a two-thirds super-majority vote in parliament to pass such a resolution. Accordingly, the Serbs demanded that the Muslim resolutions be referred to the council – a step that effectively would have killed them. The Muslims refused, claiming that the constitutional requirement was void because the council had yet to be constituted.⁹⁴

The Serbs also responded by introducing their own resolution, stating that if Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia were recognized internationally (which would encourage the Muslims to seek similar recognition for Bosnia), then each of Bosnia's main three ethnic groups also should have the right of "self-determination including secession" from Bosnia. In addition, the Serbs explicitly warned the Muslims that if they insisted on unilaterally separating Bosnia from Yugoslavia, the Serbs would unilaterally separate their regions from Bosnia by the use of force that would decimate the Muslims. At the end of a heated debate on the competing resolutions that carried over to the morning of October 15, 1991, the Serbs, who controlled the speakership of the parliament under the ethnic power-sharing deal that made Izetbegovic

⁹⁴ Robert M. Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," *Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1998), pp. 56-7. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 71, 76-7. Amendment LXX (10) was authorized in July 1990. The council was officially known as the "Council for Questions of the Establishment of Equality of the Nations and Nationalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina."

president, gaveled the session adjourned and went home. The Muslims, however, declared unilaterally that the parliament was not adjourned but merely recessed for an hour, after which time they gaveled it back into session and voted with the Croats, in the absence of the Serbs, to approve the resolutions 142-0 (out of 240 seats). Furious at this violation of their constitutional rights, the Serbs initially threatened to boycott Bosnia's governing bodies until the vote was reversed. In the event, however, though the Muslims refused to reverse the vote, the Serbs continued to participate in parliament and worked to design an ethnic cantonization proposal that the Muslims and Croats would accept prior to secession, in order to avert war. Because of the possibility that these efforts would prove futile, however, the Serbs also prepared for war – apparently both as a means of coercing the other ethnic groups to accept cantonization and as a contingency in case such coercion failed.⁹⁵

The Serbs presented their first cantonization proposal at the end of 1991. It called for the division of Bosnia into numerous territorial cantons, each of which would be administered by the majority ethnic group in the canton. Because of Bosnia's patchwork ethnic demography, this meant that each ethnic group would administer several non-contiguous cantons – which underscores that the Serbs did not originally propose a hard partition of Bosnia. The plan was designed by Nikola Koljevic, one of two Serbs on Bosnia's collective presidency and a relative moderate who was not formally a member of the nationalist Bosnian Serb SDS party. However, the plan enjoyed extremely broad support among Bosnia's Serbs – ranging from Radovan Karadzic, president of the nationalist party, to leaders of the small non-nationalist Bosnian Serb opposition. Biljana Plavsic, the other Serb member of Bosnia's presidency, who was a member of the nationalist party, confirms in an interview that she also supported the proposal at the time. It was not until the outbreak of war, she says, that the Bosnian Serb leadership rejected the notion of non-contiguous cantons in favor of hard partition.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," pp. 56-7. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 71, 76-77.

⁹⁶ Hayden dates the initial Serb cantonization proposal to late 1991, whereas Burg and Shoup say mid-January 1992. Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993," p. 4. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 59, 104. Biljana Plavsic, interview with author, Banja Luka, July 24, 2000. Plavsic also confirms that Karadzic supported the plan at the time. "Prior to the war, we favored this sort of negotiated outcome, to avoid the horrors of WWII. . . . [but] after the war started, our goals changed to wanting territorial contiguity." She says that is why in May 1993 the Bosnian Serbs rejected the Vance-Owen peace proposal, which was still based on cantonization. For more detail on the ethnic alliances in Yugoslavia during WWII, see Wilcox, *The politics of transitional anarchy*.

The first of several instances in which the Muslims temporarily agreed to cantonization was in late January 1992. At the time, the Muslims were pushing a resolution in parliament to schedule a referendum on independence, because the EC had indicated it would recognize Bosnia's independence if such a referendum were approved. The Serbs insisted that some sort of cantonization plan had to be accepted before the referendum was scheduled, and again warned that independence without cantonization would mean war. Muhamed Cengic, the Muslim vice-president of Bosnia and former vice-president of Izetbegovic's party, took such threats seriously because he expected that the Muslims would fare worst in a war, and so he embraced the idea of postponing the referendum until a cantonization plan could be negotiated. Izetbegovic gave his support to Cengic's approach the day before parliamentary debate began on the referendum, according to Muhamed Filipovic. As Plavsic recalls, Cengic took the floor of the parliament and, in the presence of legislators from all ethnic groups, urged his fellow Muslims to compromise because "if war comes, the Serbs and Croats will be OK because they have Serbia and Croatia behind them. But we have nothing." When Cengic left the floor, Plavsic ran after him and urged him to take the floor again with Karadzic so that the two jointly could endorse the idea that cantonization should precede the referendum. Cengic replied that he needed to obtain Izetbegovic's approval once more for such a dramatic step, but then returned 15 minutes later, saying he had received it.⁹⁷

Cengic and Karadzic took the floor of the parliament and, in a historic moment, the two senior Bosnian officials – one Muslim and one Serb – simultaneously endorsed the same plan to avert war in Bosnia. Karadzic declared, "We have never been so close to an agreement as we are now." The president of the Croat caucus in parliament also expressed his support. Ten minutes into their presentation, however, Izetbegovic rushed to the floor – apparently compelled by hardline members of his party – and confronted Cengic, asking who had given him permission to express support for the compromise. "You Alija, ten minutes ago," Cengic replied. Nevertheless, Izetbegovic announced that he now opposed any preconditions on the referendum and declared that any negotiations on cantonization would have to take place after the

⁹⁷ Biljana Plavsic, interview with author, Banja Luka, July 24, 2000. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 105-6. Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," p. 59. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999. The details on Cengic's interaction with Izetbegovic were provided by Plavsic, but Filipovic, a Muslim, confirms that Izetbegovic had given his approval the previous day for Cengic's plan to delay the referendum until cantonization could be negotiated. When Izetbegovic reversed himself, Filipovic says the Serbs told the Muslims, "you're pushing us on the nose" – in other words, provoking a fight.

referendum. With both sides incredulous that Izetbegovic could have reversed himself in such short order, Karadzic asked Plavsic whether she intentionally had set him up for an embarrassing failure.⁹⁸

The rest of the night was a virtual replay of the parliamentary maneuvering three months earlier. The Serbs called for the resolution on the referendum to be referred to the council on ethnic equality. But the Muslims refused, arguing that the council still was not constituted. The Serb speaker of parliament then adjourned the session at 3:30 am on January 25, 1992, scheduling the next session to begin at 10am. At 4:30 in the morning, however, a Muslim legislator declared the session resumed, and then, in the absence of Serbs, the parliament voted 130-0 to schedule the referendum.⁹⁹

The next attempt at cantonization was made by the European Community. The EC's negotiator for the Balkans, British Lord Carrington, foresaw that if Bosnia seceded prior to some agreement between its ethnic groups, there would be a bloody war. As early as January 6, 1992, he proposed that Portuguese diplomat Jose Cutileiro convene negotiations between the Bosnian groups. Starting the next month, Cutileiro held six rounds of negotiations prior to the outbreak of war, at rotating venues: (1) Sarajevo, Feb. 13-14; (2) Lisbon, Feb. 21-22; (3) Sarajevo, Feb. 27; (4) Brussels, Mar. 9-10; (5) Sarajevo, Mar. 17-18; and (6) Brussels, Mar. 30-31. He also tried repeatedly to revive the talks during the first four months of the war, but the Muslims refused.¹⁰⁰

At the critical Lisbon meeting, the EC was trying desperately to get an agreement on cantonization before Bosnia's referendum on independence, slated for five days later. The Bosnian Muslim delegation was led by Izetbegovic, who was joined by Mahmutcehajic and Silajdzic. Mahmutcehajic reports that Cutileiro was "very tough" on Izetbegovic, threatening to withdraw EC support for Bosnia's independence if he did not acquiesce. The pressure appeared to work, because on February 23 the three ethnic groups agreed to a set of "Principles for a New

⁹⁸ Biljana Plavsic, interview with author, Banja Luka, July 24, 2000. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 105-6. Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," p. 59.

⁹⁹ Hayden, "Bosnia's Internal War," p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 80. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 108-109, 117, report that the final session of the talks was held July 28, 1992. Aleksa Buha, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000, reports that a session was scheduled for May 20-23, 1992 in Lisbon, but the Muslims refused to attend, citing the ongoing Serb aggression and travel difficulties. See also, Laura Silber, Judy Dempsey, and Michael Littlejohns, "UN in disarray as Serbs halt Croatia pullout: Fears grow that war could break out anew in Croatia," *Financial Times*, May 22, 1992, p. 2.

Constitutional Structure” that would divide Bosnia into seven cantons, of which three would be Serb-controlled. Two days later, Izetbegovic presented the plan to a meeting in Sarajevo of about 40 top officials of his party, who roundly denounced it. As recalled by Izet and Ismet Serdarevic, two attendees who were close friends and longtime associates of the president:

Izetbegovic got heavy criticism when he got back from Lisbon. It was a black spot for him. . . . He offered three justifications for signing the agreement – he was trying to avoid war, buy time to prepare for war because both of the other two sides were better prepared than us, and cooperate with Croats. But the rest of the party said this was a bad tactic and that he had no right to speak publicly without consulting them. Those of us close to the President were really upset. . . . Sometimes people were screaming at him. . . . He was supposed to be there as president of the party, not president of Bosnia. And he shouldn’t have even discussed it [cantonization] until the referendum. . . . We were ready for war, not Serb occupation.¹⁰¹

Following the meeting, Izetbegovic announced that he was withdrawing his support. As Mahmutcehajic explains, “Izetbegovic felt strong resistance when he came back [from Lisbon], so he withdrew his support.”¹⁰²

After the referendum was approved (by the Muslims and Croats, with the Serbs boycotting) on March 1, and small-scale fighting erupted in early March, the EC intensified its efforts to forge a compromise before the date it was scheduled to recognize Bosnia’s independence, April 6, 1992. On March 10, in Brussels, Cutileiro proposed a more unitary government to attract the support of the Muslims, but the Bosnian Serbs predictably resisted.¹⁰³ Then, on March 18 in Sarajevo, the EC forged its second – and last – cantonization agreement between the three ethnic groups. Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic exclaimed it was “a great day for Bosnia.”¹⁰⁴ His close colleague, Aleksa Buha, confirms in an interview that “we were delighted.” The revised constitutional principles now stated that Bosnia was “one state composed of three constituent units, based on national [i.e., ethnic] principles and taking into

¹⁰¹ Izet and Ismet Serdarevic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 17, 2000.

¹⁰² Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

¹⁰³ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 108-109, reports that both Milosevic and the United States expressed support for this plan.

¹⁰⁴ David Binder, “U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10. Although all three groups agreed to the principles, they did not sign them. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 110, 112.

account economic, geographical, and other criteria.” The agreement also provided for an effective ethnic veto by designing a second legislative chamber that would have equal representation from the three ethnic groups and require a four-fifths super-majority on important decisions. Furthermore, although Bosnia would be “sovereign,” the agreement provided that each ethnic group was free to “establish and maintain links” to other states – which the Serbs wanted to do with Yugoslavia, and the Croats with Croatia. In addition, according to Buha, the Serbs proposed that the cantons should provide substantial rights to minorities, including local control of school curricula and guaranteed quotas for representation in cantonal governments. Serb support for such rights was logical, given that after cantonization many if not most Serbs would be living as minorities in cantons controlled by one of the other ethnic groups, as detailed below.¹⁰⁵

On the crucial question of territorial boundaries for the cantons, each of the ethnic groups presented its own preferred map. However, Cutileiro pressed them to accept the EC’s compromise proposal, which apportioned control of each of about 100 local territorial units (*Opstine*) to whichever ethnic group had a majority or plurality in the unit based on the 1991 census. The EC proposal then aggregated the local units into 12 or 13 cantons – of which 2 would be controlled by the Muslims, 4 by the Croats, and 6 or 7 by the Serbs. Overall, the Muslim cantons would comprise 44 percent of Bosnia’s territory, and only 18 percent of Muslims would live in other cantons. The Serb cantons also would comprise 44% of the republic’s territory, but 50 percent of Serbs would live in other cantons. The Croat cantons would comprise 12 percent of the territory, and 59% of Croats would live in other cantons.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Hayden, “The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993,” p. 7. Saadia Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars: The Critical Years, 1990-95* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2001). Aleksa Buha, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000. Buha also confirms that the Bosnian Serbs wanted to establish economic and cultural links to Serbia, including visa-free travel because of the many family ties between the two.

¹⁰⁶ Hayden, “The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993,” pp. 6-7. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 110, 112. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 85. The exact number of *opstine* depends on how those in Sarajevo are counted. See Burg and Shoup, p. 421, n. 24.

Figure 3-3
Analysis of EC's Proposed Cantonization Map – March 18, 1992

Ethnic Group	% of Population	# of Cantons	% of Territory	% Living as Minority
Muslims	44	2	44	18
Serbs	31	6 or 7	44	50
Croats	17	4	12	59

Sources: Robert M. Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993," *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 22 (May 28, 1993), pp. 6-7. Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 27, 110, 112.

*n.b. % of Population is based on 1991 census and excludes those who self-identified as "Yugoslav."

A few days later, the Croats withdrew their consent, complaining that the proposed map was unfair to them. This flip-flop reflected a long-standing divide within the Bosnian Croat community. Those who lived in heavily Croat areas of Herzegovina adjoining Croatia generally favored cantonization, because it would give them political control over these areas and permit them to establish economic and cultural links to Croatia, paving the way for at least *de facto* annexation by Croatia. For the same reason, Croatian president Tudjman supported cantonization of Bosnia. However, those Croats who lived in other areas of Bosnia, where they were minorities, opposed cantonization and favored a centralized republic so as not to be stranded, explicitly under the control of another ethnic group. When the first group of Croats agreed to the revised cantonization plan, the second group protested and compelled reversal of that decision.¹⁰⁷

What is less obvious, at first blush, is why the Muslims also withdrew their consent to the agreement a few days later.¹⁰⁸ Under the EC plan, the Muslims would have controlled an equal

¹⁰⁷ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 65-66, 104, 106-107. Ruzmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. The pro-cantonization Croats were led by Mate Boban. The anti-cantonization Croats were led by Stjepan Kljuic. Croatia's Tudjman switched his support from one to the other as necessitated by international politics, but personally sided with Boban. Tudjman's close adviser, Stipe Mesic, declared on February 15 that holding the referendum in the absence of a mutually-acceptable cantonization plan would lead to war. Tudjman publicly proposed a three-way ethnic partition of Bosnia in late 1991. After that, he toned down his overt support for partition of Bosnia because it undercut his fight against partition of Croatia. Nevertheless, he maintained a two-step plan for Bosnia: first support its unitary status to ensure its liberation from Yugoslavia, then press for its ethnic partition. This explains why Tudjman was willing to ally with the Bosnian Muslims, in favor of independence, even though they supported a unitary Bosnia and he supported an ethnic partition of Bosnia. This underlying difference helps explain why Bosnia's Muslims and Croats went to war against each other the following year.

¹⁰⁸ Hayden says the Croats withdrew their consent on March 25, and the Muslims followed on March 26. Burg and Shoup say the Croats withdrew on March 22, and the Muslims followed on March 25. They agree that the Croats withdrew first. Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993," pp. 6-7. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 110-112.

amount of territory as the Serbs, which was generous to the Muslims considering that the more rural Serbs generally were thought to live on more of Bosnia's territory. In addition, the Muslim-controlled area was divided into just two cantons, facilitating governance and defense (if necessary) in comparison to the Serb-controlled area, which was divided into six or seven cantons. Moreover, under the plan, the Muslims would have had by far the smallest percentage of their ethnic group living as minorities in cantons they did not control – 18 percent, versus 50 and 59 percent for the Serbs and Croats, respectively. Despite this, Izetbegovic announced on March 25, 1992, that he was rejecting the agreement because he never sincerely had supported it and had acquiesced to it originally only to avoid being blamed for blocking a peace proposal, which he feared could endanger Bosnia's recognition. Now that the Croats had withdrawn, the Muslims apparently felt free to withdraw too without risk of being blamed for the failure.¹⁰⁹

At the end of March 1992, the EC held its last pre-war negotiating session, attempting frantically to redraw maps to the mutual satisfaction of the groups. Remarkably, Izetbegovic again reversed himself, now saying that he would accept the statement of principles, so long as it was accompanied by other agreements. When the map issue could not be resolved during the session, the three sides agreed to form a working group on borders to report back in mid-May. However, the whole question soon became moot. In a matter of days the international community recognized Bosnia's independence, war spread across the republic, and borders began to be re-drawn – not by working groups, but by armies, militias, and paramilitaries, who cleansed civilian populations in their path.¹¹⁰

This narrative raises the obvious question of why the Muslims launched this second aspect of their tragic challenge, rejecting cantonization prior to secession. As the Serbian academic Svetozar Stojanovic has puzzled:

It is not clear why the Muslim leaders nonetheless hoped that they would be able to keep the Serbs within the seceded Bosnia, when the far stronger Croatia had failed to keep them in Croatia. This is especially strange as there are far more Serbs, both absolutely and relatively speaking, in Bosnia than in Croatia. And it should, after all, have been expected that Serbia and Montenegro would assist

¹⁰⁹ "SDA Rejects Division of Bosnia-Herzegovina on Ethnic Lines," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 27, 1992, source: *Radio Belgrade*, 1400 gmt, March 25, 1992. Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993," pp. 6-7. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 110, 112.

¹¹⁰ David Binder, "U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992," *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 112. Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993," pp. 6-7. Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 110, 112.

those Serbs no less abundantly than those in Croatia. It was also already visible that Bosnian Serbs were successfully taking over from other Serbs entire units, armaments, and equipment from those parts of the Y[ugoslav] A[rmy] that had previously been stationed in Bosnia or had withdrawn into it from Slovenia and Croatia.¹¹¹

This puzzle, and the preceding question of why the Muslims rejected staying within a rump Yugoslavia, are addressed in the following chapter.

¹¹¹ Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 93.

CHAPTER 4

TESTING THE THEORY IN BOSNIA

This chapter seeks to explain two key actions by Bosnia's Muslims that comprise the tragic challenge in this case. First, why in July 1991 did they reject – after initially appearing to embrace – the option of staying within a rump Yugoslavia, which likely could have averted war between Bosnia's Muslims and Serbs? Second, why from late 1991 to March 1992 did they reject all proposals – again, after appearing to accept several of them – to divide Bosnia along ethnic lines prior to its independence, which might have averted or mitigated war, and instead opt for unilateral secession? The chapter explicitly tests three hypotheses drawn from rational deterrence theory: (1) The Muslims did not expect the Serbs to respond to unilateral secession with retaliatory violence; (2) The Muslims expected to suffer massive violence regardless of whether or not they seceded unilaterally; (3) The Muslims expected that by seceding they could attain their goal of controlling a unitary Bosnia at a cost in retaliatory violence against Muslim civilians that they deemed acceptable. If none of these hypotheses were confirmed by the evidence, the null hypothesis would hold that the tragic challenge is explained by some non-rational theory. In fact, however, the evidence confirms the third hypothesis.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four parts. First, I conduct a detailed test of the hypotheses with regard to the first part of the tragic challenge, Muslim rejection in July 1991 of an agreement to keep Bosnia within a rump Yugoslavia. Second, I conduct an analogous test with regard to the second half of the challenge, Muslim rejection in the first three months of 1992 of agreements to divide Bosnia into ethnic cantons prior to independence. Third, I summarize these findings and reconcile the theory's assumption of unitary rational decision-making with the factional politics evident in the case. Finally, I explore the counter-factual question of whether war could have been averted if the Bosnian Muslims or international community had pursued different policies.

My standard for testing the hypotheses is whether the preponderance of evidence indicates that key decisions were made for certain reasons – not merely that one or two officials made such a claim retrospectively. Thus, as will be noted, some officials voiced claims in interviews that appear to support one of the hypotheses that I end up rejecting based on the

preponderance of the evidence. In some cases, I reject their claims as self-serving revisionism, inconsistent with the concurrent record. In other cases, I accept their claims as explanations of their personal support for a policy, but determine that broader support for the policy within the Bosnian Muslim leadership stemmed from other sources. Assessing the causes of collective policy decisions by a leadership composed of individuals with different expectations and preferences is a difficult task, especially when measures of those preferences and expectations are derived in part based on retrospective claims by the individuals. My methods are not necessarily foolproof, which is why I present as much evidence as possible to allow readers to decide for themselves whether my assessments are convincing.

To summarize my conclusions, I find that the third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory explains the Bosnian Muslims' tragic challenge. Most Muslim leaders expected that their decision to arm and secede unilaterally from Yugoslavia would trigger a violent Serb backlash. At the same time, virtually all of these Muslim leaders expected that they could avoid such a backlash by staying within a rump Yugoslavia, and some also expected they could avoid a backlash by negotiating a cantonization of Bosnia prior to independence. Yet they chose to secede unilaterally because they expected to receive international recognition and intervention that would enable them to achieve their goal of controlling an independent unitary Bosnia. They expected the cost of unilateral secession to be thousands of retaliatory civilian killings, which they viewed as an acceptable cost to achieve their goal, but they did not foresee the much higher eventual toll. If they had not expected international assistance, it appears unlikely they would have launched the tragic challenge, at least when they did and as they did, so that the resulting mass killing of Muslims probably could have been avoided or mitigated. It is possible that even without expectations of international intervention they still would have launched the challenge, but only after preparing better for war, which likely would have reduced the ultimate Muslim toll.

Testing the Theory, Part 1: Muslim Rejection of the Belgrade Initiative

Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that Bosnia's Muslim leaders rejected the Belgrade Initiative because they did not expect that rejecting the deal and pursuing armed unilateral secession would cause the much stronger Serbs to attack them. There is little

evidence for this and plentiful evidence to the contrary. As recalled by Hasan Cengic, a senior associate of Izetbegovic who was in charge of procuring weapons abroad, Bosnia's Muslims became aware of Serb preparations for violence by February 1991, five months before the Belgrade Initiative and 14 months before the outbreak of war. They also knew in early 1991 that the Bosnian police force still was 69 percent Serb. In addition, he says, by July 1991 they were aware that the Yugoslav army was re-deploying troops from Slovenia into Bosnia, and they had learned from the Croatian war that the army was willing to use overwhelming force to keep control of Serb-inhabited areas. Meanwhile the Bosnian Muslims had virtually no weapons because in the preceding year the federal army had confiscated most of the stocks belonging to the republic's territorial defense forces. "We knew without a political solution, Belgrade will pursue military means. . . . We thought we couldn't defend ourself. We were already 100-percent occupied." In addition, Cengic says, the Muslims knew that the Serb military buildup was intended to "deter our declaration of independence."¹

For some Bosnian Muslims, the implicit Serb threat was apparent even before the outbreak of fighting in Croatia and the army buildup in Bosnia. For example, during the election campaign in 1990, Zulfikarpasic warned that if violence broke out in Bosnia it would be a war "to destroy an entire nation and to cleanse the territory of its Muslims . . . it is not an exaggeration to say it would lead to their total extermination."² By early 1991, he says, he "had proof that entire Serbian [sic] villages [in Bosnia] were supplied with weapons by the army, and that they had come from Serbia. . . . I found out about the army's orders, the preparations being made by Serbia, the movements of troops, the tank units taking up various positions, the trenches being dug around Sarajevo." Zulfikarpasic had no access to secret intelligence, because he was not a member of the Bosnian government, which shows that this information was widely known in Bosnia. The threat of Serb violence was unmistakable, he argues: "The Yugoslav army stood behind the Serbs . . . It was one of the largest armies in Europe, with unlimited supplies of arms and munitions. Also it had become frustrated for having been in some way deceived in Slovenia and then beaten [sic] in Croatia, and it was only waiting for the chance to show its strength, to retaliate in Bosnia. This was all obvious."³

¹ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

² Stitkovic and Udovicki, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Second War," p. 167.

³ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, pp. 171, 184.

This evidence demonstrate that the Bosnian Muslims were fully aware by July 1991 that the much stronger Serbs planned to launch massive violence in Bosnia, as they already were doing in Croatia, if the Muslims rejected compromise and pursued armed secession from Yugoslavia. Given this fact, the only way in which the first hypothesis could be supported is if Muslim officials rejected the Belgrade Initiative because they expected to find another compromise with the Serbs prior to the outbreak of violence. No Muslim official makes this assertion. The grandest claim is that of Hasan Cengic, who says only that, “We were buying time until April 1992 [i.e., international recognition], and until then we thought a negotiated outcome might be possible.” However, even if some individual Muslims thought that another compromise still “might be possible” despite their rejection of the Belgrade Initiative, most Muslims did not, because their grand strategy ruled out the only other compromise that the Serbs might accept – ethnic cantonization prior to independence. Thus, the Muslims did not reject the Belgrade Initiative because they expected to reach some other compromise with the Serbs to avert war. Rather, they rejected the initiative because their grand strategy, in the wake of Croatia’s secession from Yugoslavia, was to pursue unilateral secession despite expecting this would lead to violent confrontation with the Serbs. Indeed, as a commentary in Sarajevo’s leading newspaper observed in April 1992, once Bosnia’s Muslims declared they would not remain in Yugoslavia without Croatia – and had ruled out the ethnic division of the republic – war became all but inevitable in Bosnia.⁴

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the Muslims rejected the Belgrade agreement because they expected to suffer massive violence regardless of whether they accepted the agreement or not. Upon first examination, this appears implausible, because there is little evidence the Muslims feared a Serb attack if they agreed to keep Bosnia in Yugoslavia. However, the question becomes more complex if the definition of violence is interpreted more broadly. Many Bosnian Muslims did fear that aligning with Serbia would lead them into a war against Bosnia’s Croats, backed by Croatia. In addition, some Bosnian Muslims feared that joining a rump Yugoslavia would lead to a long-term degradation of their welfare – arguably a form of “structural violence.” Each of these possibilities is explored below.

⁴ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 73, citing a column by Emir Hubul in *Oslobodjenje*.

Only two Bosnian Muslim officials, Haris Silajdzic and Omer Behmen, claim in interviews that the Serbs would have attacked Bosnia and slaughtered Muslims even if the Muslims had agreed to the Belgrade Initiative. Silajdzic avers that Milosevic wanted a territorial war in order to divide Bosnia with Tudjman, so that the Belgrade Initiative was “a waste of time.” Even if the Muslims had signed, he says, the Serbs “would have cleansed us or treated us like Kosovo” (where ethnic Albanians, mostly Muslim, recently had been disenfranchised). He claims that Serb violence in Bosnia had nothing to do with any Muslim challenge but rather was the culmination of a long-standing extremist strategy: “For 200 years Serb nationalists have been preparing their plan.” The only way for the Muslims to have avoided war, he says, was if “we had just left or lain down to die.”⁵ Similarly, Omer Behmen claims the Serbs would have attacked Bosnia’s Muslims even if they agreed to stay in Yugoslavia. He says that under Milosevic’s plan for a greater Serbia, “there was no room for Muslims and others in Yugoslavia. We would be either killed or cleansed, and they would destroy all our heritage – mosques, libraries, cemeteries.”⁶ However, even if these two officials sincerely believe this and are not merely reciting *post-facto* justifications for the Muslims’ tragic challenge, theirs is not the prevailing view even among hardline Muslim nationalists and so cannot explain that challenge.

A more widely cited concern among the Muslims was that embracing the Belgrade Initiative would have led to a violent secession from Bosnia of its Croats, backed by Croatia, and thus engulfed Bosnia’s Muslims in violence anyway. For example, Muhamed Cengic, the vice-president of Izetbegovic’s party, says the Muslims were in a “tough situation: if we left Yugoslavia, Serbia would attack; if we stayed in Yugoslavia, we’d have to fight Croatia.”⁷ Ejup Ganic, the Muslim vice-president of Bosnia, says he worried that in such a war against Croatia, Muslim recruits would be sent by Belgrade to the front lines.⁸ However, these concerns by themselves cannot explain the Muslims’ rejection of the Belgrade Initiative, because it was obvious for several reasons that a secession by Bosnia’s Croats would be less costly to the Muslims than a war against the Serbs. First of all, it was uncertain that the Croats even would launch an uprising in response to implementation of the Belgrade Initiative, despite their threats

⁵ Haris Silajdzic, phone interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁶ Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999.

⁷ Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000.

⁸ Ejup Ganic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999.

to do so.⁹ If the Muslims and Serbs, representing more than 80 percent of Bosnia's population, had agreed to keep the republic in Yugoslavia, the international community would have supported them and remained committed to maintaining Bosnia's integrity. Thus, a secessionist uprising by Bosnia's Croats would have engendered substantial international opposition to the Croats, at a time when Croatia's Tudjman desperately needed international support to fend off Serbia's attack on his republic. Accordingly, Tudjman, ever the pragmatic politician, might well have stifled, or at least postponed, a Bosnian Croat uprising. Second, even if the Bosnian Croats had launched an uprising, it was obvious that the Muslims would fare much better with the backing of Yugoslavia's army against the republic's Croats than vice-versa – that is, with the backing of the Croats against the army – because of the vast superiority of the Yugoslav army over Bosnian Croat forces, and the fact that the Croatian army was retreating from the Yugoslav army at the time.¹⁰ The only Croat areas of Bosnia likely to secede successfully were those in Herzegovina bordering Croatia, which were of relatively little concern to Muslim officials because few Muslims lived there. Thus, the danger of triggering a war with the Croats, while a real concern, cannot explain the Muslims' rejection of the Belgrade Initiative.

Some Muslims also expressed concerns, at the time and in retrospect, that in practice the Belgrade Initiative would have relegated the Muslims to second-class status in Yugoslavia, and thus subjected them to discrimination that scholars sometimes refer to as “structural violence.”¹¹ Hasan Cengic says “the deal was good, but there was no way to trust” that Milosevic would honor its provisions that provided for Bosnia's sovereignty within Yugoslavia. Moreover, Cengic says, because the agreement was merely intra-state between ethnic groups, rather an international treaty between two states, the international community could not be counted on to enforce its provisions. As a result, he says, Bosnia's Muslims feared they would become dominated by Serbia as had happened to other Yugoslav republics and provinces, including

⁹ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 71, 73, argue otherwise, claiming that these Croat threats indicate they would have launched an uprising if the Belgrade Initiative had been signed.

¹⁰ Richard Merle Wilcox, *The politics of transitional anarchy: Coalitions in the Yugoslav civil wars, 1941-1945 and 1991-1995*. Ph.D. Dissertation (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000), argues that the Muslims chose to ally with the Croats rather than the Serbs because of classic balance-of-power considerations – i.e., the two weaker powers were allies against the strongest power – and because it was easier for the Muslims to resolve their territorial and demographic disputes with the Croats than the Serbs. However, Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 29, indicate that the Muslims had difficult territorial disputes with both the Serbs and Croats.

¹¹ The concept was first proposed by Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 3, pp. 167-191.

“Kosovo and Montenegro.”¹² In December 1991, Bosnia’s Muslim vice-president, Ejup Ganic, cited similar concerns to explain why, following Croatia’s secession, Bosnia had rejected the Belgrade Initiative and instead was pursuing independence. “Bosnia can’t survive in a ‘Yugoslavia’ controlled by Serbia. We’ve had plenty of time to see how Milosevic deals with minorities in Serbia: the Hungarians [in Vojvodina], the Muslims [in Sandzak], and the Albanians [in Kosovo]. We’d be crazy to make ourselves vulnerable to that kind of oppression.”¹³

At first blush, such rhetoric suggests that the Bosnian Muslims were driven by security concerns – based on the perceived treatment of others in Yugoslavia – to reject staying in the federation. However, the actual level of “oppression” suffered by the other cited groups, provinces and republics of Yugoslavia does not support this notion. For example, the Hungarians in Vojvodina were one of the wealthiest groups in Yugoslavia – indeed, better off than most ethnic Serbs. Admittedly, in 1989 Serbia did revoke Vojvodina’s autonomy that had been granted in 1974. Otherwise, however, the Hungarians in the province suffered no oppression, discrimination, or diminution of rights, and were treated as completely equal citizens of Serbia and Yugoslavia. Similarly, neither Montenegro nor Montenegrins suffered any oppression at Serb hands after Milosevic successfully installed his allies at the helm of that republic in 1989. In the one case of real Serb oppression, Kosovo, the suffering of ethnic Albanians was in large measure a consequence of their boycott of Serbian authority. For example, most Albanians who lost their jobs were fired only when they refused to sign loyalty oaths to Serbia. Moreover, in Kosovo at the time, the Serbs had not perpetrated war, ethnic killing, or ethnic cleansing – all of which they reserved as retaliation against entities that launched armed secessions against their authority. (For details on Kosovo, see Chapter 7.)

Thus, if they had stayed in Yugoslavia, Bosnia’s Muslims most likely would not have risked violence or discrimination at Serb hands, but merely the loss of political control of their republic. The Bosnian Muslims almost certainly would have fared better than Kosovo’s Albanians – so long as they did not follow the Albanians’ lead by declaring themselves independent and refusing to obey Belgrade’s central authority – and probably would have fared about as well as the Montenegrins or Vojvodina’s Hungarians. Zulfikarpasic rejects completely

¹² Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

¹³ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 177.

the criticism that his initiative would have relegated Bosnia to the status of Kosovo. Instead, he estimates that Bosnia would have wound up like Montenegro – “which did pretty well. It survived and is fairly autonomous. . . . The Kosovo excuse is the excuse of losers who are guilty for the catastrophe. It would never have been the same here as in Kosovo.”¹⁴ Zulfikarpasic says his confidence stems from the fact that the Serbs had strong incentive to honor the agreement, because they were trying to achieve the lifting of sanctions at the time by burnishing their international reputation, which had been severely tarnished by their war in Croatia. “At that time the Serbs felt isolated, they were in a war with the Croats that was not going their way; they were not winning it and it was bloody. Europe was against them as the aggressor . . . The Serbs had the feeling that they were friendless and politically isolated in Europe,” so they would have tried to win back international support by honoring the agreement.¹⁵

Indeed, there is good reason to believe that Bosnia’s Muslims would have fared better under the Belgrade Initiative than they ultimately did by rejecting it. Even Burg and Shoup, who have no sympathy for Milosevic, cite a number of reasons why accepting the deal might have been the superior choice for Bosnia’s Muslims:

First, it would have brought the Yugoslav army into the Muslim camp and avoided civil war between the Muslims and the Serbs. Second, while it might initially have involved political costs, since the new federation would be dominated by the Serbs and Milosevic, it would have united all the Muslims of former Yugoslavia in one state (that is, Muslims from Kosovo, Sandzak, and Bosnia-Herzegovina). Eventually, one can surmise, the Muslims would have become a political force to be reckoned with in the new Yugoslavia. Finally, Bosnia-Herzegovina probably would have been able, with the support of Montenegro, to retain its status as a republic and many of the powers it had enjoyed in the old Yugoslav federation.¹⁶

To summarize, many Bosnian Muslims did fear they would suffer some form of violence even if they agreed to the Belgrade Initiative. However, the expected violence from implementing the agreement was much smaller than the expected violence of rejecting it and facing war against the Serbs. Thus, like the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis of rational deterrence theory cannot account for the Muslims’ rejection of the Belgrade Initiative.

¹⁴ Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999.

¹⁵ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 152.

¹⁶ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 71-72.

Testing the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis predicts that the Muslims rejected the Belgrade Initiative – despite expecting this to provoke a Serb attack that could be avoided by implementing the initiative – because they expected to attain their goal of controlling an independent Bosnia at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. There is strong evidence that the Muslims perceived their choice in this way, and rejected the agreement for precisely this reason. Moreover, interviews with senior Muslim officials reveal that their calculus relied heavily on the expected role of the international community.

A speech by Izetbegovic in 1991 makes clear the Muslims were fully aware of the deterrent contest in which they were engaged. During parliamentary debate, he stated: “The question of sovereignty . . . must be resolved. This way or that way. . . . [W]ill we accept peace at any price in Bosnia, bend our heads once and for all, because of peace accept an inferior position for the next fifteen years, or shall we say, we want sovereignty, risking a conflict?”¹⁷ This quote underscores that the first and second hypotheses do not account for the tragic challenge. The Muslims clearly were aware that by rejecting the Belgrade Initiative they were “risking a conflict.” Moreover, they expected that they could preserve “peace” if they were willing to sacrifice their demand for “sovereignty.” If they agreed to stay in Yugoslavia, their expected cost was not ethnic killing and cleansing, as Behmen and Silajdzic later claimed, but rather “accepting an inferior position” in Yugoslavia. Thus, they rejected the agreement because they preferred “risking a conflict” with the better-armed Serbs to “accepting an inferior position” in Yugoslavia.

Other Muslim officials confirm that they rejected the agreement because they wanted to be the dominant group in Bosnia rather than a subordinate group in Yugoslavia. Edhem Bicakcic, another of Izetbegovic’s long-time associates, who later became vice-president of the party and prime minister of Bosnia, says: “We rejected the agreement because Croatia wouldn’t be in it, so we would have to bow down to Serbia.” He also confirms that this prevailing view in the party ultimately forced Izetbegovic’s hand. According to Bicakcic, the initiative was “not acceptable in the political circles which Izetbegovic led. We said it had to be an equal relationship. But the Belgrade agreement would be Serbian hegemony . . . We around him didn’t want that at all.” Hasan Cengic says bluntly that the Muslims rejected the agreement because the

¹⁷ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 77. The quote is from October 14, 1991.

rump “Yugoslavia would be majority Serb.” Ejup Ganic says that Izetbegovic could not convince his colleagues to accept the Belgrade Initiative because they were convinced that “rump Yugoslavia” was equal to “greater Serbia.”¹⁸

Although the evidence demonstrates that the Muslims consciously chose to endure the costs of rejecting the agreement rather than sacrifice their goal of controlling Bosnia, it is hard to know with precision what they expected those costs to be. However, it is clear that they expected the costs to be significantly reduced by international intervention, which they believed would follow from international recognition of Bosnia’s independence. According to Zulfikarpasic, as early as the summer of 1991, Ganic and Silajdzic claimed that if Bosnia obtained UN recognition, the Muslims would “receive protection.” Likewise, Izetbegovic told him that summer that “the United States and United Kingdom will not allow a single massacre.” Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic were much more skeptical about the prospects for international intervention, and replied at the time that, “They will never send troops. They will send blankets and medicine and will count the dead.”¹⁹

Interestingly, the nascent war in Croatia at the time could be used by either side to support its view. The international community had yet to intervene in Croatia, but neither had it yet recognized that republic’s declaration of independence. In addition, the Serbs had yet to launch their most brutal attack on Vukovar. Thus, Zulfikarpasic could argue that if Bosnian Muslims refused to compromise, they would suffer an even graver fate than Croatia, while the ruling Bosnian Muslims still could insist that international recognition would bring intervention (in both Croatia and Bosnia). Indeed, even six months later – after the destruction of Vukovar, the recognition of Croatia, and the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Serb-occupied areas of Croatia – both Muslim camps in Bosnia still could insist that the example of Croatia supported their view.

These differing expectations about forthcoming international intervention help explain why Izetbegovic’s party rejected Zulfikarpasic’s initiative. Zulfikarpasic proposed the deal because he expected that in its absence the Bosnian Muslims would suffer an enormous cost in deadly violence at the hands of the Serbs. By contrast, other important Muslim officials, such as

¹⁸ Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999. Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Ejup Ganic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999.

¹⁹ Adil Zulfikarpasic, interview with author, Zurich, Switzerland, October 18, 1999. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

Ganic and Silajdzic, expected a much lower cost from rejecting the agreement because they expected international intervention to mitigate Serb retaliation. Had these latter officials not expected foreign intervention, their expected cost of rejecting the initiative would have been much higher and they might have agreed to support it. However, other hardliners rejected the initiative even though they were skeptical of forthcoming intervention, as detailed in the next section, which indicates that they had a high tolerance for retaliatory violence against their fellow Muslim civilians. Thus, it is only possible, rather than certain, that in the absence of expectations of humanitarian intervention, the Muslims would have signed and implemented the Belgrade Initiative – and thereby averted the devastating war between Bosnia’s Serbs and Muslims.

Testing the Theory, Part 2: Muslim Rejection of Cantonization

Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis predicts that the Muslims refused to accept cantonization prior to declaring independence because they did not expect this would cause the Serbs to attack them with massive force. Although a few Muslim officials make this claim, there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. First, Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav army officials issued repeated, explicit warnings. Second the Serbs added credibility to these threats by maneuvering army forces into place for nine months prior to the outbreak of war, and the Muslims were aware of these military preparations. Last, and most important, the vast majority of Bosnian Muslim officials say they perceived the Serbs as credibly threatening to attack if the Muslims rejected the compromise of cantonization prior to independence.

Only a few Bosnian Muslim officials claim they did not expect the Serbs to launch massive violence if the Muslims armed themselves, rejected cantonization, and pursued secession. Izetbegovic himself, at times, has made this argument, claiming that although he was aware of the Serbs’ military superiority, he did not expect them to retaliate with a military offensive or ethnic cleansing of captured territories. He says that he expected the Serbs either to accept Bosnia’s independence or to launch a relatively bloodless coup against him, because that would be a “more logical and reasonable response.”²⁰ Under the latter scenario, he expected that Bosnia “could perhaps be occupied by the Yugoslav army . . . where maybe a type of military

²⁰ Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

dictatorship would be introduced.”²¹ However, Izetbegovic’s claim strains credibility, because Serb forces could not have occupied the republic peacefully given that tens of thousands of Muslims were armed to prevent such an outcome. Indeed, Izetbegovic at other times has conceded he was aware of the threat, as detailed below.

A somewhat more common, and more credible, claim is that of Ejup Ganic, Izetbegovic’s vice-president, who concedes that he expected Serb retaliation but not its extent. After the earlier Serb offensive against Dubrovnik, in neighboring Croatia, Ganic says he thought, “My God, what Serbs can do! And what the international community will tolerate!” Despite this, he claims that he and “99 percent of people underestimated the Serb potential for violence . . . even after Vukovar.” In part, he attributes this to constraints, imposed by Belgrade, on media coverage in Bosnia of the Vukovar offensive. He concedes he knew the Serbs were relatively stronger in Bosnia than in Croatia but, in an interesting argument, claims this led him to expect the Serbs to be more restrained in Bosnia. “We thought the Serbs had so much power here they wouldn’t use violence.”²² Similarly, in March 1992, Haris Silajdzic told U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that he expected the Yugoslav army in Bosnia to stay “out of politics.”²³

However, both the Bosnian Serbs and the Yugoslav army issued numerous explicit threats to use overwhelming force if the Muslims unilaterally tried to take all of Bosnia out of Yugoslavia. On October 15, 1991, during parliamentary debate on the Muslims’ resolution to declare Bosnia’s sovereignty, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic explicitly warned the Muslims against unilateral secession: “You want to take Bosnia down the same highway of hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are traveling. . . . the Muslim people [may] disappear, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war – How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia?”²⁴ After the EC’s Badinter panel suggested that an independence referendum could qualify Bosnia for recognition, Karadzic similarly warned that, “The Muslims had started down the path that led Croatia to a hell, except the hell in Bosnia will be one hundred

²¹ Alija Izetbegovic, interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993.

²² Ejup Ganic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999. In addition, the argument that the Serbs blocked media coverage of events in Vukovar is made by a Bosnian Serb military officer who stayed loyal to the Muslim-led government, Jovan Divjak, interview with author, Sarajevo, Bosnia, October 15, 1999.

²³ Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 641-42.

²⁴ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 215. A slightly different translation is contained in Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 78. Interestingly, Karadzic was permitted to speak as the leader of the SDS party, even though he was a member neither of Bosnia’s parliament nor of its presidency. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p. 143.

times worse and will bring about the disappearance of the Muslim nation.”²⁵ On March 6, 1992, after the Muslims and Croats voted in the referendum and declared independence, Karadzic threatened that if the EC recognized Bosnia prior to a deal on cantonization, there would be a civil war.²⁶ He told foreign journalists that if the Muslims persisted in secession, “you’ll see blood up to the knees.”²⁷ Finally, on March 16, 1992, barely a week before the Muslims rejected the final EC cantonization agreement, Karadzic warned that the absence of such an agreement would lead to “a civil war between ethnic groups and religions with hundreds of thousands dead and hundreds of towns destroyed.” Attempting to illustrate to the Muslims the futility of their intransigence, he added: “after such a war we would have completely the same situation – three Bosnias – which we have right now.”²⁸

The Yugoslav army issued explicit warnings that it would use force if the Bosnian Muslims insisted on arming and pursuing unilateral secession. On December 19, 1991, Izetbegovic told the local commander of the Yugoslav army in Sarajevo that he intended to declare independence. The commander replied by asking the president if he intended to declare a civil war.²⁹ The army also clearly warned foreign officials. For example, on January 6, 1992, the Yugoslav Defense Minister, General Veljko Kadijevic, told U.S. ambassador Warren Zimmermann that western recognition of Bosnia’s independence would lead to war. The credibility of this threat was only strengthened the following day, when Belgrade replaced Kadijevic (who was half Croat) with a Bosnian Serb, Blagoje Adzic, who promptly warned the ambassador “there would be war” if Bosnia were recognized.³⁰

Had there been any doubt about the credibility of these threats, it should have been removed by the extensive military preparations undertaken by the Bosnian Serbs and the Yugoslav army, of which the Muslims were well aware. In addition to the early preparations mentioned above, in January 1992, following the cease-fire in Croatia, the Yugoslav army withdrew most of its forces from that republic into Bosnia. At the same time, Belgrade ordered a

²⁵ Stitkovac and Udovicki, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Second War.” p. 170.

²⁶ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 118.

²⁷ Stitkovac and Udovicki, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Second War.” p. 173.

²⁸ David Binder, “U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10.

²⁹ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 217.

³⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 185.

massive transfer of military personnel so that its army in Bosnia would be almost exclusively Bosnian-born Serbs, to increase its effectiveness and legitimacy as an “indigenous” force.³¹ On March 2, 1992, the day after the independence referendum, Bosnian Serbs erected barricades in Sarajevo. As Burg and Shoup observe, “At a minimum, the actions of the Serbs could be taken as a crude warning aimed at dissuading the Bosnian government from declaring independence prior to the successful conclusion of the EC-sponsored negotiations.”³² Even the UN’s International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia later conceded in one of its rulings that, “Both Bosnian Serbs and Croats made it apparent that they would have recourse to armed conflict rather than accept minority membership of a Muslim-dominated state.”³³

Most importantly, nearly all interviewed Muslim officials acknowledge they were aware of the Serb threats and found them largely credible. Izetbegovic and his vice-president from the immediate pre-war period, Muhamed Cengic, each quote the Karadzic threats verbatim in retrospective interviews, indicating that they struck a chord at the time. Izetbegovic adds, “We always negotiated under the blackmail threat of violence, because the Serbs had the Yugoslav army behind them.” Cengic, in explaining what motivated his initial attempt to compromise on cantonization, recalls that “the concentration of the Yugoslav army was enormous, so we Bosnians couldn’t do anything, so we looked for any way to avoid the war.”³⁴ A younger Muslim official, Almir Alikadic, similarly says, “We wanted to avoid war because it would be worse than Croatia.” Behmen says, “Especially after Vukovar, we knew war was inevitable.” Bicakcic says the Muslims knew that war would be “most tragic.”³⁵

Sefer Halilovic, the commander of the Muslims’ main militia before the war and of Bosnia’s army after independence, says he wasn’t surprised when the Yugoslav army supported the Bosnian Serbs against them. He reports that he briefed Izetbegovic prior to the war on the number of Yugoslav army troops and Serb paramilitaries in the republic and their aims. “How could Izetbegovic be surprised?” he asks. “No one here understands that either.”³⁶ Indeed,

³¹ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 217-18.

³² Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 118.

³³ Hayden, “Bosnia’s Internal War,” p. 48.

³⁴ Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000. Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Alija Izetbegovic, interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993.

³⁵ Almir Alikadic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999. Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999.

³⁶ Sefer Halilovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999.

Izetbegovic was not totally surprised, as he reveals by acknowledging that the Muslims took defensive measures prior to declaring independence: "We had light weaponry and counted on police members to defend the cities." Even more explicitly, he concedes that when the Muslims seceded unilaterally, the Serb "aggression . . . was not completely unexpected. We did know what we could expect." However, he insists, "nobody knew that it was going to be this bad."³⁷ This final point may well be accurate, and is elucidated in regard to the third hypothesis below. But even if the Muslims did not expect the size of the Serb retaliation, they still expected a significant retaliation, which indicates that the first hypothesis cannot account for their rejection of cantonization prior to secession.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis predicts that the Muslims rejected cantonization prior to independence because they expected to suffer the same violent fate whether or not they accepted the plan. This argument is made in retrospect by many Bosnian Muslim officials, who claim they expected cantonization would be merely a precursor to ethnic cleansing and hard partition. They say they feared that the Serbs, following cantonization, would launch aggression to ethnically cleanse the cantons under their control and to capture additional territory to link them together into one contiguous area, which then would secede from Bosnia to join Serbia. The Muslims say these fears originated in their knowledge that Tudjman and Milosevic had discussed a two-way partition of Bosnia as early as March 1991, and were exacerbated by the cantonal maps proposed by the Serbs (but rejected by the EC) in early 1992 that envisioned a single, large, contiguous Serb canton. The Muslims say their fears later were vindicated by the military campaign the Serbs launched in response to the unilateral secession.

In reality, however, at the time cantonization was rejected in early 1992, it appears the prevailing expectation among Muslim officials was that cantonization might well avert war. Moreover, the evidence indicates that the Muslims actually rejected cantonization for other reasons, and expected this rejection to provoke war. Thus, the puzzle that must be explained is why the Muslims consciously rejected a chance for peace in favor of a guaranteed war.

³⁷ Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Alija Izetbegovic, interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993.

Although the second hypothesis offers some insight into their thinking, it cannot explain why the Muslims chose a path that had such a higher expected cost.

Some Muslims were opposed to cantonization because of their staunch opposition to hard partition – that is, the division of Bosnian territory into three parts, each ethnically homogenous and territorially contiguous. The Muslims opposed such partition for at least three reasons. First, in light of the republic’s intermingled ethnic demography, they believed that partition could be accomplished only by significant population exchanges. Because the Muslims opposed such exchanges and were willing to fight to prevent them, they viewed partition as tantamount to war. In October 1991, Izetbegovic told U.S. Ambassador Zimmermann that partition “might be a good idea if it were possible, but it’s not possible because the populations are too mixed.” The following month, Izetbegovic told his party congress that any ethnic division of Bosnia was “impossible without violence and blood.”³⁸ Second, the Muslims feared that any Muslim “mini-state” remaining after a hard partition might not be viable. As Hasan Cengic recalls their thinking: “Under partition, the Bosnian Serb republic would join Serbia, the Bosnian Croat republic would join Croatia, and our Bosnian mini-state wouldn’t survive. We would be split between them. So we thought it was better to take a chance with fighting.” Lastly, many Bosnian Muslim officials opposed partition, or any internal division of Bosnia, because they believed the Muslims should assert control over the entire republic.³⁹

However, cantonization was not the same as partition, at least in principle. It did not require population exchanges, and it would have avoided the problem of creating a fragile mini-state by maintaining the integrity of Bosnia’s external borders. Indeed, some Bosnian Muslim officials, including some hardliners, say they would have been willing to accept cantonization – if they had believed the Serbs would respect its terms. However, these officials say they were convinced the Serbs would not honor such a plan. Omer Behmen says, “It’s possible that Bosnia could have been ethnically divided without a war. But the Serbs weren’t acting in good faith.” Hasan Cengic likewise says the Serbs merely would have used the EC plan as “a starting point for aggression.” For him, cantonization meant partition, which meant forced population exchanges. “No, we were too intermixed; we would have had to order people to leave their house.” Even Muhamed Cengic, who had sought compromise with Karadzic in January 1992,

³⁸ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 127. Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 173.

³⁹ Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

says that by the time of the EC negotiations a month later, “No one believed the plan – that Serbs would observe the plan. We thought they’d violate it,” by dividing Bosnia with the Croats along the lines of the Tadjman-Milosevic agreement. As noted, Behmen adheres to the hardest line, insisting that the Serbs would have attacked even if the Muslims had abandoned their pursuit of independence: “War and the referendum were on different tracks.”⁴⁰

The Bosnian Serbs, however, insist with equal vehemence that they would have honored the EC-brokered cantonization plan if the Muslims had not withdrawn from it. Aleksa Buha, a senior member of the Bosnian Serb nationalist party and subsequently foreign minister of the Bosnian Serb republic, says “We would not have attacked. We wanted to avoid war. We would not have rejected the agreement.”⁴¹ As evidence, Bosnian Serb officials cite the fact that their forces did not attack in Bosnia until the Muslims rejected cantonization and declared independence. They also note that Serbia did not ethnically cleanse the Muslims in Serbia itself during the Bosnia war, and explain that this was because Serbia’s Muslims had not taken up arms and declared independence at the time. Serb officials do concede that after the war began in Bosnia, their strategy switched to ethnic cleansing and hard partition of the republic. Their explanation is that with the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence they no longer felt they could live securely as minorities in Muslim areas.⁴²

Karadzic says simply that, “the Serb nation would not leave Yugoslavia. . . . As nobody respected this, a conflict had to follow.”⁴³ This indicates that the Muslims could have averted war by accepting either the Belgrade Initiative or the EC’s revised cantonization plan, which permitted the republic’s Serbs to associate with Serbia. Plavsic likewise says that, “what brought war was the Muslims constantly ganging up on us” to push forward the declaration of sovereignty, the referendum, and then independence without agreeing first to cantonization. “The referendum and declaration of independence led to war. It was a sign we needed to protect ourselves and have self-determination.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000. Muhamcd Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000.

⁴¹ Aleksa Buha, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000.

⁴² Biljana Plavsic, interview with author, Banja Luka, July 24, 2000.

⁴³ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 218.

⁴⁴ Biljana Plavsic, interview with author, Banja Luka, July 24, 2000.

Many Bosnian Muslim officials, from moderates to hardliners, also believed at the time that cantonization might avert war. For example, in January 1992, Bosnia's Muslim vice-president, Muhamed Cengic, proposed delaying the independence referendum until cantonization could be negotiated with the Serbs, because he sincerely believed this was the only way to avert war. His proposal demonstrably was not merely a sop to the international community, because the EC had not yet proposed cantonization or convened the Cutileiro negotiations. Izetbegovic also initially supported Cengic's proposal, apparently because he too thought it could avert war. As noted, Muslim hardliners persuaded Izetbegovic to reverse himself and reject cantonization, but they did not rely on the argument that cantonization would lead to war. Instead, they argued that agreeing to cantonization would undercut the Muslims' appeals to the international community to support a unitary central government in Bosnia. As the Serdarevic brothers report, at the decisive Muslim party meeting in February 1992, the hardliners rejected the Lisbon agreement on grounds that, "We were ready for war, not Serb occupation." This indicates that many Muslim hardliners viewed cantonization as an alternative to war, but rejected it anyway, because they were unwilling to grant the Serbs political control over any Bosnian territory – which they disdained as "Serb occupation" of their Muslim republic.

Thus, it appears that the Muslims were divided into at least three factions. One faction, led by Muhamed Cengic and Izetbegovic, expected that cantonization might well avert war, and so supported it. A second faction, perhaps including Omer Behmen and Hasan Cengic, was willing in principle to accept cantonization but believed the Serbs would violate it and launch a war anyway, so they opposed it. The third faction, including the Serdarevic brothers and other hardliners, apparently was decisive. This faction expected that cantonization could avert war, but rejected it anyway because – in accordance with the party's grand strategy – these officials insisted on asserting Muslim political control over all of Bosnia, despite expecting this to provoke war. Thus, it appears that most Bosnian Muslim officials expected that cantonization at least might avert war, but the party nevertheless rejected this option, fully expecting this step to lead to war. Their decision, to knowingly reject a chance for peace in favor of probable war, cannot be explained by the second hypothesis.

Figure 4-1
Muslim Party's Three Factions Combine to Reject Cantonization

	Compromisers (Izetbegovic/M.Cengic)	Distrustful (Behmen/H.Cengic)	Power Hungry Core Faction
Minimum acceptable goal	Muslim mini-state	Muslim mini-state	Muslim Bosnia
Expectation if Muslims accept cantonization	Muslim mini-state	Serbs/Croats devour Muslim mini-state	Muslim mini-state
Expectation if Muslims reject cantonization	War	War	War
Resulting stance on cantonization	Accept	Reject	Reject

Figure 4-1 summarizes the goals, expectations, and stances toward cantonization of the three factions of the ruling Bosnian Muslim party. It is impossible to determine with precision the relative size or power of each faction, although it appears that the “compromisers” were the smallest, while the “power hungry” were the largest. Indeed, the latter group apparently represented the overwhelming majority of the party, which rejected the option of a Muslim mini-state despite expecting that this option could avert war. Instead, they favored pursuing political control over all of Bosnia, even though they expected this to lead to war.

It is possible, although unlikely, that this core faction did not represent an absolute majority within the ruling Bosnian Muslim party. If so, then the “distrusters” were decisive in the party’s rejection of cantonization, because by allying with the “power hungry” they formed a majority opposed to such compromise. If the power hungry were not a majority, then the inability of some other Muslims to trust Serb commitments played an important role in the Muslim party’s rejection of cantonization.

Testing the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis predicts that the Bosnian Muslims rejected cantonization prior to independence despite expecting that this would provoke Serb violence because they expected to achieve their goal – control of a unitary, independent Bosnia – at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. There is strong confirming evidence for this hypothesis. First, the Muslim leadership explicitly discussed, and made decisions based on, such expected cost and benefit. Second, the Muslims did expect to achieve their goal at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. They expected that rejecting cantonization and declaring independence would enable them to achieve

political control over a unitary Bosnia. They also expected these actions to provoke Serb violence that otherwise might be avoided or at least reduced, but accepted such an increase in anticipated Serb violence as an acceptable cost for victory. However, they underestimated significantly the actual extent of Serb retaliation. Third, the Muslims held two key false expectations – that they would achieve their desired goal of a unitary Bosnia and that Serb retaliation would be limited. These in turn were based on an underlying third false expectation, that international intervention would be sufficient to deter or defeat the Serbs. Ambiguous signals from the United States appear to have been decisive in fostering this false expectation of forthcoming intervention. However, the evidence is mixed as to whether the Muslims would have acquiesced to cantonization – possibly averting war – if the international community had refrained from raising such false hopes of forthcoming intervention.

The Muslims debated and decided whether to accept cantonization based on an explicit consideration of expected cost and benefit. As reported by Bicakcic, after Izetbegovic initially accepted the EC's proposal in Lisbon, Muslim party officials debated "what price do we have to pay" for accepting or rejecting the agreement? According to Alikadic, the party openly debated "should we accept a Muslim mini-state?" Izetbegovic reports that both grand strategy and tactics were guided by such calculations and expectations. The long-term strategy was based on the expectation that the Muslims could achieve their goal of controlling a unitary Bosnia at an acceptable cost, but only if they acted tactically to retain international support and to avoid prematurely provoking the Serbs into violence. Izetbegovic explains: "Given Serb strength, we could not have very hard and resolute stances. We had to act tactically in order to explore all solutions and avoid a clash and buy time," until the international community recognized Bosnia. This explains certain erratic behavior that otherwise might appear irrational, such as Izetbegovic's repeated flip-flops on the EC cantonization proposal in March 1992. Several times during that month, he embraced the EC proposal solely to persuade international audiences that the Muslims were not an obstacle to peace, in order to retain their support for recognition. Each time, however, he subsequently rejected the EC proposal to ensure that recognition would be granted to a unitary Bosnia, not a cantonized one.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999. Almir Alikadic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999. Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000, says the Muslims rejected the EC proposal because

Indeed, Izetbegovic's flip-flops in March are best explained as tactics to "buy time," because his party had already decided in late-February to reject cantonization. By contrast, his earlier flip-flop on the Lisbon proposal in February is better attributed to intra-party debate and changing signals from the international community, as detailed below. For hardliners, however, even the initial February support for the Lisbon proposal was merely a tactic to buy time. For example, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, the third member of the Muslim delegation at Lisbon along with Siladzic and Izetbegovic, says: "We had the choice either to reject it or to accept it to buy some time. To reject it outright would identify us as guilty for obstructing the agreement and this could obstruct getting recognition. So we said, 'we will not reject it though not necessarily accept it,' although the newspaper said we accepted it. Izetbegovic felt strong resistance when he came back, so he withdrew his support."⁴⁶

On the surface, it appears absurd or irrational that the Muslims expected to gain control of a unitary Bosnia at low cost, given that they also perceived the Serb threats of retaliation as credible. However, this apparent anomaly is explained by the fact that the Muslims expected to receive support from the international community sufficient to enable them to deter or defeat the Serbs, and to reduce the cost of doing so. The vast majority of interviewed Muslim officials say they expected recognition to bring with it such support. Only one Muslim official, the military chief of staff, Sefer Halilovic, says he did not expect international assistance. However, he was a military rather than a political official, and so did not have a powerful voice in the decision to reject cantonization and declare independence.⁴⁷

A few Muslim officials say they actually expected to avoid war completely, because they expected the Serbs to be deterred from aggression merely by the international recognition of Bosnia's independence, based on a belief that such recognition came with an implicit guarantee of international protection. In an internal party meeting prior to the declaration of independence, Silajdzic declared that the Serbs "would never dare" to attack Bosnia after it received

doing otherwise "would promote confusion in the international community" about the Muslims' desired end-state of an independent, unitary Bosnia.

⁴⁶ Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁴⁷ Sefer Halilovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Halilovic says he never expected international military intervention on behalf of the Muslims because "England and France [were] on the Serb side, Germany [was] neutral, and the United States was too far away and thought it was a European question." Most other accounts identify Germany as a strong opponent of the Serbs, and backer of the Muslims and Croats, throughout the Balkans crisis of the 1990s.

recognition. Alikadic says, in retrospect, that he too “thought that upon international recognition, Milosevic would be deterred.” Hasan Cengic says, “We didn’t believe that after independence they [the Serbs] would be so stupid to attack an independent state. The ‘international community’ was a bigger reality than ‘Bosnia.’”⁴⁸

Most Muslim officials, on the other hand, say they expected a violent Serb response to their declaration of independence. Crucially, however, they also expected the international community to provide the assistance necessary to defeat the Serbs, protect Muslim civilians, and ensure the establishment of Bosnia as an independent unitary state. At the very least, according to Silajdzic, “we expected the same rights and privileges as an independent state,” specifically the “right to defend ourselves,” which he says was denied by the UN arms embargo. Muhamed Cengic says, “We thought Europe or the United Nations would do anything in their power to stop or prevent the war.” Izetbegovic says, in retrospect, that when he declared independence, “I expected the international community would recognize our independence and then defend the state it recognized . . . politically and militarily.” Filipovic confirms that, even prior to the war, Izetbegovic counted on attracting the international community and told Filipovic: “We must involve them, and they will take our side.” Bicakcic says, “We absolutely believed that UN recognition would guarantee military protection.” He also says the Muslims’ expectation of western backing encouraged them to be less compromising in negotiations with the Serbs prior to, and even after, the outbreak of war. Not until nearly three months into the war, according to Bicakcic, did the Muslims realize that international intervention would not be forthcoming to defend a unitary Bosnia. He says this realization occurred only after French President Francois Mitterand flew to Sarajevo, in late June 1992, but established only a UN humanitarian aid pipeline rather than a program of military assistance.⁴⁹

Perhaps the best evidence of the decisive role played by such false expectations is that once they evaporated, several months into the war, the Muslim leadership abandoned its

⁴⁸ Anonymous, interview with author, Sarajevo. Almir Alikadic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999. Hasan Cengic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 18, 2000.

⁴⁹ Haris Silajdzic, phone interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999. Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000. Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

insistence on a unitary Bosnia and embraced a series of cantonization plans, starting with the UN's Vance-Owen plan of early 1993, as the only hope of avoiding a hard partition.⁵⁰

In February 1993, Izetbegovic conceded to a radio interviewer:

[O]ur expectations have been betrayed. But perhaps these expectations were too high. They [UN peacekeepers] have not come here to protect us from the *Chetniks* [Serbs]. . . . Now that the Americans have accepted it [cantonization], looking at it realistically I do not think that there is an alternative. . . . America did not cross the Rubicon. I suppose you know what I am trying to say; it did not cross the river [i.e., support the Muslims militarily]. If it had, maybe we could have asked for something different. . . . Political wisdom forced us to oppose the para-states [hard partition] with the idea of provinces [cantonization]. . . . We do not have a great choice because pressure, setting conditions, gentle pressure, crude pressure [from the international community] are a constant factor in such negotiations: Gentle pressure is when they tell us to accept and then they will help us to rebuild. . . . Crude pressure is when they tell us that they will abandon us.⁵¹

The Muslims' initial expectation that international recognition would guarantee them military support was not merely the result of wishful thinking but stemmed also from misleading signals sent by foreign actors. However, the international community never explicitly promised military aid, as some have suggested. Izetbegovic did seek such guarantees from leading foreign politicians, but he concedes that "no western diplomat promised anything in that sense."⁵² Likewise, Haris Silajdzic says only that, "we expected, but not necessarily were promised" western assistance.⁵³ Rather than making explicit promises, the international community raised false hopes of forthcoming intervention through a series of actions and statements. The most overt action was the UN decision in early February 1992 to locate the headquarters of its peacekeeping mission for Croatia in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo.⁵⁴ As a result, soldiers from the "UN Protection Force" (UNPROFOR) started arriving in Sarajevo on March 13, 1992, just two days after U.S. Secretary of State James Baker informed Silajdzic that the United States would be recognizing Bosnia's independence the following month. According to Muhamed

⁵⁰ By this point, however, the Serbs had escalated their goals, rejecting cantonization and insisting on hard partition of Bosnia into territorially contiguous units.

⁵¹ Alija Izetbegovic, interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993.

⁵² Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999, confirms that Izetbegovic sought such guarantees.

⁵³ Haris Silajdzic, phone interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁵⁴ The operation was formally authorized in UNSCR 743 on February 21, 1992. See, http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unprof_b.htm [downloaded January 21, 2002].

Cengic, Bosnia's vice-president at the time, "Especially after UNPROFOR deployed in Bosnia for the Croatian peacekeeping mission . . . we really believed" that recognition would guarantee international protection. It is understandable that the Muslims interpreted this deployment as a signal of international support, especially because the UN intended it as such. The Security Council specifically chose to locate the headquarters for the Croatia peacekeeping mission in Sarajevo – despite explicit warnings from its staff that the city was a poor choice logistically and that war could erupt there imminently – in an attempt to deter Serb aggression.⁵⁵

The other major misleading signal was sent by the United States in late February 1992, when U.S. officials encouraged Izetbegovic to withdraw his consent from the EC's Lisbon cantonization plan. By this time, the Serbs had threatened clearly that if the independence referendum were held prior to agreement on cantonization, they would attack with their vastly superior forces. Considering that the referendum was only a few days away, both Bosnian and American officials had good reason to believe that following Washington's advice to reject the EC plan would provoke a war in which the Muslims could not defend themselves. Yet, the Muslims also knew that the United States repeatedly had expressed its sympathy for their goal of preserving a unitary Bosnia. Moreover, the Muslims had no reason to expect that U.S. officials would recommend to them a suicidal course of action. Accordingly, it was only logical for Izetbegovic to infer that the United States, by recommending a course that would provoke war, would assist him in that war.

The U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time, Warren Zimmermann, has denied encouraging Izetbegovic to withdraw his support for the Lisbon plan. However, multiple pieces of evidence, including Zimmermann's own words, belie this claim. In 1993, the *New York Times* quoted Zimmermann as admitting that the United States had encouraged Izetbegovic in February 1992 to withdraw his consent for the plan. Zimmermann initially refuted the report with a

⁵⁵ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 108. Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper: The Road to Sarajevo*, pp. 106, 119, 125. On March 6, 1992, prior to deploying to Sarajevo, UNPROFOR deputy commander MacKenzie told UN Undersecretary Marrick Goulding, "We honestly feel that Sarajevo is a poor choice as the location for our headquarters. Our 14,000 troops will be 350 kilometers away from us in Croatia. We have no mandate in Bosnia, and you couldn't pick a worse location to get in and out of. . . . More importantly, once we put the UN flag up in front of our headquarters, it will be a lightning rod for every problem in and around Sarajevo; yet we'll have neither mandate nor resources to deal with the inevitable requests for help. We recommend you reconsider." The request was summarily rejected. MacKenzie muses: "We hoped the UN was right, and our modest presence would keep the lid on the ethnic tensions in Sarajevo. . . . Perhaps the diplomats knew something we didn't." The UNPROFOR headquarters staff in Sarajevo comprised approximately 300 personnel, intended to oversee 14,000 troops in neighboring Croatia, which was approximately 200 miles away.

categorical denial, published as a letter to the editor, stating: "I encouraged him to stick by his commitment. I believe your assertions that the United States encouraged Bosnia to scrub the Lisbon agreement and that this may have led to the war are wrong. I am aware of no such encouragement to Bosnia; none was communicated to me or through me to Mr. Izetbegovic."⁵⁶ In his later memoirs, however, Zimmermann softens this denial: "I encouraged Izetbegovic to stick by what he'd agreed to. It wasn't a final agreement, I said, and there would be future opportunities for him to argue his views."⁵⁷ Even if U.S. diplomats had said nothing else to Izetbegovic at the time, this message from Zimmermann would have risked undermining the Lisbon proposal. By telling Izetbegovic that the agreement was not final and that he should try to change it in the future, Zimmermann clearly was signaling that the United States would support Izetbegovic if he backed away from his commitments at Lisbon.

However, there is evidence that the United States went much farther at the time, explicitly advising Izetbegovic to withdraw his consent from the EC's canonization plan. James Gow reports, based on interviews with Zimmermann, that the U.S. ambassador "advised Izetbegovic that if he really did not like the agreement, he should not have signed it . . . [Zimmermann was] telling Izetbegovic to stay in line with his conscience and his political support" – both of which opposed the agreement.⁵⁸ Muhamed Filipovic puts heavy blame on Zimmermann because, "he said he would help us. Although he never said with arms. . . . Izetbegovic must have believed aid was coming; otherwise, it was suicidal" to declare independence.⁵⁹

Perhaps most revealing, the *New York Times* quotes a "high-ranking State Department official" as saying: "The policy was to encourage Izetbegovic to break with the partition plan. . . . It was not committed to paper. We let it be known we would support his government in the United Nations if they got into trouble. But there were not guarantees, because [U.S. Secretary of State James] Baker didn't believe it [Serb aggression] would happen."⁶⁰

⁵⁶ David Binder, "U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992," *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10. Warren Zimmermann, "Bosnian About Face," *New York Times*, September 30, 1993, p. A24.

⁵⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 190.

⁵⁸ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 88.

⁵⁹ Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

⁶⁰ David Binder, "U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992," *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10.

Apparently, Baker did not believe that U.S. military assistance would be necessary because he had been advised by his regional experts that recognition of Bosnia's independence would avert war. This incorrect advice was based on a misreading of events in Croatia several months earlier. In Croatia, the war indeed had ended, at least temporarily, following the EC's recognition of the republic's independence, but this was merely a coincidence of timing. As detailed in Chapter 3, the main reason a cease-fire was achieved in Croatia is that the Yugoslav army already had succeeded in its goal of capturing – and ethnically cleansing non-Serbs from – the major Serb areas of Croatia. However, U.S. officials wrongly believed that recognition itself had ended the war in Croatia and thus could avert war in Bosnia. A better reading of history, or closer attention to events on the ground in Bosnia, would have predicted precisely the opposite – that premature recognition of Bosnia was almost certain to trigger war. Indeed, the UN commander in Sarajevo prior to the war recalls that, “Although we were not diplomats, all of us in uniform were pretty sure that fighting would break out around us as soon as independence was announced. There was little chance that the Bosnian Serbs would accept the consequences of a referendum they had boycotted a month-and-a-half earlier.”⁶¹

Ironically, until February 1992, the U.S. State Department did have a more accurate reading of the case. Its diplomats believed that recognizing Bosnia prior to an agreement on cantonization would trigger war, and thus they opposed it. In mid-February, however, at Zimmermann's urging, the United States reversed both its analysis and prescription. The ambassador now believed that Milosevic was so desperate to escape sanctions – and to obtain international recognition of his rump federation as the legal successor to the former Yugoslavia – that he would abandon Bosnia's Serbs and acquiesce to independence of the entire republic.⁶² Baker recalls in his memoirs that, “Warren Zimmermann in Belgrade . . . held the pragmatic hope that recognizing Bosnia might be one way to internationalize the problem and deter the Serbs from meddling.” On February 27, Baker received a memo from his assistant secretary for Europe, which was based on Zimmermann's advice and had the concurrence of deputy secretary Lawrence Eagleburger, stating: “Recognition is seen as a way to reinforce stability.”⁶³

⁶¹ Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper: The Road to Sarajevo*, p. 135. This quote is taken from the section of his memoirs discussing April 4, 1992, three days prior to U.S. recognition of Bosnia.

⁶² Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 100.

⁶³ Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 639–40.

On March 5, 1992, Baker wrote to the EC, urging early recognition of Bosnia.⁶⁴ The State Department's desk officer for Yugoslavia at the time, Richard Johnson, recalls that Secretary Baker "told the Europeans to stop pushing ethnic cantonization of Bosnia. . . . We pressed the Europeans to move forward on recognition."⁶⁵ The EC's negotiator, Jose Cutileiro, recalls bitterly: "President Izetbegovic and his aides were encouraged to scupper that [cantonization] deal and to fight for a unitary Bosnian state by well-meaning outsiders who thought they knew better."⁶⁶

Zimmermann confirms that "the [American] embassy was for recognition of Bosnia from sometime in February [1992] on. . . . Meaning me."⁶⁷ He also acknowledges that, "We reached an agreement with the EC to recognize Bosnia in hopes that internationalizing the problem, creating a state of Bosnia that would be a member of the UN and have an international personality, would deter Milosevic. Unfortunately it didn't. We were wrong in this."⁶⁸

In contrast to this frank admission in a live interview, however, Zimmermann in his memoirs attempts to shift blame to the EC and Izetbegovic. "With the EC supporting Bosnia's independence, he [Izetbegovic] seemed to think he could get away with it under the guns of the Serbs. Perhaps he counted on Western military support, though nobody had promised him that. Whatever his motives, his premature push for independence was a disastrous political mistake."⁶⁹ Remarkably, Zimmermann implies in this passage that it was the EC that pushed for early recognition of Bosnia, and that it was the EC's support that compelled Izetbegovic to seek independence. In reality, it was the U.S. role that was decisive: persuading the EC to support

⁶⁴ Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 639-42. Baker's letter to the EC stated, "We have wrestled with the question of whether recognition of Bosnia's independence would contribute to stability in that delicately balanced republic or encourage efforts by the large Serbian minority to destabilize the situation. We have concluded that while there obviously is not external influence that can guarantee the stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia, we can best contribute to that objective by a collective recognition of that republic's independence, and warning against efforts from within or without to undermine its integrity."

⁶⁵ David Binder, "U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992," *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Jose Cutileiro, letter to the editor, *Economist*, December 9, 1995. The letter also states: "the Muslims reneged on the agreement. Had they not done so, the Bosnian question might have been settled earlier, with less loss of (mainly Muslim) life and land."

⁶⁷ David Binder, "U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992," *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Warren Zimmermann, interview by Noah Adams, "All Things Considered," *National Public Radio*, March 18, 1994. The agreement reached was that the EC would recognize Bosnia in return for the United States recognizing Slovenia and Croatia, which the EC had done several months earlier.

⁶⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 178.

early recognition despite the absence of a cantonization agreement, encouraging Izetbegovic to reject the EC's plan, and assuring him that Bosnia would be recognized even if it rejected cantonization. Thus, Zimmermann cannot legitimately shift blame onto others. At the least, Zimmermann made the same "disastrous political mistake" that he attributes to Izetbegovic. More than any other western official, it was Zimmermann who believed that the Muslims "could get away with" a declaration of independence "under the guns of the Serbs." Ironically, Zimmermann's memoirs are entitled "Origins of a Catastrophe," but they fail to acknowledge his own important role in those origins.

By February 1992, the only realistic hope of avoiding war in Bosnia was to persuade the Muslims to accept the EC's cantonization plan prior to declaring independence. However, the only leverage available to the EC to compel that acceptance was threatening to withhold international recognition of Bosnia, which the Muslims sought above all. Zimmermann's strategy – persuading the EC to recognize Bosnia at an early date regardless of whether the Muslims agreed to cantonization, and then informing the Muslims of this – eviscerated the EC's leverage and thereby undermined any chance the Muslims would acquiesce to the plan, which made a bloody war all but inevitable. Zimmermann defends his decision to support recognition by arguing that the EC's negotiations "held out little hope." In reality, however, the negotiations held out significant hope until he undermined them by pushing for immediate, unconditional recognition of Bosnia's independence.⁷⁰ As mediation scholar Saadia Touval explains, because of this American diplomacy, Izetbegovic "believed that the United States did not support the [EC] plan." As a result, the EC's "argument that the Cutileiro plan represented the best terms that they [the Muslims] were likely to get, fell on incredulous ears."⁷¹ Burg and Shoup reach a similar conclusion:

With the US-European commitment [of March 10 to recognize Bosnia on April 6] a matter of public record, it would seem that the Bosnian government had very little reason to take the ongoing EC-brokered talks seriously. Only if the United States and the EC had insisted on an agreement on constitutional issues as a condition for recognition would the Muslim side have been motivated to support the Cutileiro plan. . . . The mistake of the West . . . consisted of its unqualified support for the holding of a referendum on independence before the three nationalist parties had agreed on a constitutional solution [i.e., cantonization].

⁷⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 191.

⁷¹ Saadia Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars: The Critical Years, 1990-95* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2001).

The proper time for a referendum would have been after such an agreement, as foreseen in the Cutileiro plan.⁷²

Although Burg and Shoup label this the mistake of “the West,” it was in fact a mistake of U.S. policy, spearheaded by Zimmermann, and foisted on the EC against the will of its chief negotiator, Jose Cutileiro.

Summary and Further Observations

As the former Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s, Bosnia’s three ethnic groups had four possible ways to align themselves, each likely to produce a different outcome: (1) A Muslim-Serb alliance – as proposed in the Belgrade Initiative – would keep Bosnia unitary within a rump Yugoslavia, but likely trigger a militant secession by Bosnia’s Croats, possibly supported by Croatia. (2) A pan-ethnic Muslim-Croat-Serb alliance – as proposed by the EC – would agree to cantonize Bosnia prior to independence, and thereby possibly avert war. (3) A Muslim-Croat alliance – as proposed by some including the United States – would declare all of Bosnia independent from Yugoslavia, but thereby likely trigger a war against the more powerful Bosnian Serbs and Yugoslavia. (4) A Croat-Serb alliance – as proposed by Milosevic and Tudjman in March 1991 – would pursue the bifurcation and annexation of Bosnia by Croatia and Serbia and thereby deprive Bosnia’s Muslims of political control over any territory. Bosnia’s Muslims obviously sought most of all to avoid the last option, and so were left with three choices.

The Serbs, however, made clear in explicit, credible threats that only the first two of these three options – keeping Bosnia in rump Yugoslavia or agreeing to its cantonization prior to independence – could avert a devastating attack by the more powerful Serbs against the relatively defenseless Muslims, and the forceful partition of Bosnia. In light of the Serb threat, if the Muslims’ top priority was for Bosnia to be unitary, they had to agree to keep it in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, if the Muslims’ top priority was to be sovereign and independent of Yugoslavia, they first had to agree to some ethnic division of Bosnia. What the Muslims could not do was to pursue both of these priorities simultaneously – without provoking a Serb attack. This stark set of options was enunciated clearly by Nikola Koljevic, one of two Serb

⁷² Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 116, 125-26.

members of the Bosnian presidency, in January 1992, more than two months prior to the outbreak of war:

It must be decided whether it will be a unified Bosnia that will not be absolutely sovereign, or a sovereign Bosnia that will not be absolutely unified, meaning a Muslim Bosnia [comprising only the Muslim cantons]. Let a Muslim Bosnia be sovereign. Can Bosnia be both sovereign and unified/integral at the same time? Hardly.⁷³

Yet, despite such clear, credible statements from the Serbs, Bosnia's Muslims chose to pursue their third option – joining with the Croats to declare the independence of a unitary Bosnia – the only option sure to provoke war against the Serbs.

The evidence indicates that both parts of the Muslims' tragic challenge – rejection of the Belgrade Initiative to remain in rump Yugoslavia, and rejection of cantonization prior to independence – are best explained by the third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory. The Muslims sought control over all the territory of a unitary, independent Bosnia. They expected that by arming and declaring independence, they would provoke an attack by better-armed Serb forces who would kill thousands of Muslim civilians – and that this outcome could be avoided only by accepting one of the proposed compromises. Yet, they chose to reject the two proposed compromises, arm themselves, and declare independence in the face of Serb opposition because they expected to achieve their goal and to limit retaliatory civilian deaths to a level they deemed acceptable as the cost of achieving that goal. Their expectations of victory and casualty reduction were based on a third expectation – that the international community would assist them militarily if the Serbs attacked following international recognition of Bosnia's independence. Accordingly, the main focus of their grand strategy was to avoid provoking a Serb attack until they had gained international recognition for Bosnia.

The evidence does not support the first hypothesis of rational deterrence theory – that the Muslims failed to expect that their armed challenge against the better-armed Serbs would provoke violent retaliation. This is most obvious in the second part of their challenge, when the Muslims fully expected their armed, unilateral secession to provoke a prompt violent response from the Serbs. By contrast, in the first part of their challenge, the Muslims did not expect – and did not suffer – immediate retaliation for rejecting the Belgrade Initiative, because there still was

⁷³ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 126-27, which indicates this quote was published in the Yugoslav periodical *Vreme*, January 20, 1992, pp. 24-25, and translated in the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *EEU*, January 30, 1992, p. 68.

time for further negotiations prior to independence. If the Muslims had expected these subsequent negotiations to lead to a mutually acceptable compromise that would avert war, then they would not have expected their rejection of the Belgrade Initiative to provoke retaliation, and the first hypothesis would be confirmed. However, even at the time, the Muslims held out virtually no hope for a subsequent compromise, because they already had ruled out the only compromise the Serbs would accept, cantonization. Thus, when the Muslims rejected the Belgrade Initiative, they fully expected their decision would lead to conflict with the Serbs, albeit not immediately. Accordingly, the first hypothesis cannot explain either part of the tragic challenge.

The evidence also does not support the second hypothesis of rational deterrence theory – that the Muslims expected to endure the same amount of punishment regardless of whether they made concessions to the Serbs. Here, the evidence against the hypothesis is clearer in the first part of the challenge, when most Muslims expected they could avoid violence by appeasing the Serbs – that is, eschewing secession and agreeing to stay in a rump Yugoslavia. Admittedly, some Muslims expected this might lead to war against the Croats, but such a war had a much lower expected cost to the Muslims, because they would have been allied with the stronger Serbs against the weaker Croats, rather than vice-versa.

The second part of the challenge is more complicated, because some Muslim officials did not believe the Serbs could be appeased by the proposed cantonization plan and so expected the same violence even if they agreed to the plan. Some Muslim officials also feared that agreeing to cantonization prior to independence would undercut their chance of receiving international military assistance after independence, in the event of civil war, because they already would have conceded the principle of a unitary Bosnia. However, several key Muslim officials thought that the Serbs could be appeased by cantonization. For example, in January 1992, vice-president Muhamed Cengic negotiated a deal with Karadzic, with the support of president Izetbegovic, to postpone the independence referendum until cantonization could be worked out, in order to avert war. In February 1992, Izetbegovic himself agreed in Lisbon to such a plan, which he refuted only after receiving criticism from his party and strong hints from the United States that the Muslims would be protected even if they rejected the plan. This initial, apparently sincere embrace of cantonization is evidence that at least some Muslims thought the Serbs could be appeased by cantonization, which tends to disconfirm the second hypothesis. In addition, a

decisive faction of hardliners rejected cantonization despite believing that it could avert war, because they were unwilling to grant the Serbs political control of any Bosnian territory. Ultimately, the Muslims rejected cantonization only after receiving strong signals of forthcoming international military support. Thus, it appears the Muslims rejected cantonization not because they viewed the Serbs as unable to be appeased, but because – in light of expectations of forthcoming military assistance – they saw no need to try to appease the Serbs. Accordingly, the third hypothesis explains the Muslims’ rejection of cantonization better than does the second hypothesis.

The evidence is strong that the Muslims engaged in the rational cost-benefit calculus predicted by the third hypothesis, but the evidence is less precise regarding three specific aspects of their calculus: what level of violence did the Muslims expect, what level were they were willing to accept, and why? Most Muslim officials say the ultimate extent of violent retaliation surprised them. As Bicakcic puts it, “the actual war went way beyond our predictions.”⁷⁴ This is understandable, considering that the Muslims expected, and had reason to expect, quicker and more significant international assistance than they actually received in the event. Nevertheless, most Muslim officials did anticipate a violent Serb response to their unilateral secession, at least as bad as what had occurred in Croatia, where approximately 10,000 mainly Croat civilians were killed. Many Muslim officials also believed that this cost could be avoided or mitigated by acquiescing to Serb demands for cantonization prior to independence. Thus, in choosing to pursue unilateral secession, the Muslims consciously accepted the deaths of many thousands of their civilians as an acceptable cost of obtaining their goal.

As in most such cases, it is difficult to discern precisely why the Muslim leaders viewed attainment of their goal as “worth” thousands of their own civilians’ lives. Nor is it even clear whether they were motivated more by greed or fear – that is, maximizing the territory under their control or avoiding possible Serb oppression. Most Muslim officials offer vague explanations. For example, Muhamed Cengic says the Muslims acted as they did, “because, if we did not declare independence, the Serbs would just have taken the whole country without any opposition from the international community.”⁷⁵ Alikadic adds that “in any deal with Milosevic, we would

⁷⁴ Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999.

⁷⁵ Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000.

have been second class citizens in a greater Serbia.”⁷⁶ This suggests the Muslims were driven by fear of living under Serb political control. However, it does not clarify why they perceived the prospect of Serb control of Bosnia – which most likely would have resembled the relatively benign Serb domination of Vojvodina or Montenegro – as more abhorrent than the prospect of a war in which thousands of Muslim civilians would be killed. Moreover, it explains only the Muslims’ rejection of the Belgrade Initiative, not their rejection of the EC’s cantonization plan, which would have permitted more than 80 percent of Bosnian Muslims to live in cantons controlled by fellow Muslims.

Most Muslim officials say they opposed cantonization because they felt the Muslims deserved control of the entire republic of Bosnia, just as the Serbs and Croats each had sovereignty of their own national republics from the former Yugoslavia. Accordingly, they viewed cantonization as surrendering control of their territory to outsiders. In the words of the Serdarevic brothers, quoted above, the Muslims rejected the Lisbon cantonization plan because, “We were ready for war, not Serb occupation.” This suggests the Muslims were motivated more by greed than by fear. Rather than accept control of a portion of Bosnia equal to their share of the population, the Muslims insisted on trying to control the entire republic, despite expecting this to provoke a war that would kill thousands of their civilians before international military aid would enable them to prevail.

Finally, the evidence reveals how the actions of non-unitary actors can be explained by the proposed theory that relies on the simplifying assumption of unitary rational action. The Bosnian Muslims obviously were not unitary, as amply demonstrated by the details of the case. First, not all Muslims in the republic supported Izetbegovic’s political party when it was founded. Even one of its founders, Adil Zulfikarpasic, abandoned the party because he did not agree with its increasingly Muslim nationalist tilt. He and a leading Muslim intellectual, Muhamed Filipovic, formed their own party and urged that Bosnia join with Slovenia and Croatia to secede together in June 1991, but they were rejected by their old party. Once this opportunity was missed, these two mavericks in July 1991 proposed a deal to avert war by keeping Bosnia within Yugoslavia, and received President Izetbegovic’s support, but ultimately were overruled by the powerful hardline nationalists in the president’s party. Then, in January 1992, the Muslim vice-president of Bosnia, Muhamed Cengic, with the support of Izetbegovic,

⁷⁶ Almir Alikadic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999.

proposed a deal with the Serbs to delay the referendum on independence until cantonization could be agreed, but again they were overruled by the dominant hardliners in their party. Similarly, in February 1992, under pressure from the EC, Izetbegovic formally endorsed a cantonization agreement, but he was harshly opposed by his party's hardliners. This opposition from within his own party, in combination with signals from the United States, compelled the Muslim president to withdraw his support.

Even the so-called "hardliners" or "Muslim nationalists" in the president's party were not unitary. Omer Behmen, perhaps the most powerful member of the party, says that from the start he personally would have accepted the peaceful partition of Bosnia, but he did not trust the Serbs to grant the Muslims sufficient territory or to honor their commitments. By contrast, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, a key ideologist and co-founder of the Patriotic League militia was, and remains, passionately committed to a unitary Bosnia and never would have accepted the compromise of partition.⁷⁷

However, rational deterrence theory does not claim that states or groups actually are rational unitary actors, merely that they respond as such to changing incentives. In other words, as groups or states, their actions are driven by rational calculation of the expected costs and benefits of their perceived options, based on available information. In the context of ethnic conflict, subordinate groups choose to launch violent challenges when they expect that doing so will enable them to achieve their goal at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. Based on this logic, exogenous factors (such as the policies of foreign actors) that increase such groups' expectations of achieving their goals, or that decrease their expectation of retaliatory violence, should tend to increase the incidence of tragic challenges. For the same reason, international policies that reduce these groups' expectations of low-cost victory should tend to reduce the incidence of tragic challenges.

What If?

This chapter provides a good understanding of why Bosnia's Muslims and the international community acted as they did in this case, and the consequences of those actions.

⁷⁷ Omer Behmen, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999, says, "It's possible that Bosnia could have been partitioned without a war. But the Serbs weren't acting in good faith." He says he was just trying to secure a safe home for the Muslims of Bosnia. Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

However, in order to judge the wisdom of those decisions, it is necessary to assess their net impact, which requires pondering what might have occurred had different decisions been made. Specifically, three counter-factual scenarios are most important: (1) if the Muslims had accepted the Belgrade Initiative; (2) if the Muslims had accepted cantonization prior to independence; and (3) if the international community had not sent the Muslims misleading signals of forthcoming intervention. While such counter-factual questions never can be answered definitively, and already have been touched on in this chapter, additional insight can be gained from the retrospective views of key Bosnian Muslim participants.

Interestingly, most Bosnian Muslim officials concede in retrospect that war might well have been averted by accepting the Belgrade Initiative. Not surprisingly, the original proponents of the initiative express this strongly. Muhamed Filipovic says, "The Serbs could be appeased. I believe it and I know it." As one justification for this claim, he says, "Milosevic wanted to show the international audience that he was reasonable and that he was not the one making trouble, but that Tudjman was at fault."⁷⁸ Similarly, Zulfikarpasic writes, "Even today I firmly believe that the agreement I proposed at that moment was the only alternative to madness and evil, to the course that was so treacherously and yet unfailingly leading Bosnia towards ethnic and religious conflict. . . . To this day I do not understand how he [Izetbegovic] rejected that agreement and broke his word so easily, hurtling his people into conflict."⁷⁹ Less expectedly, Muhamed Cengic, the Muslim vice-president who later tried to avert war by forging a deal with the Serbs on cantonization, says in retrospect that, "the only chance for peace was if Bosnia had stayed in Yugoslavia as one of four republics."⁸⁰ Even Izetbegovic himself repeatedly has conceded that accepting the Belgrade Initiative might have averted war. In February 1993, less than a year into the war, he stated: "I am sure that we could not have escaped from this fate when we decided for independence. We could have possibly avoided it if we had remained in Yugoslavia."⁸¹

Mahmutcehajic ultimately left the government during the war, because he disagreed with Izetbegovic's acquiescing to cantonization of Bosnia.

⁷⁸ Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

⁷⁹ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, pp. 169, 183.

⁸⁰ Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000. However, he adds the caveat that there still might have been war if Croatia tried to annex Herzegovina.

⁸¹ Alija Izetbegovic, interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993.

Yugoslav academic Svetozar Stojanovic reports that Izetbegovic later lamented aloud: "Maybe we made a mistake by leaving Yugoslavia."⁸²

In interviews, however, Izetbegovic does not concede that rejecting the Belgrade Initiative was a mistake. For example, in 1993, he said:

Croatia's departure left us with a choice: we could choose between staying in rump Yugoslavia or have an independent Bosnia. We decided for independence. . . . If there is any guilt then it is in connection with this decision. Did we make the right decision? I think that we made the right decision; the price is high but there is not a single nation in the history [sic] which received its independence as a present. Our people are paying a very high price for this. Everything depended on this critical choice we faced."⁸³

Similarly, in an interview seven years later, Izetbegovic concedes only that "war could have been avoided if I accepted that Bosnia enters greater Serbia." He says he "can only guess" what status Bosnia would have had in such a rump Yugoslavia – "Kosovo? Montenegro?" – but that it would have been unacceptable in any case. "There wasn't a choice. Independence of Bosnia was the only dignified path."⁸⁴ Thus, Izetbegovic reveals his embrace of nationalist ideology: each ethnic group must have its own state, even at the cost of war, because any other outcome would be "undignified." Such thinking drove the Muslims to reject the Belgrade Initiative in July 1991 and serves still to justify that decision in their minds.

The second counter-factual scenario – that is, if the Muslims had accepted cantonization prior to independence – elicits less consensus among Muslim officials about how events would have played out. Most Muslim officials argue in retrospect that the Serbs never would have honored mutually agreed cantonal borders and would have used them merely as a starting point for war and ethnic cleansing. For example, Alikadic says, "Appeasement doesn't work. Milosevic would never be satisfied. War was unavoidable. That's why we [willingly] paid a big price. We would make the same choice today. Otherwise Bosnia would have disappeared . . . under repression like Kosovo." However, as Burg and Shoup note, the Bosnian Muslims cannot be sure because they rejected all of the "Bosnian Serb offers to negotiate autonomy, the sincerity of which was therefore never put to the test."⁸⁵ Other Bosnian Muslim officials, who were not in

⁸² Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 94.

⁸³ Alija Izetbegovic, interview quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17, 1993.

⁸⁴ Alija Izetbegovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000.

⁸⁵ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 126.

the ruling party at the time and therefore lack the same motivation to defend past decisions, say in retrospect that cantonization could have averted war and would have been a better outcome for the Muslims. For example, Filipovic says the Serbs would have honored the Lisbon agreement and that it was a better agreement for the Muslims than the eventual Dayton accords. Even the leader of the Croat nationalist faction that at the time favored a unitary Bosnia and opposed cantonization, Stjepan Kljuic, now says of the Lisbon plan: “When I think about it today, it was acceptable to us, as Cutileiro described it.”⁸⁶

Perhaps most remarkably, Warren Zimmermann – the U.S. ambassador who had opposed cantonization and pushed for early recognition of Bosnia in 1992, thereby undermining the EC plan and inadvertently triggering war – switched his opinion by the following year. In a 1993 interview, Zimmermann said that in retrospect, “the Lisbon agreement wasn’t bad at all.”⁸⁷ In his subsequent memoirs, the former ambassador elucidated: “In the hindsight of history, Cutileiro’s plan, although it introduced for the first time the concept of Bosnia’s division, would probably have worked out better for the Muslims than any subsequent plan, including the Dayton formula, since the divisions would have closely followed the actual ethnic percentages of the populations.”⁸⁸

This raises the third counter-factual scenario – what if the international community, led by the United States, had not sent misleading signals of forthcoming military assistance by promising recognition even if the Muslims rejected cantonization and by headquartering UN peacekeepers in Sarajevo? Remarkably, Zimmermann claims there was no connection between international actions and the outbreak of war in Bosnia. “Western recognition didn’t provoke that aggressive [Serb] strategy, nor would the lack of Western recognition have deterred it, as Serbian propagandists charge.”⁸⁹ However, the facts belie this claim. The Serbs clearly were provoked by the Muslims’ armed unilateral declaration of independence, which resulted directly from the western promise of recognition. Indeed, the core tenet of the Muslims’ grand strategy

⁸⁶ Stjepan Kljuic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 11, 1999. He says, however, that he could not have accepted the Serb cantons of Bosnia being annexed by Serbia, as some Serb nationalists wanted to interpret cantonization.

⁸⁷ David Binder, “U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1993, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, pp. 190-191. However, he now argues that the Serbs did not support Cutileiro’s proposed cantonization map, so the plan could not actually have been implemented. Interestingly, at the time, he opposed the plan because he argued it did the bidding of the Serbs by partitioning Bosnia.

⁸⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, p. 192.

was to eschew such a declaration until they were sure of recognition. Had the United States and EC not promised recognition, the Muslims would have postponed their declaration, and the Serbs would not have been provoked into war in the spring of 1992. Thus, contrary to Zimmermann, western recognition did indeed provoke the Serbs to launch aggression at that time.

However, the tantalizing question is whether a more restrained stance by the international community would not merely have postponed the Muslims unilateral secession, but averted it, and thereby potentially averted the war? For example, if the United States had not undermined the EC's leverage during the Cutileiro negotiations, would the Muslims have honored their initial commitment to cantonization, perceiving it as the only way to achieve their main goal of international recognition of Bosnia's independence? And if the Muslims had done so, would the Serbs have been willing to eschew violence, contenting themselves with the 44 percent of non-contiguous Bosnian territory they were granted in the EC plan, even though they had the military strength to conquer more? Put simply, if the international community, led by the United States, had not raised false hopes of intervention, might the Bosnian war have been averted?

Some Muslim officials say the international role was not decisive. For example, Muhamed Cengic says that, "Without the existence of the international community we would probably have done the same thing, because we had no choice. There was no way to appease the Serbs."⁹⁰ Interestingly, however, prior to the war, Cengic obviously believed that the Serbs could be appeased, because it was he who negotiated the compromise with Karadzic in January 1992 to postpone the referendum until a cantonization plan could be worked out. Bicakcic also suggests that the impact of the international community was not decisive; he claims that the Muslims would have scheduled an independence referendum even if the Badinter panel had not recommended it. However, this begs the crucial questions of the timing and pre-conditions of the referendum, which the Serbs say were the decisive factors – rather than the referendum itself – that caused the war. When asked explicitly whether the Muslims might have been more willing to compromise if they had known the international community would not prove willing to provide them military assistance during the first two years of the war, Bicakcic replies initially, "It's hard to say." On further consideration, he falls back to the same rhetoric as

⁹⁰ Muhamed Cengic, interview with author, July 16, 2000.

Muhamed Cengic – that even without international signals, the Muslims would not have compromised with the Serbs, because “there was no alternative.”⁹¹

It is possible that Bosnia’s Muslims, or at least those in the dominant hardline faction, were so fearful and/or greedy that they would have rejected cantonization even if the international community had insisted on this compromise as a pre-condition for recognition. However, such a stance by the international community would at least have posed a dilemma for the Muslims, because each of their remaining options violated some aspect of their grand strategy. For example, if they acceded to the will of the international community by agreeing to cantonization, they surrendered their commitment to a unitary Bosnia. If they defied the international community by declaring independence prior to cantonization, they sacrificed their plan to ensure international recognition and support, and thereby risked having to fight the Serbs by themselves. If they stalled for time and continued to acquire weapons, they risked provoking war with the Serbs prior to independence, which endangered their plan to obtain intervention by characterizing the war as international aggression rather than civil war. Thus, had the international community stuck to the EC’s original insistence on cantonization as a pre-condition for recognition, the Muslims would have been forced to compromise at least one aspect of their grand strategy. Confronted by this choice, the Muslims might well have chosen to acquiesce to cantonization, which could have averted or mitigated the war.

One compelling analysis of this question is offered by anthropologist Robert Hayden. He argues that the EC’s cantonization plan probably could not have assuaged desires for ethnic purification of territory in Bosnia – and thus ultimately would have led to hard partition. Still, he asserts, using the cantonization plan as a way-station to partition would have mitigated violence considerably in comparison to achieving partition through war as actually occurred, and produced a better outcome for all sides including the Muslims. Despite this, he believes the Muslims were so opposed to cantonization and partition in 1992 that the international community would have had to impose it on them – and should have – with diplomatic and military pressure:

This is not to say that an agreed partition of Bosnia would have been accomplished without violence. On the contrary, it would have had to be imposed both diplomatically and militarily on the Muslims, who had most to lose by partition in all senses. However, had the international community acceded to the

⁹¹ Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author. Sarajevo, October 16, 1999.

partition [sic] of Bosnia that had been agreed [at Lisbon] by the elected representatives of two of the three national groups in Bosnia [the Serbs and Croats], which also controlled most of the military force in the republic, the Muslims might well have seen the futility of resisting partition and agreed to an exchange of populations. . . . [Such an exchange] would widely have been seen as immoral, yet it has already largely been accomplished by the Serbs and Croats in the campaigns of terror that have come to be called “ethnic cleansing.” These have probably been more widespread than they would have been had the division of Bosnia been accepted in advance. The international refusal to accept the partition of Bosnia that was made inevitable by the partition of Yugoslavia ensured that it would be accomplished in the worst possible way.⁹²

Interestingly, Hayden made these observations in May 1993, when the war still had two more years to run and ethnic cleansing was not yet complete. His argument has only been strengthened by subsequent events in the war: the increased death toll; the crushing of remaining Muslim enclaves in Serb areas, including most notoriously Srebrenica in 1995; and the Dayton accords that ended the war by codifying the *de facto* partition of Bosnia.

Despite these three counter-factual scenarios, which suggest that Muslim losses might have been averted or mitigated by compromising with the Serbs, most Muslim officials in retrospect express no regrets about rejecting such a course at the time. Indeed, nearly a decade after their fateful decisions, when asked what they would have done differently had they known then what they do now – for example, that the international community would be so slow to intervene – most Muslim officials insist they still would have opted for unilateral secession. The only regret they express is not preparing better for war prior to its outbreak in two ways: acquiring more weapons; and utilizing additional public-relations efforts to build international support for intervention.

For example, Bicakcic says he regrets only having not made “earlier, better preparations for war. I wouldn’t give up on the goal [independence of a unitary Bosnia], but better preparation would have meant fewer victims. I think the decisions were right. The question is why weren’t we more ready.” Halilovic concurs: “We should have put in more effort to acquire weapons pre-war.” Silajdzic likewise says that, in retrospect, he only “would have prepared better for the defense. . . . [and] would have organized a better propaganda system. We had no

⁹² Hayden, “The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-1993,” pp. 13-14.

arms – and no lobbies or networks in the West.” Ganic too says he would have “armed secretly more . . . [and] warned the world in harsher terms” about the violence to come.⁹³

By contrast, Bosnian Muslims who are not personally invested in the decisions made at the time, because they were not part of Izetbegovic’s party, more commonly argue that compromise with the Serbs might have worked and should have been pursued. For example, Filipovic says, “I blame Izetbegovic for two things. First, for rejecting compromise and forcing everything on people,” which Filipovic says led to the war. “Second, for not realizing that he was violating Serbian rights – as guaranteed in the constitution.” By the latter, Filipovic means Izetbegovic’s repeated use of parliamentary maneuvers to push through the Muslims’ agenda – the declaration of sovereignty, the independence referendum, and ultimately the declaration of independence – despite Serb objections and requests for cantonization. Paraphrasing the Bosnian constitution at the time, Filipovic says it required that “if the national interest of any group is to be violated it must be discussed by a special commission,” which he says Izetbegovic repeatedly refused to do. None of this, he emphasizes, excuses the Serb atrocities during the war. However, he is convinced that the war, which produced those atrocities, could have been avoided if the Muslim leadership had been more willing to acknowledge legitimate Serb concerns and to compromise.⁹⁴

A final group of Muslim officials are less definitive about what might have been done differently and about the ultimate wisdom of their decisions. For example, Alikadic says, “Bosnia is a moral winner, but not the military winner.”⁹⁵ Ejup Ganic, who was a Western-trained professor of engineering before he returned to Bosnia and became its vice-president after the 1990 elections, says it is still too soon to evaluate the Muslims’ decision to pursue unilateral secession, even if today it looks ill-advised. “Was it smart? Historians will judge us in 50 years.” Finally, when asked whether the Serbs could have been appeased if the Muslims had tried, he responds like a scientist: “Unfortunately it’s an experiment that cannot be repeated.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Edhem Bicakcic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 16, 1999. Sefer Halilovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 12, 1999. Haris Silajdzic, phone interview with author, Sarajevo, July 19, 2000. Ejup Ganic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999.

⁹⁴ Muhammed Filipovic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 13, 1999.

⁹⁵ Almir Alikadic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999.

⁹⁶ Ejup Ganic, interview with author, Sarajevo, October 14, 1999.

CHAPTER 5

RWANDA: PURSUIT OF WESTERN BACKING MAGNIFIES COSTS

Because of the massive victimization of the Tutsi ethnic minority by the Hutu majority in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, it commonly is not understood that the conflict actually was triggered by a violent Tutsi challenge against the Hutu-controlled government. This tragic challenge was launched in 1990 by a group of Tutsi refugee warriors who invaded from Uganda and fought for more than three and a half years to seize effective control in Rwanda. The rebels knew in advance that their invasion would trigger a violent backlash against Tutsi civilians within Rwanda. Moreover, as the Tutsi rebels advanced, they received increasing threats and indications that, if they did not relent, a massive retaliatory killing campaign would be launched against Tutsi civilians. Nevertheless, the Tutsi rebels persisted in their military offensive and demands for political power, refusing to make compromises with the Hutu government that might have averted massive retaliation. When the rebels finally reached a point where they were poised to seize control of the country, the Hutu government retaliated with the most efficient genocide in history – killing more than three-quarters of Rwanda's domestic Tutsi population in barely three months. Ironically, the Tutsi rebels did ultimately defeat the Hutu government by the end of those three months, but they gained control of a country whose Tutsi population had been decimated. Remarkably, despite the obviously disastrous consequences of this tragic challenge, there has been little rigorous study of what caused it.

The question is partially addressed by a small literature on the roots of the Tutsi rebels and the possible causes of their initial 1990 invasion.¹ However, this work is deficient in several respects. First, it tends merely to list, rather than to test the validity of, such putative causes. Second, in some cases, it reports as fact what actually is misinformation or disinformation put

¹ Catherine Watson, *Exile from Rwanda: Background to an Invasion* (Washington: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1991). Dixon Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict: Its Roots and Regional Implications* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain, 1993). Gerard Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire du Front patriote rwandais," *Politique Africaine*, Vol. 51 (1993), pp. 121-138. Wm. Cyrus Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Front," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1996), pp. 479-501. Gerard Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," in Christopher Clapham, ed., *African Guerrillas* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). Ogenga Otunnu, "Rwandese Refugees and Immigrants in Uganda," and Ogenga Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion by the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA)," both in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, eds., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

out by the rebels or their enemies during the conflict in their respective attempts to garner international support. Third, it neglects to explore the role, if any, of the rebels' expectations about the costs of their violent challenge. Fourth, it underplays or incorrectly reports the specific impact on rebel decision-making of their expectations of forthcoming international intervention. Fifth, and perhaps most important, it focuses almost exclusively on the rebels' initial invasion, failing to explore the causes of their subsequent actions – during three and a half years of civil war and peace negotiations – that provoked the genocidal retaliation.² These subsequent actions include: launching military offensives in 1991 and 1992; refusing to compromise during peace negotiations in 1992 and 1993; breaking a cease-fire and launching an offensive in early 1993, which antagonized even their allies within Rwanda; refusing to renegotiate the terms of an existing peace agreement in late 1993 despite increasing signs that such refusal would lead to massive retaliation against Tutsi civilians; refusal to accept cease-fire offers during the first two weeks of the genocide; and pursuing a war plan during the genocide that gave greater priority to military victory than to protecting Tutsi civilians.

This chapter provides background on the case and the details of the tragic challenge. The next chapter attempts to pinpoint the cause of the tragic challenge by testing the three proposed hypotheses of rational deterrence theory. In both chapters, I build on the previous literature and rely heavily on interviews with former senior Tutsi rebels – both political and military officials – who now are more willing to speak frankly about past actions than they were during the war or in its immediate aftermath. Interestingly, most of these officials also say they never before have been asked by scholars or journalists about the expectations that guided their actions.

Interviews were conducted with Tutsi who were senior officials of the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) prior to and during the war, including: its founding coordinator (Tito Rutaremara); its vice-chairman at the time of the invasion (Protais Musoni); its director of external affairs and top peace negotiator during the war (Patrick Mazimaka); its deputy peace negotiator (Theogene Rudasingwa); its top delegate to peace talks in 1991 and director of war operations during the genocide (Karenzi Karake); its top delegate to the first peace talks in 1990 (Dennis Karera); its head of finance from its founding through the genocide (Aloysie Inyumba); its representative in Washington during the war (Charles Murigande); the personal physician and

² The rebels' demands during peace negotiations are discussed in Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

right-hand-man of its leader Paul Kagame (Emmanuel Ndahiro); a member of its executive committee and the eventual minister of information (Wilson Rutaysire, AKA "Shaban"); and an eventual senior official in the ministry of defense (who wishes to remain anonymous). For additional perspective, I interviewed a senior moderate Hutu officer in the Rwandan army during the genocide (who wishes to remain anonymous). The Tutsi rebels made their major decisions in a highly institutionalized manner, which included extensive debate and, when there was not consensus, subsequent voting by the RPF membership. Perhaps for this reason, the retrospect accounts of the officials interviewed for this study are highly consistent with each other, yielding robust evidence on the causes of those decisions.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into six parts. First, I provide an overview of the case, including the history of Rwanda, the roots of its ethnic violence, the 1960s precedent of invasions sparking retaliatory killing, the 1990 invasion by Tutsi refugees, the resulting civil war and attempted peace process, and finally the genocide of 1994. Second, I summarize the literature's partial and incomplete explanation of the tragic challenge in Rwanda. Third, I detail the Tutsi rebels' grand strategy that steadily guided their decision-making throughout the tragic challenge. Fourth, I provide a revised history of the Tutsi rebels, essential to understanding their decision-making during the tragic challenge. Fifth, I detail the first part of the tragic challenge: the Tutsi rebel invasion from Uganda in October 1990. Lastly, I detail the second part of the tragic challenge: the Tutsi rebels' repeated military offensives and refusal to compromise their demands for political control of Rwanda, despite the fact that this intransigence provoked retaliatory killing of domestic Tutsi civilians that culminated in genocide.

Historical Overview

In colonial and pre-colonial times, Rwandan politics were dominated by the Tutsi, a group that made up 17 percent of the population just prior to independence. Virtually all the rest of the population was Hutu, and less than one percent were aboriginal Twa. All three groups lived intermingled in Rwanda for hundreds of years. Although the Tutsi have a separate heritage and apparently entered the region somewhat later than the Hutu, the term "tribe" or "ethnic group" has long been technically inappropriate to distinguish between these two main Rwandan groups. They share a common language and religions, and have intermarried. In recent decades, however, the Hutu-Tutsi distinction has become very salient owing to several factors: the

struggle for political power in Rwanda, physical insecurity during periods of civil war, a Tutsi refugee crisis, and certain self-policed restrictions on intermarriage.³

Historians divide into two camps regarding the nature of Hutu-Tutsi relations prior to European colonization.⁴ One view, endorsed by Tutsi politicians and espoused by many Western historians, including recently by Gerard Prunier, contends that relations between the two groups generally were symbiotic rather than antagonistic until the arrival of colonial powers in the late nineteenth century. This school does not dispute that Tutsi kings ruled over most of Rwanda during the pre-colonial period, but contends that many administrators had been Hutu and that patron-client relationships between and within each group were flexible and mutually beneficial. Tutsi tended to be cattle owners, and Hutu were usually cultivators, but these distinctions were not rigid

This school argues that it was first Germany and – after the transfer of colonial authority during World War I – Belgium that sharpened ethnic distinctions in Rwanda to implement a system of indirect rule. Neither European power deployed a large number of its citizens to colonize or administer Rwanda, so they were forced to appoint local officials to oversee the extraction of resources. Because Tutsi dominated the pre-colonial royalty and were viewed by European ethnographers of the time as superior to the rest of the populace, they were selected to head the local administration. By this reading of history, it was European demands for resource extraction that bastardized Rwanda's social system, forced a small group of Tutsi administrators to oppress the Hutu majority, and thereby polarized and hardened ethnic identities.

Hutu politicians and some other historians disagree, contending that Tutsi rule even before the arrival of the Europeans imposed a discriminatory two-tier system. This school holds that the colonial powers merely formalized and institutionalized a pre-existing racist system by taking steps such as issuing identity cards that listed group affiliation. Thus there is substantial disagreement as to whether the pre-colonial Hutu-Tutsi relationship was one of symbiosis or

³ For further detail on the background to the genocide, see Alan J. Kuperman, "The Other Lesson of Rwanda: Mediators Sometimes Do More Damage Than Good," *SAIS Review*, Vol. 16 (Winter-Spring 1996), pp. 221–40. This chapter also draws from longer histories, in addition to those in note 1, including Filip Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise: Rwanda, Burundi, 1988-1994* (Paris: Karthala, 1994); Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Ntaribi Kamanzi, *Rwanda: Du Genocide a la Defaite* (Kigali: Editions Rebero, 1997); Alison Des Forges, et al., *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 1999); L. R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (New York: Zed Books, 2000).

domination. However, both schools agree that during the colonial period an elite group of Tutsi exploited Hutu as second-class citizens.

In the mid-1950s, the Tutsi began to embrace ideas of decolonization that were spreading across Africa. Belgium had begun to switch its allegiance toward the majority Hutu, which spurred the Tutsi to push even harder to obtain independence while they still retained political dominance.⁵ In their quest, the Tutsi obtained support from international communist sources, which only reinforced Belgium's shift towards the Hutu. Meanwhile the Hutu were building their own political movement based on the historical claim that the Tutsi had subjugated them for hundreds of years. They mobilized around the platform that Rwanda was a Hutu nation that had to throw off the yoke of centuries of Tutsi oppression, calling their movement the *Parti du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation des Bahutu* (PARMEHUTU), or Hutu Emancipation Party. Thus the Hutu independence movement was based even more on liberation from internal Tutsi domination than from external colonial authority.

Large-scale violence between Rwanda's Hutu and Tutsi erupted for the first time in 1959, as the Hutu mobilized their masses to seize power. Belgium deployed troops who temporarily quelled violence and facilitated the transfer of political power to the Hutu. The Hutu consolidated this new power in a 1961 referendum, but only after burning houses, killing hundreds of Tutsi, and triggering the flight of tens of thousands more to neighboring countries – mainly Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Zaire. Formal independence was granted to the Hutu regime of President Gregoire Kayibanda on July 1, 1962.

Starting in 1961, however, a group of Tutsi refugees attempted to return to power in Rwanda by launching attacks from bases in Uganda and Burundi. These Tutsi rebels were known as the "*inyenzi*," or cockroaches, for their propensity to return repeatedly at night despite attempts to stamp them out. Although eventually the term became one of derision when employed by Hutu, it apparently was adopted originally by the rebels themselves as a symbol of their relentlessness.⁶

In response to these repeated attacks by Tutsi refugee rebels in the 1960s, Rwanda's hard-line Hutu nationalist government retaliated by escalating oppression of, and attacks against, Tutsi

⁵ For more on this debate, see "Crisis in Central Africa: The History of Politics and the Politics of History," *Africa Today*, Vol. 45 (January-March 1998).

⁶ For possible explanations of the Belgian switch, see Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 25-31.

⁶ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 32.

within the country. The government's policy was intended to reduce domestic support for the rebels and to deter any further attacks, and it caused many more Tutsi to flee as refugees. The most successful of the *inyenzi* attacks occurred in 1963 – when Tutsi from Burundi came within ten miles of the Rwandan capital, Kigali – but this also triggered the most intense outburst of reprisal killing against Tutsi in Rwanda. Ultimately, the government's tactics, though horrific, proved effective in reducing the incidence of *inyenzi* attacks, which ended by 1967.⁷ Overall, from 1959 to 1967, some 20,000 Tutsi were killed and another 200,000 Tutsi – half their population in Rwanda at the time – were driven from the country as refugees. As a result, the Tutsi percentage of Rwanda's population dropped from about 17 to 9 percent, and Hutu represented virtually all the rest.⁸

After the end of the *inyenzi* invasions, the remaining Tutsi population of Rwanda was spared further significant outbursts of violence until the waning days of the PARMEHUTU regime in 1973. In that year President Kayibanda faced mounting internal criticism for his ineffective rule and favoritism toward his home region of south-central Rwanda. In response, he attempted to revive pan-Hutu support for his regime by blaming Rwanda's remaining Tutsi for the country's ills, and he renewed violent attacks against them.⁹ However, this strategy was short-lived because Kayibanda was overthrown in July 1973 by a Hutu army officer from northwestern Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana.

As the new president, Habyarimana declared that he would put an end to ethnic violence in Rwanda and lived up to this promise for the next seventeen years. During this period, discrimination in Rwanda was not anti-Tutsi, but rather favored a narrow section of the Hutu population who came from the president's home region in northwestern Rwanda. This regional group dominated key positions in government, business, the army, and Habyarimana's single

⁷ The *inyenzi* were formed in 1961 by militant refugees of UNAR, the former Tutsi monarchist party formed in the late colonial period. They launched 10 major attacks from March 1961 to July 1966. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 5. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 32, also cites an invasion on December 21, 1961, from Burundi into the Bugesera region of Rwanda, which approached within 20 kilometers of Kigali. The Rwandan army repulsed the rebels with the help of Belgian officers. Watson reports that the *inyenzi* faded away because their raids were backfiring and they had exhausted their funds, so they no longer could travel the world in search of support. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 5. In 1964, President Kayibanda warned the Tutsi refugees that if they again sought power, they "may well find that the whole Tutsi race will be wiped out." Quoted in Peter Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (September 1997), p. 99.

⁸ The citations and calculations for these estimates are contained in Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), pp. 19-20.

⁹ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 57.

ruling party, the *Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Developpement* (MRND). In addition, the northwest region received the lion's share of government investment. The rest of the country, both Hutu and Tutsi, suffered from relative neglect. On the whole, however, Rwanda thrived for the first fifteen years of Habyarimana's regime, benefiting from political stability, ample commodity prices, and foreign development assistance to achieve by far the best economic growth of any state in east-central Africa during this period.¹⁰

Habyarimana's handling of the Tutsi question was complex. On the one hand, he ensured that there were no further violent attacks against Tutsi for the first seventeen years of his rule and permitted some Tutsi to become prominent businessmen and even personal friends. However, he prohibited Tutsi refugees from returning to Rwanda. He also subjected domestic Tutsi to quotas for access to government-controlled programs such as education, limiting them to their percentage of the population – in what Americans might call an "affirmative action" program to compensate Hutu for historical discrimination. In sum, Habyarimana was willing to protect Rwanda's small Tutsi population and to permit (and benefit from) Tutsi business activities, but he felt it necessary to block the return of refugees and perpetuate quotas in order to prevent the Tutsi from developing a power center that could challenge his authority.

In the late 1980s, however, Habyarimana's authority began to be challenged by several other developments. First, declining global agricultural prices undermined Rwanda's economy, which depended heavily on tea exports. This spurred increasing domestic political opposition, especially from the neglected south-central region of the country that had been the base of the PARMEHUTU. Second, the international community started to pressure Habyarimana to democratize and to resolve the long-standing Tutsi refugee issue, which had contributed to instability in some of the neighboring host countries for thirty years. Third, Habyarimana was aware that Uganda's army contained many Rwandan Tutsi refugees, who were rumored to be considering an armed invasion of Rwanda. In an attempt to head off these challenges, Habyarimana in 1990 initiated a series of reforms – albeit mainly superficial – toward democratization and refugee return. However, before the sincerity of the reforms could be put to the test, the armed Tutsi refugees invaded from Uganda on October 1, 1990, under the banner of a party called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its military wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army.

¹⁰ Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp. 34-35.

Most of the Tutsi leaders of the RPF originally had fought for Ugandan rebel Yoweri Museveni in the 1970s and 1980s in that country's civil wars, first against President Idi Amin and then to overthrow President Milton Obote successfully in 1986. After helping to bring Museveni to power in Kampala in 1986, the top Tutsi rebels became senior officials in Uganda's army, where they helped recruit more Tutsi refugees to become soldiers. As the Tutsi thereby gained access to arms and military training, but continued to face ethnic hostility from some in Uganda, they began to think increasingly about invading back into Rwanda, which they did in October 1990. (The details of this momentous decision are discussed later in this chapter.)

Although Habyarimana previously had been a protector of the Tutsi who lived within Rwanda, he reacted to the invasion much as his extremist predecessor had done decades earlier, by arresting politically active Tutsi in the capital of Kigali and permitting intermittent massacres against Tutsi in the countryside. In addition, France, Belgium, and Zaire intervened immediately in support of the government's efforts to combat the rebels. France deployed 350 troops, who provided military assistance but officially did not engage in combat; Zaire deployed 500 of its elite Presidential Guard, who engaged in actual combat; Belgium deployed 540 troops to Kigali's airport in preparation for a possible evacuation of foreign nationals. Benefiting from this foreign support, the Rwandan army quickly beat back the rebels, who initially were ill-organized and ill-equipped because they had defected from disparate Ugandan army units immediately prior to the invasion. As the rebels retreated into the mountains on the Ugandan border, Belgium withdrew its troops and Habyarimana asked Zaire to withdraw its troops because they were accused of pillaging. However, France maintained its military deployment on behalf of Habyarimana's government for three more years. This fit with France's general policy at the time of absorbing Belgium's sphere of influence in central Africa in order to maintain the region's francophone quality, as Belgium withdrew in response to increasing ethical and financial concerns about its post-colonial role.¹¹

Although Habyarimana was able to rely temporarily on French military backing to prevent his overthrow, the French also insisted that he pursue a transition to multiparty democracy. The French government made clear to Habyarimana that its military support could not last forever and that he had to broaden his domestic support and legitimacy to survive the

¹¹ See Alain Rouvez, with the assistance of Michael Coco and Jean-Paul Paddock, *Disconsolate Empires: French, British, and Belgian Military Involvement in Post-Colonial Sub-Saharan Africa* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 186, 342-45.

transition to democracy. Habyarimana responded with grudging concessions toward pluralization in 1991 and 1992, although without ever actually devolving real power. Other Western states then applied even stronger coercive pressure, threatening to suspend aid and trade – and in some cases doing so – to force Habyarimana to commit to reforms and to honor those commitments. This leverage was effective because Habyarimana desperately needed Western support in the face of the RPF's military threat.

The Tutsi rebels, for their part, regrouped within months of their initial defeat. By 1991 they had staged new offensives in the north and compelled Habyarimana to the negotiating table to arrange a cease-fire. As the rebels progressed militarily, they also forged uneasy political alliances with the opposition parties then emerging in Rwanda. On the surface, some of these alliances were quite bizarre. For example, the RPF, an organization of Tutsi refugees, was cooperating with the Mouvement Democratique Republicain (MDR), which was the reincarnation of the Hutu nationalist PARMEHUTU that had ethnically cleansed the Tutsi from Rwanda in the first place. But the two parties needed each other. The MDR could not get Habyarimana to negotiate seriously without the military pressure applied by the Tutsi rebels. And the RPF, whose natural constituency consisted only of the minority Tutsi refugee community, could not gain political legitimacy in Rwanda or internationally unless it was seen working with the domestic Hutu majority. Thus the temporary alliance of convenience suited both sides.¹²

Another successful rebel offensive in 1992 again forced Habyarimana to the negotiating table – this time comprehensive, internationally supervised peace talks in the town of Arusha, Tanzania. After making progress on matters such as refugee return, the talks bogged down over two crucial issues of power-sharing: Which political parties would be represented in a transitional government before elections? And how would the rebel and government troops be integrated into a combined army? Habyarimana and his Hutu cronies from northwestern Rwanda feared that, if the Tutsi rebels and their allies within the Rwandan opposition were allowed to dominate the transition government and army, the outcome would amount to a

¹² C. M. Overdulse, *Rwanda: Un peuple avec une histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 58, argues that most of the opposition parties, though opposed to Habyarimana, always shared his vision of Rwanda as a Hutu republic, whereas the RPF sought to undermine this vision. "The [opposition] parties therefore did not share any of the goals of the RPF, despite the fact that their opposition to the Habyarimana regime was in part parallel to that of the RPF." [My translation from the French.]

negotiated coup. Under this scenario, the Hutu elite feared they would at best lose the privileges of rule, and at worst suffer deadly retribution for their years of corruption and favoritism.

In January 1993, with the negotiations stalled, Rwandan Hutu extremists perpetrated another of their periodic massacres of Tutsi, which had started in response to the 1990 invasion. This attack raised the toll of Tutsi victims to about 2,000 during the preceding two and a half years. In retaliation, the RPF launched yet another offensive. Fortified by more than two years of training and battlefield experience, the rebels had become a formidable force. They made their deepest advances of the war, approaching the capital and appearing poised to capture it. However, France then deployed another 240 troops who joined 250 troops still there – an infusion of support that bolstered the confidence and performance of the Rwandan army and deterred the rebels from further advances. Although this French force was too small to enable a Rwandan army victory on the battlefield, the rebels nevertheless agreed to a cease-fire. The rebels feared that pressing the battle would make them appear too militant, endanger the hard-won diplomatic support of the international community, and prompt France to send more reinforcements¹³

Habyarimana, however, began to feel increasing pressure from all sides: political pressure from domestic Hutu opponents, economic pressure from Western powers, and military pressure from the rebels. This pressure was exacerbated by France's insistence that it soon would be removing its troops, which he correctly saw as his only defense against the rebels. His army already had shown itself unable to stop the rebels except when reinforced by the French – who provided strategic, operational, and tactical assistance; bolstered the confidence of his troops; and deterred the rebels by threat of further reinforcement.¹⁴ In August 1993, seeing little other choice, he finally caved in on the rebels' key demands and signed the comprehensive Arusha accords.¹⁵ The RPF and its political allies – the mostly Hutu opposition parties within Rwanda – were to be given the majority of seats in the transitional cabinet and legislature prior to elections. Moreover, the rebels were to be granted 50 percent of the officer positions (and 40 percent of the enlisted ranks) in the combined army. In light of the superiority of the rebels over government troops on a man-for-man basis by this time, the military integration protocol was

¹³ RPF officials, interviews with author, Kigali, Rwanda, April 1999.

¹⁴ A similar point is made by Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide," p. 108.

¹⁵ Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda*, p. 84. This book provides the most detailed analysis of the Arusha negotiations and shows how eventually the international players sided with the RPF on its key demands.

tantamount to a negotiated surrender of the Hutu army to the Tutsi rebels. Habyarimana's cronies felt betrayed and terrified. They immediately set out to undermine the implementation of the accords, working in conjunction with Habyarimana.

Although Habyarimana's motivation and intent at the time still remain somewhat clouded, he was clearly walking a political tightrope. He apparently perceived that it would be political suicide – if not literal suicide – either to refuse to sign the accords or actually to implement them. If he refused to sign, the international community including France had threatened to suspend economic and military assistance, which would leave his regime at the mercy of the militarily superior Tutsi rebels. But if he actually started to implement the accords by surrendering power, he would raise the risk of his being assassinated by his own entrenched Hutu elite, which sought to block implementation in order to preserve its power and security. Thus, he pursued a third, middle path, signing the accords but doing everything possible to avoid implementing them as intended.

UN peacekeepers arrived in late 1993 to replace French forces, as called for in the accords, but this switch only exacerbated the paranoia of the governing Hutu elite, which felt it was losing its last line of defense. Ironically, the French widely have been blamed for contributing to the genocide by supporting the Hutu government of Habyarimana. In reality, it was this withdrawal of French military support that raised Hutu fears to the breaking point and thereby prompted the final radicalization of politics that culminated in the genocide.

Habyarimana obstructed and attempted to modify implementation of the accords for eight months. He hoped to retain power by splitting the alliance of convenience that had formed between the Tutsi rebels and the domestic Hutu opposition by convincing the latter to support him in a pan-Hutu alliance against the Tutsi. Interestingly, Habyarimana was helped in this effort by the February 1993 Tutsi rebel offensive, which had proved to be a tactical military success but a strategic disaster. The rebels, by advancing so close to the capital, had renewed fears among Rwanda's Hutu that the RPF's real goal was to conquer Rwanda to restore Tutsi domination. Moderate Hutu in Rwanda's opposition political parties began to suspect they were being used as stalking horses by the Tutsi, to be discarded after the rebels took power through force or negotiation. These fears were further stoked in October 1993, when Tutsi in neighboring Burundi assassinated that country's first Hutu president and killed thousands of Hutu civilians.

As ethnic fear increased, Habyarimana employed a combination of bribery and populist appeals to pan-Hutu solidarity to coopt the main opposition parties. The parties split into two factions: a moderate wing allied with the RPF and a hardline "Hutu Power" wing allied with Habyarimana against the Tutsi rebels. By late 1993, the hardliners dominated all but one of the main opposition parties.¹⁶ It became impossible to implement the transitional government called for in the Arusha accords because the competing wings of each party submitted separate names for each cabinet seat assigned to that party under the accords. Further complicating matters, Habyarimana insisted that the power-sharing framework be modified to add an extreme Hutu nationalist party to the government, the *Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique* (CDR), but the Tutsi rebels refused all such demands for compromise. So long as the transition government could not be implemented, however, Habyarimana retained power.¹⁷ The Tutsi rebels, growing increasingly frustrated with these delays, prepared for a possible final military offensive to conquer the country.

At the same time, extreme elements within the ruling Hutu clique prepared their own "final solution" to retain power and block what they perceived as a Tutsi attempt to re-conquer Rwanda after thirty-five years of Hutu emancipation. These Hutu extremists apparently believed that by preparing to kill all of the Tutsi civilians in Rwanda they could prevent the country from being conquered by the rebels. Accordingly, they imported thousands of guns and grenades, and hundreds of thousands of machetes. They also converted and expanded the Hutu political parties' youth wings, which previously had engaged only in low-level physical intimidation, into full-fledged armed militias, and providing some of them with formal military training. To foment Hutu fear and anti-Tutsi hatred they also created a new private radio station as an alternative to the existing, somewhat more moderate government channel. They also apparently established a

¹⁶ Kamanzi, *Rwanda*, pp. 53ff, provides an excellent account of Habyarimana's successful efforts to co-opt the Hutu opposition. Only the *Parti Social Democrate* (PSD) did not form a Hutu Power faction and, as a result, virtually its entire leadership was killed at the start of the genocide.

¹⁷ Filip Reyntjens argues that the RPF shares blame for this delay in implementation, apparently because it refused to compromise and would not accept any deviations from the Arusha structure or the lists of government appointees submitted by the pro-rebel wings of the opposition parties. This is a legitimate argument, especially because by this point the Hutu Power wings were bigger than the pro-rebel wings of the opposition parties and should have had at least a say in the candidates chosen to represent the parties. However, because it was Habyarimana who insisted on modifying the terms of a signed agreement and who fostered schisms within the opposition parties in order to obstruct its implementation, he must be assigned the bulk of responsibility for the delay. Filip Reyntjens, *Rwanda: Trois jours qui ont fait basculer l'histoire* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1995), p. 17; and e-mail communication to author, September 27, 1999.

clandestine network of extremists within the army to take charge when the time came. As the Tutsi rebels picked up indications of some of this activity in early 1994, they began training in earnest for the resumption of war, which only further fed Hutu fears. This crescendo of fear was further propelled in February 1994 by a wave of mutual political assassinations.

Finally, on April 6, 1994, as President Habyarimana was flying back to Rwanda from a conference in Tanzania, he was killed when his private plane was shot down on approach to Kigali by surface-to-air missiles. Hutu extremists quickly blamed the Tutsi rebels for the attack and seized effective control of the government. Within hours, they commenced the genocide of Tutsi, as well as an assassination campaign against all moderate opposition politicians, whether Hutu or Tutsi. In just two days, the extremists wiped out the political opposition and established a new "interim" government that then oversaw the fastest killing campaign in modern history. Within the first two to three weeks, these Hutu extremists killed approximately 250,000 Tutsi – representing one-third of their total domestic population and one-half of the ultimate victims of the genocide. In response, the RPF turned all its energies to conquering Rwanda, refusing cease-fire offers on grounds that the genocide first had to be stopped. The government retorted that civil violence could not be stopped until there was a cease-fire in the war. Ultimately, the genocide ended only when the entire country had been conquered by the RPF, after more than three months of fighting and killing. Ironically, the Tutsi rebels did achieve their long-desired return to power in Kigali, but the price was a half-million dead Tutsi.

It remains unclear who shot down Habyarimana's plane and why. It is possible that the extremist Hutu launched the attack to prevent Habyarimana from succumbing to Western pressure to implement the Arusha accords, and to provide a pretext for a genocide they already had decided to perpetrate. However, it alternately is possible that the Tutsi rebels had grown frustrated with Habyarimana's refusal to implement the Arusha accords and fearful that a genocide might be imminent, so they decided to assassinate the president and resume the war as a preventive act, in the expectation of a quick victory. If the latter scenario is correct, it would call into question whether the extremist Hutu already were committed to carrying out the genocide prior to the assassination, or whether the genocide was merely a contingency plan, whose implementation was triggered by Habyarimana's death. In addition, as discussed below, it remains unclear whether the genocide was intended from the start to continue until total

annihilation of the Tutsi, or whether the Hutu extremists might have been willing to suspend it early on, in return for the rebels agreeing to a cease-fire and renegotiation of the Arusha accords.

No Satisfying Explanation of the Tragic Challenge in the Literature

Previous analyses have identified three major long-term causes for the decision of the Tutsi rebels to invade Rwanda, and at least ten possible triggers to account for its timing. The most commonly identified long-term cause is that the Tutsi refugees felt persistent insecurity in Uganda. From the 1960s they had been subjected to intermittent waves of persecution including violent ethnic cleansing. Even during relatively good times, they were treated as outsiders by their neighbors and denied Ugandan citizenship.¹⁸ Second, Rwanda's government denied the refugees a peaceful return home for three decades. Third, the Tutsi refugees in Uganda gradually obtained access to military hardware and expertise. From the perspective of many outside observers, these three factors – the persistent insecurity of Tutsi in Uganda, their inability to return home peacefully, and their access to the means to force their way home – made an invasion all but inevitable.

However, the RPF invasion did not occur until four years after the triumph of Museveni's NRA in Uganda, and three years after formation of the RPF, so scholars have tried to account for this delay and for the ultimate timing of the invasion by identifying ten possible triggers:

1. From 1986-89, the Tutsi were publicly scapegoated for Uganda's ills by the northern rebel Ugandan People's Democratic Army (UPDA), composed of remnants of Obote's forces. Adding fuel to the fire, Museveni placed three Tutsi officers, Fred Rwigyema, Chris Bunyenyezi, and Stephen Ndugute, in charge of the anti-rebel counter-insurgency campaign, which brutalized the civilian population and stoked further resentment of the Tutsi.¹⁹
2. In 1989, the NRA successfully concluded its counter-insurgency in northern Uganda, which freed up Tutsi soldiers to turn their attention toward Rwanda.²⁰

¹⁸ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 9.

¹⁹ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 146. The rebel UPDM force included remnants of the Amin and Obote regimes. For details of the brutal counter-insurgency methods used by the Tutsi in Uganda, see Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," pp. 32-33.

²⁰ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 129.

3. Several prominent Tutsi officers in the NRA were removed from their posts in the late 1980s, including Fred Rwigyema and Peter Bayingana. These leading officers, realizing that their careers in Uganda were essentially over, now had increased time and motivation to turn their skills towards Rwanda.²¹
4. Habyarimana started to make concessions on refugee return in the late 1980s, especially with regard to Uganda-based refugees, which threatened to undermine the RPF's stated rationale for invasion. If Tutsi refugees began to return home peacefully, there would be less support for a military option among both the Tutsi refugees and the international community, which the RPF had been courting for several years. Some scholars argue that the invasion was thus triggered by the desire to act before Habyarimana could make any further concessions.²²
5. In 1990, Museveni dashed the hopes of many Tutsi refugees in Uganda by declining to offer them citizenship, as he earlier had indicated he might. Under Museveni's rule, the Tutsi had prospered significantly in business, government, and the military – and many Tutsi likely would have accepted an offer to become citizens. However, the prosperity of the Tutsi caused resentment among Uganda's biggest ethnic group, the Baganda, who provided vital political support to Museveni. To appease the Baganda, Museveni withdrew his offer of citizenship to the Tutsi and tried to reduce their overall influence in the country. This backtracking by Museveni renewed Tutsi fear that they would never be secure until they could return to their own country.²³
6. By 1990, the RPF increasingly feared an army-wide purge of Tutsi from the NRA in response to growing Ugandan questions about the presence of "foreigners" in the force.

²¹ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 42–43. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 131. The NRA retained two other senior Tutsi officers, Kagame and Chris Bunyenyezi. Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," p. 38, explains that Rwigyema and Bayingana were removed in an attempt to appease popular anti-Tutsi sentiment. Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," p. 127, also claims that Rwigyema only began to support the invasion option after he was decommissioned by Museveni. However, all RPF officials interviewed for this study deny that assertion, insisting that Rwigyema always had led and supported the organizing of the planned invasion. RPF officials, interviews with author, Kigali, April 1999. In fact, Kagame says that the reason Rwigyema originally joined Museveni's rebels in 1976 was to learn skills that would enable a subsequent military return to Rwanda. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 42.

²² Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 130.

²³ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 11. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 129. Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," p. 127.

This put a premium on launching the invasion quickly, before more Tutsi could be purged, so that the soldiers could use their weapons and equipment for the invasion.²⁴

7. Habyarimana had begun to infiltrate the NRA and RPF with informants, and was reported to be planning assassination attempts against leading RPF officials in Uganda. He also had begun to expand the Rwandan army to defend against a prospective invasion. This gave further impetus for the RPF to launch an invasion quickly before any further infiltration of their ranks – or defensive preparation by Rwanda – could undermine their plans.²⁵
8. In 1990, the RPF received several prominent defectors from Rwanda, both Hutu and Tutsi, who argued that Habyarimana was increasingly vulnerable due to his regime's corruption, human rights abuses, and regional tensions with Rwandans in the south-central area of the country who had been marginalized for 17 years. These defectors included Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu who later would become the figurehead president of Rwanda under the RPF during the first few years after the genocide, and Vincent Kajeguhakwa, a prominent Tutsi businessman who broke ranks with Habyarimana over a soured business deal. They argued that Rwanda was "ripe" for an invasion, because much of Rwanda's population was opposed to Habyarimana.²⁶
9. An aggressive wing of the RPF had been pushing for invasion since 1988, and finally may have prevailed over the more pacifist wing.²⁷
10. Museveni was tiring of the Tutsi presence, which was a political albatross for him, so he encouraged and sponsored the military invasion of Rwanda.

All of these explanations appear deductively logical, but only a few are cited in retrospect by senior RPF officials, while a few others are simply false. In addition, RPF officials emphasize several other factors not mentioned in the literature, as discussed below. The literature

²⁴ Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 487. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 131. Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," p. 37, adds a slightly different spin, asserting that the now unemployed, former NRA soldiers began to agitate for invasion of Rwanda.

²⁵ Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 487. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 54. Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," pp. 36-37.

²⁶ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 44. Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," p. 35. Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," p. 130.

²⁷ Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," pp. 34-35. Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," p. 126, reports that such "hotheads" actually attempted to invade Rwanda even earlier, in the spring of 1986, soon after they

also fails to capture adequately the fascinating political dynamic between Museveni, Habyarimana, and the RPF prior to and immediately after the invasion. Most importantly, the existing literature on Rwanda shares the flaws of the general literature on mass killing: it assumes that discrimination inevitably leads to – and is the main cause of – violent challenges, and fails to examine what role, if any, is played by the challengers’ expected costs and benefits. This study corrects these flaws by carrying out a fine-grained process-tracing of the Tutsi rebels’ tragic challenge (in this chapter) and then utilizing this data (in the next chapter) to conduct a rigorous test of the three proposed hypotheses of rational deterrence theory.

Grand Strategy of the Rwandan Patriotic Front

Process tracing reveals that the Tutsi rebels formulated a grand strategy prior to their invasion that guided their actions throughout their tragic challenge. The goal of this strategy was not merely to achieve the return of Tutsi refugees to Rwanda, as the rebels initially claimed in their public pronouncements and their presentations to foreign governments. Rather, the rebels also sought to obtain at least a share of political power in Rwanda. Without such political power, they believed that any returning Tutsi refugees including themselves would be second-class citizens in Rwanda, subject to discrimination and possibly violence. This prospect would have been a step down for the Tutsi rebel leaders from Uganda, where although they were viewed as outsiders they had attained a considerable degree of wealth, education, and political power, resulting in part from their longstanding association with the president and his army. Accordingly, the rebels’ minimum goal in Rwanda was to obtain sufficient political control to ensure that returning Tutsi refugees were treated at least as equal citizens. In the words of Emmanuel Ndahiro, the personal physician and right-hand man to RPF leader Paul Kagame, “we had to be a partner.”²⁸

Had the rebels actually perceived such an outcome as feasible, they might have been satisfied with sharing power with the Hutu in a “genuine democracy,” as their founding platform claimed they sought. Although many of the rebel leaders had longstanding ties to Marxist movements, and a few may have sought simply to reestablish Tutsi hegemony in Rwanda, by the

helped Museveni come to power in Uganda in January 1986. The plotters were rounded up and punished by Museveni’s security forces.

²⁸ Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999.

late 1980s most appear to have embraced the ideal of democracy on both genuine philosophical grounds and the practical grounds of conforming to an international norm. However, given Rwanda's history of authoritarianism, regionalism, and ethnic polarization, the Tutsi rebels did not believe that Rwanda's Hutu actually were willing to share power with them in the short run. Accordingly, the Tutsi rebels believed they initially had to attain dominant political control in Rwanda, in order subsequently to lead the country to democracy. The rebels appear sincerely to have believed that after they captured power, they would share it with the Hutu through democratization. The Tutsi rebels also expected, somewhat naively, that most Hutu within Rwanda could be convinced that the rebels' ultimate goal in acquiring superior military power and demanding political control in Rwanda was to democratize the country rather than reestablish Tutsi hegemony. In reality, even those Hutu who opposed the Habyarimana regime were extremely wary of the Tutsi rebels' ultimate intentions and acutely sensitive to perceived indicators of malign intent. As a result, this domestic opposition would prove highly susceptible to political manipulation by Hutu extremists.

The Tutsi rebels devised a three-part grand strategy to achieve their short-run goal of capturing political control in Rwanda. First, their top priority was to retain the support of the international community. The only thing that they believed could prevent them from obtaining political control in Rwanda was if western powers intervened militarily against them to protect the Habyarimana regime. As long as the international community did not intervene against them, the Tutsi rebels believed they eventually could capture political control of Rwanda by force, if necessary, based on their extensive military experience in Uganda. In order to retain crucial international support, in light of the international community's preference for negotiated power-sharing agreements over military victories, the rebels believed they had to eschew conquering Rwanda militarily except as a last resort – even though this would give the regime more time to retaliate against Tutsi civilians. The rebels accepted such retaliation as the cost of achieving their goal.

Second, the rebels' main politico-military strategy was to build up a superior force but to use it mainly as leverage in negotiations to compel Habyarimana to hand over political control to them, rather than to conquer the country. Whenever the Hutu president resisted their demands or tried to coerce them by massacres of Tutsi civilians, the rebels would launch a military offensive, sufficiently large to remind Habyarimana that they could capture the country by force if

necessary, but sufficiently restrained so as not to endanger the support of the international community. The rebels repeatedly walked this fine line. However, they also retained a last-resort plan to conquer the country by military force, if necessary, which they dubbed the “zed option.”

Third, the Tutsi rebels attempted to forge alliances with Hutu in central and southern Rwanda who opposed Habyarimana because he discriminated against them in favor of Hutu from his northwestern home region. These alliances served three rebel purposes. First, they added to the coercive pressure on Habyarimana to surrender power. Second, they provided the rebels an entrée to communicate their platform of pan-ethnic democracy directly to the Rwandan masses, in an effort to broaden their political support from its narrow base of Tutsi refugees. Third, the alliances with the Hutu opposition conveyed to foreign audiences the impression that the rebels were dedicated to inter-ethnic power-sharing, rather than Tutsi hegemony, thereby bolstering international support for the rebels.

Senior rebel officials confirm all three elements of this grand strategy, starting with their primary emphasis on retaining international support by eschewing military victory. The RPF’s founding coordinator and leading ideologue, Tito Rutaremara, says that by 1992 the rebels were confident they could defeat the Rwandan army, but held off because of risks including provoking “French intervention” on behalf of the Hutu government. Patrick Mazimaka, in charge of external affairs for the RPF, says the rebels believed that pursuing military victory “had a dark side – the international community would say you didn’t give this guy [Habyarimana] a chance.” So, instead, the rebels chose to “get enough [military] power to make sure he listens.” Mazimaka’s then-deputy, Theogene Rudasingwa, explains that although some members of the RPF leadership “wanted to go for military victory,” the prevailing leadership view was that engaging in extensive negotiations with Habyarimana was a “necessary step,” because otherwise the rebels “would have lost credibility” with the international community.²⁹

By the first weeks of their invasion, the rebels had initiated a pre-planned public-relations campaign to block western military support to the Hutu regime. At least in the case of Belgium, it went off like clockwork: the Tutsi rebels invaded Rwanda; Habyarimana retaliated against Tutsi civilians; RPF officials in Brussels then cited this as proof that Habyarimana was engaging

²⁹ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 4. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 2. Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 1.

in ethnic oppression; and the Belgian government responded by cutting off its military support to the Rwandan army.³⁰ Thus, by provoking retaliation against Tutsi civilians, the Tutsi rebels managed to arouse international outrage against the Hutu regime and cut off a key source of its military support. Nevertheless, the Tutsi rebels continued to worry about western military intervention on behalf of the Habyarimana regime throughout the civil war. For this reason, during peace negotiations, the rebels initially opposed deployment of a UN peacekeeping force, insisting that any peacekeepers instead should be from the Organization of African Unity. Even when the rebels finally acquiesced to a UN force, they demanded that its numbers be kept small.³¹ Ironically, this stance ultimately worked to the disadvantage of the Tutsi, when the deployed UN force proved too feeble to prevent the genocide. The rebels had wanted the UN force to be small so that it could not prevent them from launching a final offensive to conquer the country if they chose to do so, but as a result it was also too small to stop the extremist Hutu from carrying out the genocide.

Rebel officials also confirm that their military offensives were intended mainly as coercive leverage in peace negotiations, rather than to conquer the country. In 1992, RPF leader Paul Kagame explained that, “The best way to fight is protracted war, because the ultimate solution is political. War is to create pressure to force the government to break down completely or realize the need for a negotiated settlement.”³² A senior rebel officer likewise explains that the February 1993 offensive was “a response to the government killing people and talking hate on the radio while negotiating peace.” He says the RPF intended the offensive “to prove to Habyarimana and the international community that if you don’t give us peace we can take it ourselves.”³³ Former information minister Wilson Rutaysire confirmed in an interview that the “military and diplomatic tracks had to go hand in hand,” and Rudasingwa says the rebel strategy was “double-edged throughout,” threatening the Hutu regime with military defeat if it did not agree to rebel demands. Aloysie Inyumba says the rebels always retained the “zed option” of pursuing military victory, but first tried to persuade “the Rwandan people and the international

³⁰ Reed, “Exile, Reform, and the Rise,” p. 489.

³¹ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 2.

³² Catharine Watson, “War and Waiting,” *Africa Report* (November/December 1992), p. 55. After the RPF came to power following the genocide he reminisced about this strategy in Francois Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda? Entretiens avec Paul Kagame* (Brussels: Editions Luc Pire, 1995), pp. 45, 51.

³³ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999.

community” to accept the rebel demands. Charles Murigande, the RPF representative in Washington prior to and during the war, says the RPF explicitly incorporated the zed option into its internal “operational guidelines” several years prior to the invasion. He says the rebels were committed to obtaining political power, and to not compromising their demands, whatever it took. “The best would be without taking Kigali” by military force, says Murigande, “but we were prepared to go to capture Kigali.”³⁴ Finally, Tito Rutaremara reveals that the RPF’s alliances with Rwanda’s domestic Hutu opposition were strictly instrumental. The Tutsi rebels knew that “there were very few genuine democrats” among the Hutu opposition, he says, but “working with the opposition leaders was a necessary evil.”³⁵

Revised History of the Rwandan Patriotic Front

Previous studies have noted the importance of exploring the Rwandan Tutsi refugee experience up to the late 1980s in order to understand the subsequent actions of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. However, these previous accounts have been incomplete, and in some cases inaccurate, so it is useful to present here a revised history of the RPF.

The first Tutsi refugees fled Rwanda in 1959, upon the outbreak of violence associated with Rwanda’s Hutu revolution. They went to four neighboring states – Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire. Soon after, as noted above, the Tutsi *inyenzi* refugee rebels organized the first efforts to return to Rwanda by military force, but this ended in disaster, triggering further expulsions of about 200,000 Rwandan Tutsi, or about half their population. These early rebels were “royalists,” meaning that their invasions from Burundi and Uganda were aimed at returning the deposed Tutsi *mwami* (king) to the throne and restoring Tutsi hegemony in Rwanda. When the effort collapsed in around 1967, no significant successor movement arose on behalf of the Tutsi refugees for more than a decade. Most of the refugees remained in Rwanda’s four neighbors, although over time some dispersed as far away as Europe and North America.

³⁴ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 1. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 1. Aloysie Inyumba, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999. Bruce Jones, “The Arusha Peace Process,” in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, eds., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999), p. 141, concurs that the rebels used their military offensives for leverage in negotiations, but he does not cite his sources. Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” pp. 136-37, concurs that the rebels used negotiations instrumentally without any intention of compromising their demands.

³⁵ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999.

Rwandan politics blocked any significant refugee returns for three decades. Under the country's first president, the Hutu supremacist Kayibanda, Tutsi refugees understandably were too afraid to return to Rwanda. In the 1960s, two expatriate organizations aimed to bridge Hutu-Tutsi tensions in Rwanda, but they were small and had no significant impact.³⁶ In 1973, when Juvenal Habyarimana took power and reduced ethnic tensions within Rwanda, some Tutsi refugees probably would have wanted to repatriate, but Habyarimana explicitly barred any such returns. The Tutsi refugees, lacking the means or organization to force their way home, instead did their best to make lives in their new lands. At the same time, however, most of the refugees retained their Rwandan language and culture and dreamed of eventually returning home. In some states such as Tanzania and Burundi, the refugees were relatively welcome, while in others such as Zaire and Uganda, they were objects of discrimination and sometimes massive abuse.

Of the four neighboring African states, Uganda was the site of the best and worst times for the Rwandan Tutsi refugees, because they became entangled in intra-Ugandan power struggles. Initially, Uganda was quite welcoming to the refugees in the expectation that their stay would be short. Local political leaders such as Milton Obote supported legal protections for the Rwanda refugees even prior to Uganda's 1961 independence. However, Ugandan resentment soon built against the Rwandan Tutsi for at least three reasons: the refugee camps were being used as rear bases and recruitment areas for *inyenzi* attacks into Rwanda; the refugees received special benefits from the United Nations, creating jealousy and resentment among their Ugandan neighbors; and the Tutsi allied themselves with a culturally-related Ugandan ethnic group, the Hima, who were resented locally as elitists. Eventually, during an economic slump in the late 1960s, President Obote turned against the refugees and announced a policy banning them from employment. However, the policy never was implemented fully because of a successful coup by Idi Amin in 1971. Obote retreated to the bush and launched a protracted rebel campaign against Amin, eventually teaming with another rebel leader, Yoweri Museveni.³⁷

Amin's tenure turned out to be a mixed blessing for the refugees. Initially, he reduced oppression of the Tutsi in Uganda. In 1972, however, he suddenly began persecuting them as part of his blanket retaliation against all Rwandans for the fact that the Rwandan government

³⁶ Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 481.

³⁷ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 33. Otunnu, "Rwandese Refugees and Immigrants in Uganda," pp. 6-15. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 9-10.

was backing Obote's rebel force – even though the Tutsi refugees shared Amin's hatred of the Hutu regime in Kigali. After Habyarimana's 1973 coup, Amin again reversed course and cozied up to the Tutsi refugees, recruiting some to join his infamously brutal army and security forces. However, when Amin's leadership faltered in the late-1970s, he reversed himself yet again and turned on the Tutsi, blaming them and other refugees as scapegoats for Uganda's ills. Despite this final split, many Ugandans continued to associate the Tutsi with Amin's brutal security forces, so that when Amin was overthrown in 1979, Ugandans attacked the Tutsi refugees in revenge.³⁸

Amin was overthrown by a combination of Tanzanian troops and Ugandan rebels, including Museveni and Obote. An interim Ugandan government was established in 1979, and Museveni served as defense minister, but in late 1980 he lost in disputed presidential elections to Obote. Two months later, in February 1981, Museveni returned to the bush and formed the guerrilla Popular Resistance Army, aiming again to conquer Kampala by force. Obote, back in power, again persecuted the Tutsi, including by large-scale attacks in October 1982 that entailed killing, rapes, maimings, and destruction of homes, leading to the displacement of tens of thousands of Tutsi refugees. A subsequent wave of attacks in December 1983 displaced another 20,000 Rwandans in Uganda. In the face of such oppression, some Tutsi began to join Museveni's rebel movement, now called the National Resistance Army (NRA), thereby giving Obote further reason to persecute the remaining bulk of refugees. In 1986, Museveni's rebels succeeded in overthrowing Obote, ushering in a renaissance for the Tutsi refugees, who were rewarded for their military role by receiving key posts in government, business, and the army – highly unusual power and prestige for refugees. However, this Tutsi renaissance in Uganda was short-lived, because questions soon began to be raised in the country as to why such refugees had more power and wealth than “real” Ugandans.³⁹

The earlier violence in the wake of Amin's fall gave rise to a slow resurgence of political organizing among the Tutsi refugees in Uganda. In 1979, they formed the Rwanda Refugee Welfare Foundation to address the immediate needs of refugees who had been attacked, by

³⁸ Prunier, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” p. 122. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 9-10.

³⁹ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 10. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 40-42. Otunnu, “Rwandese Refugees and Immigrants in Uganda,” pp. 17-21. Prunier, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” pp. 126-27. The Popular Resistance Army was transformed into the NRA in 1982, when it merged with another rebel group. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/uganda/Uganweb-06.htm> [downloaded February 11, 2002].

mobilizing resources and self-help within the refugee community itself. Later that year, the organization expanded its agenda to include advocating for eventual return to Rwanda, and changed its name to the Rwanda Alliance for National Unity (RANU), although it remained clandestine in the face of Ugandan hostility. RANU's first chairman, Sebeyeza, had fought with the *inyenzi* in the 1960s. However, the new organization rejected two main tenets of the *inyenzi* movement by being anti-monarchist and restricting itself to pacifist strategies. Most of its members also had an affinity for Marxist ideology, although they generally lacked formal education or indoctrination. RANU had only about 20 members after two years, but it still managed to be fractious, and failed to pursue any serious mobilization effort among the Tutsi diaspora. In 1981, when Zenu Mutimura became the second chairman, the organization began to function more smoothly and gradually to enlarge its membership. In 1982, when anti-Tutsi abuses increased in Uganda, most members of RANU fled to Kenya, where they remained for four years. By 1983, RANU still had only about 100 members and remained clandestine.⁴⁰

From its beginning, RANU also had ties to Museveni through a Tutsi refugee named Fred Rwigyema. Rwigyema had been one of the first to join Museveni's anti-Amin rebel group – going to Mozambique for training in 1976⁴¹ – and he was also a member of RANU from its founding year 1979. Another early connection was Tito Rutaremara, a Tutsi refugee in Paris who served as RANU's original representative in Europe, while simultaneously working for Museveni. Paul Kagame was another Tutsi refugee who joined Museveni's struggle in 1979, although he did not join RANU because of its narrow ideological orientation.⁴² When Museveni returned to guerrilla warfare in 1981, two of the 26 rebels who initially joined him were the Tutsi refugees Rwigyema and Kagame.⁴³ Other Tutsi refugees gradually followed in their footsteps. Some did so to escape the refugee camps and to help overthrow an oppressive regime in Kampala. Others, starting in 1983, were sent from Kenya to Uganda by RANU to obtain military expertise that would enable a possible future return to Rwanda by force, even though

⁴⁰ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, pp. 1-2. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 1. Also, Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 484, notes that RANU established contacts w/ Libya, Eritrea, and states of the East Bloc. See also, Rutaremara's comments in Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 154.

⁴¹ Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 54.

⁴² Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, pp. 43-44, 51. He eventually joined eight years later, as RANU was transforming into the RPF.

⁴³ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 10-11. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 39-40. At the start of the war, Rwigyema and Kagame were aged approximately 23 and 25, respectively.

RANU remained nominally pacifist. Museveni told RANU that he needed medical doctors, so the organization sent many physicians, most notably Peter Bayingana. Other early RANU recruits to the NRA included Wilson (Shaban) Rutaysire, Joseph Karemera, and Jeffrey Byegeka, as well as Kanu and Muzungu., all of whom later played decisive roles in the RPF. Once they joined Museveni in the field, however, these recruits lost contact with the Kenya-based RANU for such long periods of time that RANU officials feared they may have lost their members permanently to Museveni's cause. They had not. In addition, Tutsi membership in the NRA grew considerably in 1985, when the rebel group began actively recruiting in Uganda's refugee camps. Indeed, many more Tutsi refugees were active in Museveni's Ugandan rebel force than in RANU.⁴⁴

By the time of RANU's 1985 annual congress in Kenya, some members had grown openly frustrated with the group's strictly pacifist focus, arguing that it had produced only empty promises from European states to apply pressure on Habyarimana to open Rwanda's doors to the refugees. They wanted to reorient the movement from an intellectual "talking club" to a grassroots mobilization effort that would include a military option. However, this view remained in the minority in RANU until 1986, when Rwanda's President Habyarimana announced a formal policy barring the return of refugees on grounds that Rwanda was overpopulated. This affront galvanized belief within RANU that military force, or at least its credible threat, would be necessary to enable a return to Rwanda.⁴⁵

Coincidentally, the capture of Kampala by the NRA in 1986 paved the way for development of such a military option by the Tutsi refugees. At the time of the NRA's victory, approximately 3,000 of Museveni's 14,000 rebels were Rwandan Tutsi.⁴⁶ In addition, the defeat of Obote allowed RANU to move back to Uganda, so that the organization could associate more regularly with Tutsi in the NRA – now transformed into Uganda's national army. However,

⁴⁴ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, pp. 1-2. Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 2. Charles Murgandé, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 1. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 1. Otunnu, "Rwandese Refugees and Immigrants in Uganda," p. 16.

⁴⁵ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 1. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 26.

⁴⁶ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 125.

Rwigyema warned RANU not to organize openly within the army, because it could call into question the loyalty of the Tutsi troops to Museveni and Uganda.⁴⁷

In June 1987, RANU established a task force to reorganize itself from a narrow clique of Ugandan intellectuals into a worldwide mass-mobilization effort for Rwandan refugees. To broaden its appeal, the group abandoned its quasi-Marxist, anti-monarchist, pacifist ideological focus in favor of a coalition “front” philosophy, welcoming capitalists, Christians, monarchists, militarists, and anyone else dedicated to achieving the refugees' return to Rwanda. These ideas were mapped out in three documents prepared by the task force: an 8-point political program; flexible operational guidelines for cells around the world in recognition that they would have to operate in differing political environments; and a strict code of conduct to bar corruption and stem leaks of information. While the group still hoped to achieve return to Rwanda via diplomatic means, it now embraced as a last resort the “zed option” – the use of military force, if necessary.⁴⁸

At its December 1987 annual meeting, RANU adopted this new program and formally changed its name to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), electing Charles Kabanda as its first leader. The new big-tent philosophy and military option attracted more support from Rwandan refugees, including Tutsi members of the NRA. Paul Kagame, for example, who had refused to join RANU because of its narrow ideological focus, became a member of the RPF. Thus, a major consequence of the reforms was to effect a type of merger between the Tutsi political activists of RANU and the Tutsi warriors of the NRA.⁴⁹ For the first time the group also employed full-time cadres, such as Aloysie Inyumba and Christine Umutomi, who were sent to recruit grassroots support in the refugee camps by conducting political education. These initiatives were paid for by the RPF's newly aggressive fundraising effort within the worldwide Rwandan diaspora – an effort that also had the side-benefit of creating an international network

⁴⁷ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 2. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 1. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 1. Reed, “Exile, Reform, and the Rise,” p. 485. Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” pp. 126, 128. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 154.

⁴⁹ Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 1. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 156.

of RPF members to lobby their national governments to support the cause of the Tutsi refugees in multilateral organizations.⁵⁰

The RPF did not initially integrate its military and civilian wings, however, which gave rise to some tension. The most senior RPF members in the Ugandan army were Fred Rwigyema, who was the army's deputy chief of staff, and Paul Kagame, who was its head of intelligence.⁵¹ However, these officers were too senior to be actively involved in the RPF, so the *de facto* head of the refugee group's military wing was Peter Bayingana, an aggressive mid-grade officer. On the political side, the RPF's coordinator was Tito Rutaremara, who was an experienced international time operative with a much more patient approach than Bayingana. These two RPF officials differed repeatedly over strategy, and in each case Rwigyema or Kagame would have to be brought in to settle the dispute. Finally, in September 1989, the conflict over civil-military relations boiled over and was resolved by a thorough overhaul of the RPF's structure. Fred Rwigyema, who recently had been removed from his senior position in the NRA – due most likely to Museveni's sensitivity to growing Ugandan resentment of the Tutsi – became chairman of the RPF. Serving directly below him as vice-chairman was a longtime RANU official, Protais Musoni. Under Musoni were the functional directors, both political and military, including: Kagame for security; Bayingana for military operations; Joseph Karemera for training; Rutaremara for political mobilization; and Inyumba for fundraising and finance. This put a military official at the helm of the organization but attempted to integrate political and military officials in the chain of command below him.

In September 1990, immediately prior to the invasion of Rwanda, Musoni was replaced as vice-chair by Alexis Kanyarengwe, a Hutu former Rwandan army officer implicated in a 1980 coup attempt against Habyarimana, who had been recruited into the RPF by Rwigyema in April 1990.⁵² This change added a thin veneer of multi-ethnicity at the top of what was still at heart an organization of Tutsi refugees, and also provided the rebels with a source of inside information

⁵⁰ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 126, also reports senior RPF members had "infiltrated" the NRA's military security and recruitment branches.

⁵² Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 5.

about military considerations in Rwanda – a country that most of the RPF membership had never seen after childhood, if at all.⁵³

The RPF also set up a decision-making structure that was quite democratic and that initially avoided dominance by any single individual. As far back as 1981, the leaders of RANU had made a study of failed revolutionary movements and concluded that the “cult of personality” was a common cause of failure. Thus, the RPF adopted a policy of rotating its key positions every two years (a principle it maintained even after taking power in Rwanda following the genocide, although the limit was later extended to four years). The RPF’s military “high command” consisted of ten officers. Its senior decision-making “executive committee” comprised, in addition to this high command, the heads of military departments, and approximately 15 political leaders, for a total membership of about 30, split evenly between political and military officials. The RPF’s largest central body was the “political bureau,” which in addition to the executive committee, included the heads of political departments and regional chairmen from around the world, for a total of about 100 members, of whom about 75 usually were able to attend each bimonthly meeting.⁵⁴

In addition, the RPF dramatically expanded its global political network in the diaspora. Members were grouped into “cells,” each of which usually represented a single city. These cells were then aggregated into “branches,” which generally represented a single country, and ultimately “regions” such as North America. When contentious or decisive issues arose in the RPF’s political bureau, the organization would poll the global network of cells for their votes. This system was both democratic and practical, given that the diaspora provided most of the

⁵³ Despite the RPF’s claims to be of mixed ethnicity, the strongly pro-Tutsi nature of the group was decried as early as 1991 by a former Hutu member of its executive committee, Shyriambere Jean Barahinyura. He published an open letter stating: “I am convinced today that, contrary to claims by the RPF (including me) as to how the RPF would be a mixed organization, the RPF has been, and remains, a Tutsi organization with the ambition of taking power in Kigali.” Remarkably, Barahinyura was so embittered that the next year he founded the extremist Hutu CDR party. Pierre Erny, *Rwanda 1994: Cles pour comprendre le calvaire d'un peuple* (Paris: Editions L’Harmattan, 1994), pp. 101, 148; Reyntjens, *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp 127, 147. Overall, the RPF’s combined military and political wings were about 98 percent Tutsi, according to Joan Kakwenzire and Dixon Kamukama, “The Development and Consolidation of Extremist Forces in Rwanda,” in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, eds., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999), p. 88.

⁵⁴ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 4. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 1. Kagame concedes that senior officials had more influence on decisions than the rank and file, and that he, as president, had the greatest influence. However, he says he could be overruled by the executive committee. In most cases, he says, the RPF leadership acted by consensus. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 72.

rebels' funding, which totaled approximately \$1 million annually during the first years of the war.⁵⁵ (This decision-making process also turned out to be fortuitous for scholars, because recollections of these debates by participants offer insight into which factors were considered and which proved decisive when the RPF made key decisions.) Despite such global outreach and eventual recruitment of Tutsi refugees from other states to fight as rebels, the organization's leadership remained dominated by refugees from Uganda who had roots in RANU, the NRA, or both.⁵⁶

Tragic Challenge, Part 1 – Tutsi Invasion

By 1988, it had become an open secret in Uganda and Rwanda that Tutsi members of the Ugandan army were considering an invasion of Rwanda, in part because eager, younger Tutsi soldiers sometimes said so during unguarded moments.⁵⁷ Eventually, non-Tutsi soldiers in the NRA began openly to tease their Tutsi counter-parts, asking why they hadn't had the nerve to launch their invasion yet.⁵⁸ However, the RPF leadership had yet to make the final decision for invasion, and its senior military officials within the Ugandan army were extremely circumspect, hiding their membership in the rebel organization and avoiding any open planning or discussion of the invasion.⁵⁹ Amongst other concerns, they were afraid of being dismissed from the army prematurely, which would deny them access to weapons for the invasion.

Many historical accounts claim that Ugandan President Museveni supported the Tutsi invasion of Rwanda, based on the fact that he did not prevent it and that he later permitted the

⁵⁵ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999. Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 2. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 1. Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 1. The funding figures are reported in Alex Shoumatoff, "Rwanda's Aristocratic Guerrillas," *New York Times Magazine*, December 13, 1992, p. 50, and Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 52.

⁵⁶ As the war progressed, in late 1992, Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 54, reported that RPF "recruits from Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, and Tanzania outnumber those from Uganda," and that the "Ugandan contingent was slashed by deaths and desertions early on." However, this was true only in the lower ranks of the rebels. The RPF leadership remained dominated by former Uganda-based refugees throughout the war, and still remains so at the time of this writing, eight years after the genocide.

⁵⁷ Indeed, as early as 1987, when the U.S. National Security Council's new senior director for Africa, Herman Cohen, traveled to Africa, "President Habyarimana told me of his suspicions that Tutsi youth in the Ugandan army were plotting to invade their ancestral homeland." Herman Cohen, "Rwanda," chapter of book manuscript, August 1998, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999.

⁵⁹ In Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 47, Kagame says that as Tutsi would join the NRA they would make their presence known to Rwigyema.

rebels to use Uganda as a rear base and conduit for military supplies during the civil war. These accounts claim that Museveni sponsored the invasion in order to get rid of the Tutsi refugees in Uganda, who were a political liability for him because other Ugandan ethnic groups resented their privileged connection to Museveni and their role in the army's brutal counter-insurgency campaigns. Although the facts in these accounts are mostly correct – Museveni wanted to be rid of the Tutsi, did not stop their invasion, and later supported their war effort – the accounts incorrectly infer from these facts that Museveni favored a Tutsi invasion of Rwanda.⁶⁰ In reality, Museveni wanted the Tutsi refugees to return to Rwanda peacefully, rather than by invasion, because of his own domestic and foreign-policy concerns.⁶¹ Museveni had only taken power in 1986, and his continued tenure depended heavily on producing economic growth, which in turn required significant international assistance because of declining prices for coffee and other agricultural export commodities. Museveni also knew that if Tutsi from his army invaded Rwanda, he would be blamed and possibly subjected to international sanctions, which could devastate his economic and political agenda. It was too risky for him, however, to try to block the invasion by arresting Tutsi soldiers, because they were some of his best warriors and might have resisted by launching a coup or civil war against him in Uganda.

Instead, Museveni tried to use the threat of an impending Tutsi invasion to coerce Rwandan President Habyarimana to accept the peaceful return of Tutsi refugees. Had this worked, Museveni would have achieved both his goals, ridding himself of the political albatross of Tutsi refugees, while derailing their planned invasion of Rwanda and thereby avoiding economic sanctions. Accordingly, Museveni approached Habyarimana as early as 1988, urging him to legalize the return of refugees in order to avert the impending invasion. Museveni reassured Habyarimana that permitting the return of Tutsi refugees would not undermine his Hutu regime, citing his own case in Uganda, where Museveni recently had permitted the return of Ugandan refugees from abroad. In February 1988, a joint Uganda-Rwanda ministerial

⁶⁰ The Ugandan populace supported the invasion as way to get rid of the Tutsi, but Museveni firmly stated that the Tutsi should not be “chased” from Uganda. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 17. While Museveni may not have supported the initial invasion, or known in advance of its precise details, he did know for years that the Tutsi were planning such an invasion and warned Habyarimana of it in advance. Thus, it appears that Museveni is dissembling or parsing his words extremely finely when he claims that he was surprised by the invasion. See, for example, Otunnu, “An Historical Analysis of the Invasion by the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA),” pp. 44–45.

⁶¹ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999. Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 5.

commission was established to address the refugee issue, but it made little progress initially, apparently due to Habyarimana's resistance.⁶²

Museveni's efforts also were opposed by the RPF, which did not want the refugee issue to be resolved in isolation. Although RANU's original goal had been refugee return, the RPF had a broader political agenda, which included removal of Habyarimana and implementation of political reform in Rwanda to provide the returning Tutsi a significant share of political power there.⁶³ Museveni urged his two senior Tutsi military officers, Rwigyema and Kagame, to meet with Habyarimana, but they refused to do so in secret as had been proposed.⁶⁴ Indeed, the RPF leadership believed there was little point in meeting Habyarimana at all prior to an invasion, because they were convinced he never would grant significant political concessions until threatened by military overthrow.

Habyarimana took several steps to avert the invasion. First he ordered his intelligence service to infiltrate both the NRA and RPF in order to sabotage, or at least acquire intelligence to defend against, a Tutsi invasion. Second, he agreed jointly with Uganda to seek UN assistance on two initiatives to facilitate repatriation of Tutsi refugees – a survey of their wishes in the Ugandan camps, scheduled for October 1990, and a visit to Rwanda by refugee leaders to draw up lists of proposed returnees, scheduled for November 1990. Third, he legalized opposition political activities in Rwanda. With these steps, Habyarimana attempted both to undermine Tutsi refugee support for an invasion and to assuage international pressure for liberalization. However, the RPF had no desire to resolve the refugee issue in isolation because that would have undercut support for its planned invasion – both among the Tutsi refugees and the larger international community – without achieving the RPF's additional demands for democratization and power-sharing.

By invading in October 1990, the rebels preempted Habyarimana's refugee initiatives before their sincerity could be tested. Publicly, the RPF stated at the time – and still does – that his initiatives were inadequate because they offered return only to refugees in Uganda, without addressing the needs of Tutsi refugees in other states whom the RPF also represented.⁶⁵ Senior

⁶² Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 1. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 43.

⁶³ This was a mainstream RPF position, not merely that of the radicals as reported by Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 130.

⁶⁴ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 2.

RPF officials anticipated correctly that Habyarimana would reject their request for the repatriation of these other refugees because only those in Uganda were armed and therefore represented a threat of invasion. However, even if Habyarimana had agreed to take back all Tutsi refugees, RPF officials say privately in retrospect that they still would have launched the invasion – unless Habyarimana also had offered to give them a significant share of political power. While a few old-line RANU pacifists were willing to forego invasion in return for repatriation, they were but a small minority in a revamped refugee organization that had much greater ambitions.⁶⁶

The RPF planning for the invasion was deliberate – taking nearly three years from the founding of the group until the invasion – and was inhibited somewhat by the need to organize in secrecy within the Ugandan army. Rwigyema knew that the RPF and NRA had been infiltrated by Habyarimana.⁶⁷ Accordingly, only a small, “special planning group” of Tutsi officers within the NRA was permitted to know in advance when the invasion would occur and what the plan was. Other Tutsi officers and enlisted soldiers knew something was being planned, but received only one day’s notice of the actual invasion.⁶⁸ This secret, patient approach led a group of 26 younger, more aggressive Tutsi soldiers to attempt to jump-start the invasion prematurely by crossing into Rwanda’s Akagera national park in January 1989, hoping it would compel others to join them. Instead, Rwigyema crossed the border and retrieved the men. The actual invasion was not launched for another 21 months.⁶⁹

Rwigyema’s plan for the invasion was to cross from southern Uganda, the easiest place quickly to congregate Tutsi defectors from the NRA, into northeastern Rwanda. He believed he needed about 1,000 troops to succeed, but was concerned that Museveni would stop him. His plan, after crossing the border, was to move south by foot about 20 miles through the forest of

⁶⁶ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13. Reed, “Exile, Reform, and the Rise,” p. 486. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 43. Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” p. 130. RPF officials, interviews with author, Kigali, April 1999.

⁶⁷ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 1. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 2. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999. Kagame likewise says, “we functioned in a small group at the command level and used the subordinate commanders only in the final days [before the invasion]. We made everyone aware that, if there were any leaks, we would have all kinds of problems.” He says he did not even tell his wife. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 55.

⁶⁹ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 2. Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” pp. 129-30.

Rwanda's Akagera park, in order to attack a lightly guarded Rwandan army barracks at Gabiro that would provide weapons and ammunition for his troops. He planned then to move about 20 miles west into the hills of Byumba province, which he believed would provide a secure base for a protracted guerrilla struggle, analogous to those he had carried out successfully with Museveni in Uganda. Rwigyema believed that if his forces could reach Byumba, "not even God can move us from there."⁷⁰

Nearly all previous accounts of the invasion have claimed that the RPF anticipated a rapid collapse of the Rwandan army that would enable a quick capture of Kigali. However, these accounts appear to be erroneous, and may be based on incorrect inferences from the course of the actual invasion or interviews with junior officials who lacked access to pre-invasion planning. In reality, Rwigyema and other senior rebel officials anticipated a protracted struggle, based on their expectation of confronting a negatively lopsided order of battle at the start of the conflict. The rebels expected to be on foot while they knew the Rwandan army had helicopters and mechanized forces, including armored personnel carriers and other motorized vehicles. They expected to have about 1,000 troops, while they knew the Rwandan army would have about 5,000. In addition, the rebels expected that foreign powers, including Belgium, France, and Zaire, probably would intervene to support the army, and they discussed this prospect explicitly prior to the invasion. Anticipating that France could not be dissuaded from intervening, Rwigyema directed his external affairs chief – at the start of the invasion – to plead with Zaire and Belgium not to intervene.⁷¹

The rebels' logistical and operational preparations provide further evidence that they anticipated a protracted struggle, and help explain the delay between the founding of the RPF and the launching of its invasion. In addition to the main invasion route from Uganda, the RPF prepared food stores and follow-on invasion routes in Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi. Tito Rutaremara was charged with arranging logistical support from the west of Rwanda, and Protais Musoni from the east. In April 1990, six months prior to the invasion, Musoni was directed to arrange production of crops for the troops. He obtained land to grow maize in Tanzania, organized transport across Lake Victoria, and arranged two water crossings of the Akagera River

⁷⁰ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999. Tito Rutaremara likewise says that the initial goal of the invasion was to get a foothold in Rwanda, which is why it resembled a conventional – rather than guerrilla – attack. Quoted in Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 21.

⁷¹ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, pp. 4-5.

into Rwanda that would enable resupplying the rebels after they invaded. The RPF also arranged a network to provide meat for its fighters,⁷² and shortly before the invasion slaughtered 1,200 cattle to prepare dried meat for the war.⁷³

The formal RPF decision to invade was made around July 1990,⁷⁴ approximately the same time Rwandan President Habyarimana proposed his initiatives for the peaceful repatriation of Uganda's Tutsi refugees. At the end of September, the RPF gave the order for Tutsi soldiers in the Ugandan army to desert their posts and head south. Rwigyema, now retired from the NRA but still closely associated with it, met the troops and told onlookers he was taking them to celebrations for Uganda's independence day on October 9. To lend credibility to their cover story, the defecting soldiers had to leave behind most of their heavy military equipment – further indication that Museveni did not support the initial invasion – and thus carried with them only their small arms. On October 1, 1990, Rwigyema led the troops across the border into Rwanda.⁷⁵ As noted, he had worried that he might not get even 1,000 troops, the level he deemed necessary to establish a base in Rwanda. In the event, however, he was met by about 4,000 Tutsi soldiers, and another 3,000 Tutsi civilians who joined spontaneously upon hearing that the long-awaited return to Rwanda finally was being launched. As detailed below, this was the first of many ways in which the reality of the invasion did not match the RPF's expectations.

Even after the invasion began, Museveni apparently hoped it could be truncated and used as leverage to achieve the peaceful return of refugees to Rwanda. At the time of the invasion, both Museveni and Habyarimana were in New York at a UN conference. (It is possible the RPF timed the invasion to coincide with their absence.)⁷⁶ Museveni was first to receive word, by phone, that Tutsi soldiers were defecting from his army and crossing the border. Though he had feared such an invasion might be imminent, he was irate that his longtime friends and military

⁷² Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999.

⁷³ Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," p. 41.

⁷⁴ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13, quotes Rwigyema as saying July. Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, says it was "around June." Kagame says that the details of the invasion plan were finalized in a phone call between him, from the United States, and Rwigyema, who was visiting Brussels at the time. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 55.

⁷⁵ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 14. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Risc," pp. 487-88. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 131, reports that the defections were facilitated by Rwigyema's respected standing in the Ugandan army, Kagame's position as interim director of military security, and the fact that most of Museveni's presidential guard were Rwandan Tutsi, some of whom were able to take with them to Rwanda their military vehicles, including two well-equipped communications cars.

⁷⁶ Otunnu, "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion," p. 42.

deputies, Rwigyema and Kagame, had not discussed it with him and given him advance notice. He later said he was “taken by surprise by the speed and the size of the desertions,” which implies he was not surprised by the desertions and invasion themselves. This is consistent with the fact that he had been warning Habyarimana of the risk for two years. After being informed of the invasion, Museveni alerted Habyarimana and offered to stop the Tutsi if the Rwandan president would negotiate with them on their demands, including refugee return. Habyarimana initially agreed, so Museveni sent orders back home to stop any further defections or border crossings. By October 5, Ugandan troops had established seventeen roadblocks, capturing some 500 Tutsi soldiers and 200 civilians. As Habyarimana returned home, however, he made a stopover in Brussels, where he publicly accused Museveni of having sponsored the invasion. Museveni, feeling betrayed by the Rwandan president, reversed his order and released the detained Tutsi on October 6, after confiscating some of their Ugandan army equipment. It remains unclear whether Museveni really would have been willing or able to stop the Tutsi invasion in its tracks, had Habyarimana engaged in negotiations and not denounced him. However, as detailed below, it appears the Rwandan president had anticipated and prepared for the invasion, and never really considered anything but a violent reaction to it.⁷⁷

Tragic Challenge, Part 2 – Tutsi Refuse to Compromise Despite Rising Retaliation

For more than three years after their initial invasion, the Tutsi rebels escalated their violent challenge and refused to compromise their demands for political power, despite persistent retaliation against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda that culminated in genocide. At the start of the invasion, at 10:00am on October 1, 1990, approximately 4,000 former Ugandan army soldiers (including approximately 120 officers) and 3,000 Tutsi civilians crossed into Kagitumba in northeast Rwanda. Most of the former soldiers were Rwandan Tutsi but some were Ugandans

⁷⁷ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 5. He also is quoted relating the same details in Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 21. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 2. Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 1. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 14. Kagame says that his agreeing to go for training in the United States prior to the invasion was a diversion to make Ugandan authorities believe that the suspected invasion was not imminent. He says he and other Tutsi officers already had been interrogated several times about a suspected plot but had been found innocent. He also says Museveni “was surprised by the timing of the attack. . . . He was very bitter. He was extremely unhappy. There is no doubt about this.” Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, pp. 54, 65-66.

who had followed their defecting Tutsi commanders.⁷⁸ Although they had to leave behind much of their Ugandan army equipment, they were able to take their personal weapons and a few motorized vehicles. The few pieces of heavier equipment they managed to take to Rwanda included towed artillery, Russian BM-21 (122mm) rocket launchers, mortars, and 4x4 trucks.⁷⁹ By contrast, the Rwandan army not only had larger quantities of similar equipment, but even a few armored personnel carriers and helicopters.⁸⁰

The war did not go as planned for the rebels. Fred Rwigyema, their political and military leader, was killed on the second day, just as he was about to organize the rebels into units. The soldiers had defected from a variety of Ugandan army posts and had been unable to organize prior to the invasion because of the need to keep their plans clandestine. Now they had to be hurriedly organized into 4 to 5 makeshift battalions, after launching their invasion, and after losing their commander. Due to this unexpected loss, as well as the unexpectedly large number of Tutsi soldiers and civilians who had joined the invasion (seven times the 1,000 expected), and the limited equipment they were able to take with them from Uganda, the RPF invasion initially was unwieldy, disorganized, and logistically challenged.⁸¹

Habyarimana retaliated immediately, launching a military counter-attack and a crackdown on civilians – Tutsi and opposition Hutu – who were accused of supporting the invasion. Within three days, he had detained 10-15,000 domestic opponents, and eventually he

⁷⁸ The figure of 4,000 invading RPF rebels is provided by Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 2; Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 2; and a senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999. Kagame confirms that prior to the invasion, there were approximately 4,000 RPF troops clandestinely ensconced in the Ugandan army, although it is not clear they all were able to join the initial invasion. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 54. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 132, says only 2,500 rebels initially invaded. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 488, estimates a combined 10,000 civilians and rebels invaded. Kagame, and Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 3, say that the civilian presence proved to be a hindrance to the invasion, prompting the RPF to communicate word to Uganda that no more Tutsi were to enter Rwanda.

⁷⁹ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 132. Prunier says the defectors included one general (Rwigyema), one lieutenant colonel (Adam Waswa), five commanders (Kagame, Bayingana, Bunyenyezi, Nduguta, and Sam Kaka), about 15 captains, and about 100 lieutenants and sub-lieutenants.

⁸⁰ Details on the Rwandan army's equipment in 1994 can be found in Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 41.

⁸¹ Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 2. Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 5. Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, pp. 1-2. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 131. Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999. Musoni, who was Rwigyema's political deputy in the RPF, says the invasion went much worse than expected because of Rwigyema's untimely death.

imprisoned an estimated 8-13,000.⁸² In an act of subterfuge to whip up anti-Tutsi fervor, justify emergency measures, and attract French intervention, Habyarimana also ordered his own troops to fire on the capital, on October 4-5, 1990, to give the impression that the rebels were threatening foreign nationals in Kigali and were on the verge of conquering the country.⁸³ Zaire quickly deployed armored units to Rwanda that provided key assistance in helping Habyarimana blunt the initial rebel offensive, although Habyarimana made them leave on October 17, because they also engaged in looting. Belgium deployed troops that limited themselves to protecting and evacuating foreign nationals in the capital, which freed up the Rwandan army to focus on the rebels. The Belgians withdrew their military support on November 20, 1990, after intensive lobbying by RPF representatives in Brussels, who accused Belgium of supporting an oppressive regime. France deployed troops that bolstered the resolve of the Rwandan army, helped organize its counter-attack, and assisted in operations such as targeting artillery, although without officially engaging in direct combat. The French continued this military support for the next three years, deploying reinforcements whenever necessary.⁸⁴

The rebels made an initial advance, traveling quickly by road to seize the northern town of Nyagatare and the Rwandan army military barracks at Gabiro, as planned. However, Zairean armored units managed to cut off the road behind the rebels. The rebels then diverged from Rwigyema's original plan to turn northwest and seek cover in the hills of Byumba. It is not clear whether this deviation was because Rwigyema's temporary successor as commander, Peter Bayingana, had never shared Rwigyema's conservative approach, was emboldened by the rebels' initial success, lacked command and control over his troops, or was reacting to the Zairean presence. In any case, rather than heading northwest for cover, the rebels proceeded south and west through open savanna, where they were vulnerable to counter-attack by the better armed and more mobile Rwandan army supported by Zairean forces and French advisers. Some of the rebels met no resistance and quickly reached the southeastern Rwandan prefecture of Kibungo, but they outran their communications and logistics and eventually were called back. Then, in a decisive battle on October 23, the Rwandan army killed 300 rebels, including Bayingana and his

⁸² Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 135, reports that there were 8,047 official arrests between October 1990 and April 1991. Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, p. 49, reports 13,000.

⁸³ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 5. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 2. Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," pp. 133-36.

deputy Chris Bunyenyezi. Just three weeks into the war, the rebels already had suffered heavy battlefield losses, including losing three of their top four military commanders.⁸⁵

The RPF's other senior military commander, Paul Kagame, was in the United States at the time of the invasion. Museveni had sent Kagame, who was the Ugandan army's chief of intelligence, for training at the U.S. army's Fort Leavenworth, possibly in an unsuccessful attempt to forestall an RPF invasion of Rwanda. Kagame returned to the region on October 14, 1990, replaced the late Rwigyema as military commander of the RPF, and belatedly began to establish a rebel command structure – some two weeks into the war. However, Kagame did not also assume Rwigyema's role as political leader of the RPF. Instead, in an attempt to mitigate their image as Tutsi invaders reminiscent of the *inyenzi* – an image that Habyarimana was promoting – the RPF appointed as its new president one of its few Hutu members, Alexis Kanyarengwe. As noted, Kanyarengwe was a longtime opponent of the regime in Kigali who had participated in a failed coup against Habyarimana in 1980.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 134. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 3. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 489. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp. 93, 99-103.

⁸⁵ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 133. Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 5, says the rebels' biggest problem was inadequate communications, which prevented central control. He and others paint a picture during the first weeks of the invasion of separate rebel units acting autonomously, and communicating mainly by use of messengers on foot. Kagame also confirms that at the beginning the rebels were plagued by "total disorganization," for at least two reasons: the quick exodus from Uganda, and the presence of untrained civilian Tutsi among the rebels. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 4, says that logistics was the "Achilles' heel" of the rebels. He says the RPF had counted on capturing food and supplies from the Rwandan army, but was not able to do so sufficiently. He also says the savannah yielded much less food than other areas of Rwanda, so the rebels could not live off the land. Kagame says it was a mistake to pursue a conventional war strategy without organized troops and secure logistics supply lines, especially in the face of intervening foreign troops. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 61.

A widespread account, that the top three rebel leaders had died from rebel infighting rather than hostile fire, apparently was a false rumor spread by the Habyarimana regime to undercut the morale and recruiting efforts of the Tutsi rebels. It was spread especially by Shyriambere Jean Barahinyura, after he split with the RPF and joined the Hutu extremist camp, according to Misser. Kagame says he has researched the question extensively and is "90 percent" sure that Rwigyema was killed by the enemy, not by in-fighting, but that he can't be positive because he wasn't there. He also presents a detailed account of how Bayingana and Bunyenyezi were killed. The rumor, probably false, is that they were killed in revenge for having killed Rwigyema. Kagame, who was not there because he was training other rebels in the Akagera forest, says that Bunyenyezi was lured into an ambush by a false offer from the Rwandan army to discuss its possible surrender. He thinks Bunyenyezi suspected it was an ambush because the latter brought along a heavy complement of rebels. However, the Rwandan army cut off the rebels' retreat and then fired from armored vehicles, killing Bunyenyezi and many of his men and capturing their weapons. Bayingana who had been waiting in the north, went to investigate and was mortally wounded. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, pp. 55-59, 63.

⁸⁶ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 131. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 60. Kagame also established a seven-man military high command and established an explicit operational plan for the first time.

On October 30, the Rwandan army recaptured the northernmost town and original invasion point of Kagitumba, and on November 2, the rebels retreated into northeast Rwanda's Akagera national park. They attempted to hide in the forest, but the army then cut down trees to remove their cover. Over the next few weeks, the rebels lost dozens of more troops in heavy fighting in Ngarama, and then Gatunda and Kaniga, as they retreated westward back to the Ugandan border. As the Rwandan army and its allies recaptured the Mutara hunting region on the edge of the park, they also massacred an estimated 500-1000 local civilians of the Bahima ethnicity, closely related to the Tutsi. This gave Rwandan civilians additional reason to fear and resent the rebel invasion. In retrospect, the rebels say they were surprised at the initial hostility and fear of the Rwandan populace, which supported the government army and fled when the rebels first invaded. This fear was exacerbated in December 1990, when a group of rebels, retreating westward, massacred approximately 50 Rwandan civilians in the northern Byumba town of Kivuye. Not surprisingly, the Habyarimana regime highlighted this atrocity to whip up opposition to the rebels. (The RPF claims that it killed civilians only when they were used as human shields by the army.)⁸⁷

The rebels retreated in two directions in December 1990. Kagame led the main core of rebels, who committed the Kivuye massacre, westward to Mt. Gahinga in the volcanic Virunga mountains on the border with Uganda. The other group of rebels retreated northeast to the forest of Mutara as a diversion to split the opposing Rwandan army troops. The mountains provided refuge, but the rebels were wholly unprepared for the harsh winter at high altitude, and some of them died of exposure. In the face of these unexpected battlefield losses and harsh living conditions, many rebels deserted and went back to Uganda, including many of the younger Tutsi refugees and the Ugandan nationals. Other rebels took only temporary refuge in Uganda before rejoining the cause, but Museveni generally frowned on such use of Uganda as a rear base because it brought him international condemnation. While conditions in the mountains were

⁸⁷ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 14-16. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," pp. 488-89. Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, pp. 1-2. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 55. Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, p. 50. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 93. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 3. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 4.

difficult, the respite gave Kagame and his remaining rebels time to regroup, slip into Uganda for supplies, and prepare their next offensive.⁸⁸

To demonstrate that they were not defeated, the rebels staged a daring raid on January 23, 1991, moving from the border mountains into the northwestern Rwandan prefecture of Ruhengeri, one of the strongest bastions of support for the Habyarimana regime. The rebels successfully attacked a prison and freed its inmates, including the former Rwandan army colonel Theoneste Lizinde, who had led the failed 1980 coup on Habyarimana.⁸⁹ However, the attack also provoked retaliatory massacres against several hundred Tutsi civilians in Ruhengeri and neighboring Gisenyi.⁹⁰

From early 1991 through the spring of 1992, Habyarimana renewed his efforts to make concessions on democratization and refugee return to satisfy international demands and undercut support for the rebels. For example, on February 19, 1991, in Tanzania, he signed the Dar-Es-Salaam declaration on the rights of refugee return. The Rwandan government also participated in direct negotiations with the rebels, in Zaire, reaching a cease-fire at the end of March 1991. In July, Habyarimana offered Rwandan passports to Tutsi refugees abroad. He also legalized opposition political parties. In August 1991, he commenced even more comprehensive negotiations with the rebels in Arusha, Tanzania, and asked for U.S. mediation, although these talks did not get serious until July 1992. At the end of 1991, Habyarimana made a small gesture toward pluralization, by adding to his government one representative of a Hutu opposition party. Then in April 1992, he installed a more genuinely multi-party government comprising 10 ministers of his own party and 9 from the opposition, although he still retained effective control.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 14-16. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," pp. 488-89. Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, pp. 1-2. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 55. Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, p. 50. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 3. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 490.

⁹⁰ Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 95.

⁹¹ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 61-62. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 492. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp. 104, 110, 202, notes that in response to the invasion, Habyarimana expedited the work of a reform commission in early 1991, truncating its planned deadline from two years to a mere two months. The new cabinet was announced on December 30, 1991.

The rebels were not appeased by these concessions. In 1991, while engaging in peace negotiations, they streamlined their military logistics and trained new recruits.⁹² Soon after, in March 1992 they launched a mobile engagement in Rwanda's northeast areas of Akagera, Mutara, and Kagitumba, and performed markedly better than they had in 1990. In contrast to their initial invasion, the rebels now benefited from training as units, good logistics and communications, and well-designed plans – and showed themselves able to confront the Rwandan army. The following month, they launched an offensive against the regime's stronghold in Ruhengeri. Then, in June 1992, they attacked the northern province of Byumba. France deployed an additional 150 troops to bolster the Rwandan army, but the rebels managed to occupy the north of the province – the first substantial territory they had been able to control in Rwanda during nearly two years of war. The RPF finally had the foothold in Rwanda that Rwigyema originally had intended. According to a top RPF political official, Tito Rutaremara, the 1992 offensives were launched for two purposes: to show Habyarimana that the rebels were capable of mobile and even conventional war, in order to coerce further concessions from him; and to create a space within Rwanda from which the rebels could engage in domestic political activities. The new rebel zone also facilitated military training and recruitment of Tutsi from within and outside Rwanda.⁹³ However, by resorting to military force, the RPF also raised questions in the minds of its Hutu allies within the Rwandan opposition about its true intentions. Up to that point, the opposition Hutu had welcomed the RPF presence, because it helped them extract concessions from Habyarimana on power-sharing. In the wake of the new offensive, however, the opposition Hutu worried that the rebels intended to conquer the country for themselves.⁹⁴ On July 1, 1992, the leading opposition Hutu party, the MDR, criticized the rebel offensive, saying it “shows a duplicity within the RPF that calls into question its good faith and sincerity.”⁹⁵

⁹² Kagame says the RPF established “all sorts of means of procuring weapons and food, so as to be able to support our troops for an indefinite duration.” Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 62.

⁹³ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999.

⁹⁴ Herman Cohen, “Rwanda,” p. 9, indicates that the opposition parties already had been skeptical of the RPF as early as May 1992, when he visited Rwanda. “The different opposition parties were refreshingly multi-ethnic, with Tutsi intellectuals holding important positions. Nevertheless, everyone placed the RPF in a separate category. . . . [M]any of the Hutu opposition also regarded the RPF as a throwback to the old days of Tutsi feudalism. For them, the RPF was less a force for democratization and more a threat of a return to traditional minority rule.”

⁹⁵ Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 4. Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 2. Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 66-68. Tito

In response to the rebel offensives, and at the urging of U.S. and Ugandan representatives, Habyarimana agreed to serious peace negotiations at Arusha on July 10, 1992. After three days, he reached a cease-fire with the rebels, creating a demilitarized zone between the opposing forces to be monitored by 50 foreign military observers. Habyarimana also conceded in principle to the rebels' demands on rule of law, democratization, power-sharing, and creation of a unified military, although without specifying the crucial details. Hardline members of the Rwandan army in the north had made clear the previous month that they were opposed to any concessions that would result in downsizing the army, by staging a small unsuccessful mutiny on June 1, 1992.⁹⁶

Following the cease-fire and initial concessions from Habyarimana, the RPF continued its two-track strategy. At Arusha, the rebel group continued to press Habyarimana for further concessions. Meanwhile, in its occupied area and the demilitarized zone, it continued to build its military power and political support. According to two senior RPF military officials, the rebels used the next six months to politically indoctrinate new recruits, conduct military training, build relationships with the domestic Rwandan Hutu opposition to Habyarimana, and learn about the real situation in the country that most of their parents had fled three decades earlier. The RPF also began to enjoy its first serious success in winning over hearts and minds among the domestic Tutsi population, although most of them still were too scared of retaliation from the Hutu regime.⁹⁷

At the start of 1993, the RPF launched one of the most controversial and consequential aspects of its tragic challenge. On February 8, 1993, the rebels broke a seven-month cease-fire and rapidly captured a large swath of northern Rwanda, including portions of the hardline Hutu stronghold of Ruhengeri. Within two weeks, the rebels doubled the territory under their control and approached within 20 miles of the capital, Kigali, appearing poised to capture it. In the course of the operation, the rebels also killed many Hutu civilians. The government characterized these as massacres, while the rebels claimed that the victims mainly were collateral damage, killed when the rebels retaliated against Hutu troops and militias who were attacking

Rutaremarara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 4. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 204. The top rebel commanders were Kaka, Kayumba, Musitu, and Muhire.

⁹⁶ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 67-68. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 492.

⁹⁷ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 2. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, pp. 4-5.

from within civilian areas.⁹⁸ The RPF offensive also provoked retaliatory killing of Tutsi in Ruhengeri on March 5, 1993, and displaced an estimated one million Rwandans, or approximately one-eighth of the country's entire population. The government claimed that the civilians had fled in terror of the approaching Tutsi rebels. The RPF claimed – in an effort to fend off international criticism – that the Rwandan army itself had ethnically cleansed the civilians as it retreated, to prevent them coming under control of the rebels.

Regardless of the precise details, the Tutsi rebel offensive sparked widespread Hutu concerns – including among Habyarimana's opponents who had been allied politically with the RPF – that the rebels were intent on conquering the country and restoring Tutsi hegemony. France deployed 150 troops to reinforce the Rwandan army on February 9, 1993 and another 250 troops on February 20. Confronted by this French military intervention and by political condemnation from the domestic Hutu opposition and the international community, the RPF halted its offensive and, on March 19, 1993, pulled back from two-thirds of the territory it had captured, including the strategic road linking Kigali and Ruhengeri. The rebels also conceded to UN monitoring of the Ugandan border by 100 peacekeepers, which started four months later, intended to identify any illegal arms transfers to the rebels. However, this concession was minor because the UN mission was too small to detect most such transfers, and was not empowered to stop them.⁹⁹

The RPF's explanation for launching its offensive is that Habyarimana was refusing to make concessions at Arusha while continuing to orchestrate periodic massacres of Tutsi civilians.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, only weeks earlier, Habyarimana's representative at the peace talks, Col. Theoneste Bagosora, had left in anger, announcing he was going home “to prepare the

⁹⁸ Kagame says that while there may have been individual cases of deliberate massacres, most civilian deaths were collateral damage, resulting from, for example, the Hutu forces firing on the rebels from civilian homes, and the rebels returning fire on the homes. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, pp. 68-69.

⁹⁹ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 53, 55, 70-71. Jones, “The Arusha Peace Process,” p. 141. Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” pp. 137-38. Despite the cease-fire and rebel withdrawal, the Rwandan government prevented most displaced civilians from returning to their homes.

¹⁰⁰ Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 205. A rebel communiqué on February 9, 1993, justified the invasion by citing these massacres, as well as the incitement of hate, the impunity of those organizing the massacres, and the alleged plans of the Rwandan army to break the cease-fire. Three months later, Kagame explained, “We exerted forceful pressure on the government so that it would resume negotiations and it worked. If it had not worked, it would have been easy to overthrow the regime.” Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 143.

apocalypse.”¹⁰¹ Soon after, from January 22-31, 1993, Hutu forces massacred some 300 Tutsi in northern Rwanda (which as noted above brought the toll to around 2,000 since the start of war).¹⁰² The RPF says it perceived that Habyarimana was attacking domestic Tutsi civilians in an effort to coerce concessions from the rebel group at the negotiating table, and that it had to demonstrate to him that this was not an acceptable tactic. However, it appears the rebels intended more than just to send signals. Had their offensive not provoked French military intervention and international political condemnation, the rebels apparently intended to proceed to conquer the country. In other words, the indications are that the RPF finally had invoked its long-standing “zed option” of last resort.

As has been widely observed, the February 1993 RPF offensive was a short-run success but a long-run disaster. The rebels succeeded in showing Habyarimana that they could overrun his army if he refused to concede to their demands, and thereby were able to coerce further concessions from him in the following months at Arusha. However, the offensive also inadvertently helped to coalesce the Rwandan Hutu political class against the Tutsi. Until the RPF offensive, much of the domestic Hutu opposition to Habyarimana still thought the Tutsi rebels might be seeking only to share power in Rwanda rather than to capture it for themselves. However, the rebels’ offensive toward Kigali, which included atrocities and was stopped only by French intervention, undercut the RPF’s credibility and inadvertently assisted Habyarimana’s efforts to unite all Hutu in opposition to the rebels and their domestic Tutsi “accomplices.” This became clear even during the offensive, at the end of February 1993, when RPF representatives met in Burundi with their erstwhile allies from the Rwandan Hutu opposition. Faustin Twagiramungu, the moderate Hutu leader of the MDR opposition party, criticized the RPF for displacing a million Hutu and accused it of being no better than Habyarimana’s party – that is, interested in total control rather than sharing of power. The rebels defended their actions by saying that they had to do something to stop the regime’s repeated massacres of civilian Tutsi.

¹⁰¹ There are several versions of this account, with some claiming the statement was made in Arusha and others in Kigali. The date varies from December 1992 to February 1993. It is possible that Bagosora repeated several versions of the threat at different times and places. African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, Revised Edition (London: African Rights, August 1995), p. 86. See also, Hugh Nevill, “Genocide ‘masterminds’ to plead.” *Agence France Presse*, February 18, 1997. See also, extracts from the testimony of Eric Gillet to the French Parliament’s inquiry, March 31, 1998, http://users.skynet.be/am249801/_rapports/mission_gillet.htm [downloaded February 21, 2002]. Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 6, relates a tragicomic anecdote, saying that when he heard Bagosora’s words he had to ask others what “apocalypse” meant, because he had never heard the word before.

The RPF resented the fact that the opposition Hutu politicians were more critical of the rebel military offensive than of the original massacres of Tutsi that triggered it.¹⁰³ As Patrick Mazimaka puts it, “They felt that 1,000 Tutsi could die, but why must the war re-start?”¹⁰⁴ The RPF and the Hutu opposition nominally maintained their alliance of convenience for several more months, to retain a common front in making demands at Arusha, but mutual trust had been destroyed.

Following the RPF’s dramatic display of strength, and spurred by renewed pressure from the international community, Habyarimana soon conceded to virtually all of the rebels’ remaining demands at Arusha. He agreed to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, the transformation of his office of president into a largely symbolic office, a transitional government prior to democratic elections, and a small UN peacekeeping force to facilitate security during the transition. Finally, and most importantly, he conceded to integrate the rebels into the Rwandan army on the terms demanded by the RPF – including a 50-50 split in the officer corps, rather than the 85-15 split he originally proposed. The profound distress within the army and government engendered by this concession was widely known. According to one account, “An American participant observed at the time that the division of the army as it stood would never be accepted by hard-line factions in the army.”¹⁰⁵ Likewise, prior to the genocide, a western media account noted that, “because Tutsi account for less than 10 percent of Rwanda’s population, many Hutu feel the government went too far in offering them such a large share of military power.”¹⁰⁶ In retrospect, the U.S. assistant Secretary of State for Africa during most of the war says the “RPF demands concerning the future of the military were guaranteed to push the regime into a state of total paranoia.”¹⁰⁷ Yet, Habyarimana conceded to these demands because the international community made clear that otherwise it would remove its support, which would

¹⁰² Jones, “The Arusha Peace Process,” p. 141.

¹⁰³ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 7. Reyntjens, *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp. 206-7; also, p. 121, notes that Habyarimana wanted two of his representatives to attend the meeting in Burundi, but that the hardline wing of his party forced him to retract the authorization.

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Jones, “The Arusha Peace Process,” pp. 142-43.

¹⁰⁶ Scott Stearns, “An Uneasy Peace,” *Africa Report* (January/February 1994), p. 35.

¹⁰⁷ Herman Cohen, “Rwanda,” pp. 14-15. He adds, “Their position of equality in the military would effectively neutralize Hutu majority political power.” Cohen left office in April 1993.

leave him militarily at the mercy of the rebels. As the RPF's Rutaremara observes, "He had to [concede] because of the international observers who provided aid."¹⁰⁸

The rebels argue that they too made multiple concessions. For example, they accepted the Hutu regime's demand for a dual-command structure in the combined army. They agreed that refugees would not necessarily be able to return to their home original regions within Rwanda due to concerns about overpopulation. They accepted a complex transitional power-sharing arrangement rather than absolute control. They conceded to a UN peacekeeping force, even though they preferred an all-African force that would reduce the potential influence of France. And they agreed to accept a 60-40 split in the enlisted ranks of the combined army, rather than the 50-50 split they sought and which they received for the officer corps.¹⁰⁹

However, these were marginal concessions and did not impinge on the RPF's unceasing demand that Habyarimana hand over to them effective political and military control of Rwanda. Indeed, even the rebels admit that Habyarimana made the lion's share of the concessions. They attribute this to three factors: the rebels' unrelenting military pressure; the international community's threat to cut off aid to Habyarimana; and the internal Hutu opposition, which Habyarimana had to appease to retain ethnic support, and which was unarmed and therefore favored a negotiated outcome rather than military victory by either side.¹¹⁰

In the fall of 1993, however, Habyarimana obstructed implementation of the Arusha accords by coopting virtually all of the Hutu opposition parties into his "Hutu Power" alliance against the Tutsi. He spawned Hutu Power wings within each opposition party, and then these hardline wings took control of all but one of the opposition parties. This effort was facilitated greatly by the coincidental assassination of neighboring Burundi's first elected Hutu president by Tutsi soldiers, in October 1993, and the subsequent massacre by Tutsi of tens of thousands of Burundi's Hutu civilians during inter-ethnic violence. Based on these massacres, and the RPF's military offensive earlier that year, Habyarimana now could make a credible case that the Tutsi represented an existential threat to the survival of Rwanda's Hutu. Playing on this fear successfully to unite most of Rwanda's Hutu behind him, Habyarimana greatly strengthened his political hand. Once the opposition parties were dominated by their Hutu Power wings, he

¹⁰⁸ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 4. Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 6. Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 6.

insisted to the rebels that these hardliners – rather than the minority moderate wings allied with the RPF – should appoint the parties’ representatives to the transitional government, which would enable him to retain effective control of the government. He also demanded that the transitional government be broadened to include the extremist Hutu CDR party. Meanwhile, the Rwandan media began to report, and the rebels became aware of, strong signs that extremist Hutu were preparing to greatly escalate their campaign of retaliation against civilian Tutsi.

By early 1994, the rebels had two choices. They could finally make concessions in their demands for power – for example, by letting the now dominant “Hutu Power” wings of the opposition parties pick the parties’ representatives in the transitional government – in the hope of averting massive retaliatory violence against Tutsi civilians. Alternately, the rebels could maintain their hard line and prepare a final resort to the “zed option” – a military offensive to conquer Rwanda and protect as many Tutsi as possible from the expected retaliation. Once again, the RPF chose to pursue the tragic-challenge option – refusing to compromise its demands, preparing for renewal of war, attempting to arm and train Tutsi civilians within Rwanda to defend themselves, and urging the international community to put still more pressure on the Habyarimana regime. Theogene Rudasingwa says that, “in early 1994 it became clear that the transitional government was not going to happen.”¹¹¹ What this really means, however, is that the rebels, faced with Habyarimana’s new support from domestic Hutu, had decided not to make the concessions necessary to implement the transitional government and had decided instead for war. Rudasingwa claims there was no prospect for compromise, because the two sides were engaged in a zero-sum struggle for the non-divisible resource of political power. “There was no middle ground. The *Akazu* [Habyarimana’s ruling clique] could not accept change. And the RPF could not accept no change.”¹¹² Rather than making concessions, the rebels’ only feeble effort to avert the impending renewal of violence was to “push the international community in Rwanda very hard to push Habyarimana” to rein in the extremists.¹¹³

As part of its end-game, prior to the renewal of violence, the RPF attempted to arm and train Tutsi and opposition Hutu within Rwanda to defend themselves from the impending genocidal retaliation of the Hutu regime. This was a belated and major expansion of the RPF’s

¹¹¹ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 2.

¹¹² Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 2.

¹¹³ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 2.

longstanding, and largely unsuccessful, efforts to bolster its allies within Rwanda. The RPF initially had tried to find sympathetic Tutsi in Rwanda even prior to its invasion, but most domestic Tutsi were too scared to cooperate with the rebels. After the rebels gained a foothold in Rwanda in 1992 and began political activities there, they were shocked to learn that their allied domestic Hutu opposition parties had virtually no grassroots support, in contrast to Habyarimana's well-mobilized party. The RPF had expertise in grassroots mobilizing, based on its experience in Uganda's refugee camps, and offered its assistance to the opposition parties. Subsequently, after Habyarimana formed his *Interahamwe* militia, the RPF encouraged the formation of militias by the opposition parties and offered to arm and train them in its northern occupied zone, but most refused because they either did not trust the RPF or feared reprisal from Habyarimana. Finally, in early 1994, as the RPF decided that renewal of war was imminent, it redoubled its efforts to train the opposition militias and Tutsi within Rwanda. For example, Rutaremara says he met four times with the Christian Democratic party "to persuade them that there would be great violence and that they needed counter-training."¹¹⁴ Ironically, most of the opposition militias subsequently were coopted into the Hutu Power movement, so that during the genocide they participated in the killing of Tutsi.

In February 1994, two months prior to the genocide, the RPF also started arming and training Tutsi "self-defense forces" within Rwanda to defend against the expected retaliatory massacres. When the genocide started, the program was a few months away from fruition, so that most Tutsi in Rwanda still were defenseless. Musoni suggests this was no coincidence and that the genocide was started preventively, before the Tutsi could be armed and trained. "Whoever shot down [Habyarimana's] plane did us a disservice and they know it."¹¹⁵ In the first two months of 1994, some RPF officials also proposed publicly urging the "expected targets" of retaliation in Rwanda – that is, all its Tutsi – to flee the country. However, the rebels decided this would be counter-productive, because it would give the appearance to the international community that the rebels were preparing again to break a cease-fire. Moreover, by telling Tutsi to flee Rwanda, it would stigmatize them as fifth-columnists, confirming the worst accusations

¹¹⁴ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, pp. 6-7. Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 1, says the RPF also helped train other militias, including the Social Democrats' *Akambozi* militia.

¹¹⁵ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 4.

of the Hutu extremists.¹¹⁶ Instead, the RPF decided to communicate discreetly to certain groups of domestic Tutsi that they should flee Rwanda. According to rebel officials, most such Tutsi refused to leave on the grounds that they expected the UN peacekeepers to protect them if violence broke out.¹¹⁷

As another precaution in anticipation of renewed war, the RPF in early 1994 withdrew its top political officials from Kigali – where they had been deployed along with the initial rebel battalion under the Arusha accords, in December 1993, to prepare for installation of the transitional government. The RPF intended to return these officials by road to Kigali in late February 1994, but the rebels had been tipped off that the convoy was going to be ambushed. Instead, the rebels sent only a military escort, which was indeed ambushed but was able to defend itself because of the advance notice. The RPF never did return its senior political officials to Kigali prior to the outbreak of renewed war and genocide.¹¹⁸

Lastly, the RPF also took several steps during the first months of 1994 to prepare for a new military offensive to conquer the country. First, it infiltrated additional rebels to its battalion positioned in Kigali under the Arusha accords, increasing number of troops there from 600 to about 800. Second, the RPF ordered its rebels in the northern zone, who had been training only lightly because they were preparing for integration with the Rwandan army under the Arusha accords, to switch to a “war-footing.” These rebel units were told to be prepared to “react quickly” and to train for “urban warfare,” indicating they soon would be fighting to capture the capital. Third, the RPF developed a war plan, under which the reinforced battalion in Kigali would pin down most Rwandan army troops, leaving the rest of the country to be captured by a separate rebel offensive. The plan was risky because the rebel battalion headquarters in Kigali was ringed by five Rwandan army battalions and several additional army companies around the city, but the RPF was cautiously optimistic about its prospects. “We thought we could defend ourselves as the FAR [Rwandan army] came to us [in Kigali]. It would leave them vulnerable to our main thrust from the north, but still we were scared. It was guts.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 1

¹¹⁷ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 2. Kagame also discusses this ambush, at the town of Gasyata, in Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, pp. 77-78.

¹¹⁹ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, pp. 1, 3. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 2. Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 5.

Even after the start of the genocide and the renewed civil war, the RPF still clung to the strategy of its tragic challenge – refusing to compromise its demands for political power and accepting retaliation against Tutsi civilians as the price of achieving that goal, even as the price climbed higher than the RPF ever had expected. This strategy was reflected both in the rebels’ operational war plan and their refusal to test the sincerity of the government’s cease-fire offers during the first few weeks of the genocide.

After Habyarimana’s plane was shot down, the RPF immediately ordered the rebels in their northern occupied zone to mobilize that evening, April 6. By 7:00am the following morning, April 7, the rebels had launched their offensive from the northern base, with one group of troops racing towards the capital to reinforce the battalion there, and the rest moving more deliberately to conquer the rest of the country.¹²⁰ In Kigali, the RPF battalion issued an ultimatum, also on April 7, that if violence did not stop, it would leave its headquarters and start fighting, which it then did at 4:00 pm that afternoon. While this ultimatum lent the impression that the RPF was giving the government a last chance to avert the renewal of war, the fact that the rebels in the north already had launched their offensive calls into question the sincerity of the peace offer by the rebel battalion in Kigali.¹²¹

The RPF’s military offensive was designed primarily to optimize the chances of conquering the country, rather than to protect Tutsi civilians from retaliatory violence, although the rebels did modify the plan somewhat during its implementation to save Tutsi civilians at the

¹²⁰ The RPF offensive is detailed with a map in Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, pp. 42-43.

¹²¹ Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 6. Reyntjens, *Rwanda: Trois jours*, p. 148. The question of when precisely the rebels launched their offensive from the north also has significance for the question of who shot down Habyarimana’s plane. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 220-1, rejects the notion that the RPF might have shot down the plane on two grounds. First, he claims that, “The RPF did not decide to fight till 8 April,” two days after the plane was shot down, which he says indicates that it was not ready to fight when the plane was shot down. However, this argument is undermined by testimony from a senior military official of the RPF who says the rebels went on alert on the evening of April 6 and launched its offensive the next morning. Apparently, Prunier is repeating disinformation put out by the RPF. Interestingly, several political officials of the RPF, including Mazimaka and Ndahiro, continue this disinformation campaign, claiming that the RPF did not launch its offensive until several days after the plane was shot down. Second, Prunier asks, “how could the RPF have planned to do anything in Kigali with 600 lightly armed men to contend with at least 15,000 troops equipped with armoured vehicles and artillery?” But this argument also is undermined by the rebels’ testimony that prior to the renewal of war they had reinforced the battalion in Kigali and planned for it to conduct a holding action when the war renewed, while other rebel forces would conquer the rest of the country. Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, p. 182, discusses the possibility that the RPF even may have launched its offensive prior to Habyarimana’s plane being shot down, which would suggest strongly that the rebels shot down the plane. She cites claims by the French government, supposedly based on intercepted rebel radio communications and confirmed by the testimony of Rwandans who lived in the north, that the RPF actually launched its offensive on the morning of April 6, prior to the shooting down of the plane that evening.

expense of military efficiency. Had the RPF placed highest priority on protecting Tutsi civilians, the rebels initially would have moved southwest from their northern base. The vast majority of Tutsi in Rwanda, some 86 percent, lived towards the southwest of the country, in the six prefectures of Kigali, Butare, Gitarama, Gikongoro, Cyangugu, and Kibuye.¹²² However, the rebels did not move southwest immediately because they feared suffering casualties if they tried to penetrate the line between the Rwandan army's two strongholds in Kigali and Ruhengeri. Instead, the RPF initially moved east, where "the campaign was easier because the terrain was flatter" and few army troops stood in the way, intending to envelop the capital in a clockwise direction. The rebels swept through the eastern half of Rwanda in about two months, on foot, by using unorthodox tactics. Rwandan army units in the eastern half were spread thin and so ensconced themselves with artillery on strategic high ground. The RPF, rather than confronting the army units, bypassed them, cut off their supply lines, and kept moving forward. By doing so, the rebels broke a cardinal military principle by leaving the enemy both behind and in front of them. Nevertheless, the strategy succeeded because the dispersed army units in the east eventually ran out of logistics and apparently lacked the nerve to risk casualties themselves by moving from their high ground to confront the rebels directly. However, the RPF's circuitous eastern route did have a major cost: by the time the rebels reached the south and west of the country in June 1994, most of the Tutsi there already had been killed.¹²³

Interestingly, the RPF initially had ordered one unit of rebels to go directly to the southwest of the country by crossing the road that linked Kigali and Ruhengeri, and these rebels did pierce the road at its midpoint, between the areas of Tumba and Tare. However, the RPF then worried that these rebels were being outflanked by Rwandan army troops along the Base river to the north, and so ordered the unit to withdraw rather than proceeding further southwest to areas with high concentrations of Tutsi civilians as originally intended. This incident highlights that the RPF's top priority was military effectiveness, rather than protecting Tutsi civilians. The RPF defends its decision to pursue an eastern route on grounds that it believed the best way to save Tutsi civilians would be to defeat the Rwandan army and conquer the country, on grounds that the Rwandan army "provided the psychological and physical environment for the killers."

¹²² Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 121.

¹²³ Karake Karenzi, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999, says the Rwandan army troops in Kigali included elite units that were disciplined and fought well for three months. By contrast, he says, regular army units had low morale and little stomach for war.

In the event, however, by the time the rebels managed to defeat the army, three-quarters of the Tutsi already had been killed. Thus, in retrospect, the rebels probably could have saved many more Tutsi if they had pursued a southwestern offensive that emphasized protecting Tutsi civilians over conquering the country.¹²⁴

Admittedly, the rebels probably were correct that such a southwestern route would have inflicted heavier casualties on them, because of the Rwandan army strongholds on both flanks and the more difficult terrain. In addition, the rebels did not know in advance that the genocidal retaliation against Tutsi civilians would be so quick and thorough. Moreover, in the course of its offensive, the RPF did at times sacrifice military efficiency in order to protect Tutsi civilians. "That was the guiding spirit," according to the RPF's head of military operations during the offensive, Kareenzi Karake. For example, as the RPF conquered medium-size towns, which were the strategic strongpoints in Rwanda, the rebels sent some of their troops to the countryside to protect and care for surviving Tutsi (some of whom also were sent to the RPF's rear areas for training to join the fight). As a result of these efforts to save Tutsi civilians in outlying areas, the rebel "deployments were thinner than usual" in the towns they had captured, which potentially exposed them to attack by hostile forces. In another concession to the humanitarian tragedy, once the rebels who were conducting the eastern offensive successfully occupied that half of the country, they diverged from their original plan to link up immediately with their comrades in Kigali for a joint offensive to capture the capital. Instead, because of the rapid pace of the genocide, these rebels continued moving west to capture the south-central prefectures of Butare and Gitarama in order to protect surviving Tutsi there. The rebels even tried to design a plan to travel all the way to Rwanda's west coast to rescue Tutsi who were fighting for their survival in Kibuye. However, after France intervened in southwest Rwanda in late June 1994 and declared it a safe area, there was no way for the rebels to move further west without risking combat with French troops. At that point, the rebels turned their focus to Kigali, conquering it a few days later, on July 4, 1994.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Karake Kareenzi, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999, pp. 1-3. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 4. Rutaysire defends the eastern strategy by saying that a southwestern RPF offensive would have resulted in rebel casualties and become stalled when it confronted the Rwandan army in Ruhengeri, so that it would not have reached the southwest in time to save most of the Tutsi there. However, it appears that what drove the RPF decision at the time was the fear of rebel casualties, not considerations about how to save the most Tutsi civilians.

¹²⁵ Karake Kareenzi, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999. Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999.

Nevertheless, throughout the offensive, the rebels also made decisions that had the effect of sacrificing Tutsi civilians in the name of ensuring the RPF's military objective. For example, during the first two months of the genocide, the RPF kept some 2,000 rebels fighting in Kigali, rather than deploying them to the south and west, where hundreds of thousands of Tutsi were being slaughtered less than 50 miles away. One senior rebel military official defends this decision by saying that "to leave Kigali to save civilians would leave the enemy behind us," and thus expose the rebels to military losses. This underscores how the rebels placed higher priority on securing military objectives than saving Tutsi civilians.¹²⁶

The rebels also repeatedly refused to test the sincerity of the government's offer of a cease-fire during the first weeks of the genocide. The cease-fire proposal was initiated less than a week into the genocide, on April 12, by moderate Rwandan army officers, including the newly appointed army chief of staff, Marcel Gatsinzi, who was installed after his predecessor was killed in the plane crash with Habyarimana.¹²⁷ A senior RPF military official, Frank Mugambage, met with the Rwandan army moderates on April 14, and presented three conditions for a cease-fire, contained in a position paper signed by senior rebel official Jacques Bihozagara. The RPF said it would accept a cease-fire only if the interim government first stopped the massacres, dissolved the presidential guard, and annulled all of its decisions made in the week since Habyarimana's death. The moderate Gatsinzi told the rebels that the extremist government never would accept the latter two conditions, and he proved to be right.¹²⁸

The fact that the RPF's conditions for a cease-fire went beyond a halt in the massacres, but also demanded the dismantling of the army's elite forces and the annulment of the interim

¹²⁶ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999.

¹²⁷ Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, pp. 204-205.

¹²⁸ Senior Rwandan army official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 3. The other moderate officers at the April 14 meeting were Lt. Col. Kayuga and Maj. Filbert Rwigamba. Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, p. 697, reports that on April 9, the RPF proposed the formation of a joint force with the Rwandan army and the UN peacekeepers – with each of the three contributing 300 troops – to stop the killing. The anonymous senior Rwandan army official confirms that the RPF appealed to the moderates in the Rwandan army to join with the rebels to oppose the Hutu extremists and stop the genocide. However, he says that even the moderate Hutu rejected the rebel proposal, because it was unthinkable that the Hutu army would work with the Tutsi rebels in the midst a civil war between them. Instead, the moderate Hutu counter-proposed that the rebels first agree to a cease-fire and to implementation of the transitional government, after which the army would participate in the joint peacekeeping patrols as a confidence-building measure. Although the rebels rejected this proposal, they had subsequent discussions with the army moderates during the genocide in May and June 1994. However, it was not until the RPF had conquered the country and all but ended the genocide that a few moderate army officers finally accepted the rebel offer and were incorporated into the RPF.

Hutu government, was consistent with the rebel's longstanding quest for political power even at the cost of retaliatory violence against Tutsi civilians. Admittedly, the interim government probably would not have stopped the massacres even if the rebels had agreed to a cease-fire. A senior moderate Rwandan army official, who was unaware of the genocide plan at the time, says in retrospect that he believes the interim government already was committed to carrying it out to fruition. Indeed, the extremists were so displeased by the moderates' recommendation for a cease-fire that Gatsinzi was dismissed as army chief of staff on April 15. However, the fact that the rebels did not even test the government's offer to halt the killings in return for a cease-fire indicates that, at least during the first weeks of the genocide, the RPF was more willing to sacrifice Tutsi civilians than to postpone its goal of controlling Rwanda.¹²⁹

By late April 1994, the RPF finally realized that the genocide was being carried out so quickly that, at its current rate, most Tutsi would be killed before the rebels could conquer the country. Moreover, the rebel military advance actually was accelerating the retaliatory killing. According to the director of the rebel offensive, the extremist Hutu "made it a policy to kill as many as they could just before withdrawing" from areas that the rebels were about to capture. In addition, the rebels apparently decided that the expected cost in retaliatory violence had risen so high – total annihilation of Rwanda's Tutsi population – that it was no longer acceptable as the price of achieving their goal. Accordingly, on April 23, the RPF belatedly offered to accept the cease-fire that the army moderates had offered 10 days earlier.¹³⁰ According to Patrick Mazimaka, the rebels made this offer based on the hope that, "if we accepted a cease-fire, the Rwandan army might stop the killings because they knew they were going to lose otherwise. . . . The army could help us in areas where we couldn't get to quickly enough." However, while such a concession might have had a chance of working earlier, when the moderate Gatsinzi still was army chief of staff, it now came too late. The ruling extremists had purged such moderate Hutu officials and now were dedicated to finishing the genocide, so they rejected the cease-fire offer.

¹²⁹ Senior Rwandan army official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999.

¹³⁰ Keith Richburg, "Rwanda Rebels Call Truce, but Bloodshed Goes On," *Washington Post*, April 27, 1994.

Two haunting questions remain: Why had the rebels refused to offer any real compromise during the previous three and a half years? And could such an earlier concession have averted the eventual genocidal retaliation?¹³¹

¹³¹ Karake Karenzi, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 4.

CHAPTER 6

TESTING THE THEORY IN RWANDA

This chapter seeks to explain two aspects of the tragic challenge in Rwanda. First, why did the Tutsi refugee rebels initially launch the challenge by invading from Uganda in October 1990, despite the historical precedent that such invasions in the 1960s had led to massive reprisals against Tutsi civilians within Rwanda? Second, after the rebels' invasion and their demands for political control of Rwanda did indeed provoke anti-Tutsi massacres and threats of even larger retaliation, why did the rebels repeatedly escalate militarily and refuse to compromise their demands, eventually provoking a retaliatory genocide? The chapter explicitly tests three hypotheses drawn from rational deterrence theory: (1) The Tutsi rebels did not expect their violent challenge – the invasion, military escalation, and refusal to compromise – to provoke retaliation against Tutsi civilians within Rwanda; (2) The Tutsi rebels expected that Tutsi civilians within Uganda and/or Rwanda would suffer massive violence regardless of whether or not the rebels launched their violent challenge; (3) The Tutsi rebels expected their violent challenge to achieve its goal of capturing political control in Rwanda at a cost in retaliatory violence that they deemed acceptable. If none of these hypotheses had been confirmed by the evidence, the null hypothesis would hold that the tragic challenge was explained by some non-rational theory. In fact, however, the evidence confirms the third hypothesis.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four parts. First, I conduct a detailed test of the hypotheses with regard to the first part of the tragic challenge, the Tutsi refugee rebels' decision to invade from Uganda in October 1990 despite the strong historical precedent in Rwanda of violent retaliation to such challenges. Second, I conduct an analogous test with regard to the second half of the challenge, the rebels' persistent military offensives and refusal to compromise their demands for political control of Rwanda despite this provoking increasing retaliation against domestic Tutsi that culminated in genocide. Third, I summarize these findings and explore why the Tutsi rebels apparently had such a high tolerance for retaliation against domestic Tutsi civilians. As part of this exploration, I also reconcile the theory's assumption of unitary rational decision-making with the evident principal-agent issues in this case, arising from

the fact that the Rwandan Tutsi were bifurcated between longtime refugees, who launched the challenge, and those in Rwanda who suffered the retaliation. Finally, I explore the counter-factual question of whether the genocide could have been mitigated or averted if the Tutsi rebels or the international community had pursued different policies.

To summarize my conclusions, I find that the third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory explains the tragic challenge by the Rwandan Tutsi. The first hypothesis is not confirmed because the Tutsi rebels expected that launching and continuing to press their armed challenge would provoke retaliatory killing against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. Interestingly, the rebels never anticipated fully the scale of the eventual retaliation until approximately three weeks into the genocide, by which time half of the ultimate victims already had been killed. However, even prior to their initial challenge, RPF officials expected that an invasion would provoke retaliatory killing against thousands of Tutsi. And by late 1993, six months prior to the genocide, they expected that continuing their armed challenge would trigger much greater retaliation – on the order of tens of thousands of victims. The second hypothesis also is not confirmed because the RPF had no fear that Tutsi in either Rwanda or Uganda were in danger of imminent violence if it eschewed an invasion. The rebels did harbor some long-term concern about the security of Tutsi in Uganda, but process-tracing demonstrates that this concern was not what drove their decision to invade or its timing.

Rather, as per the third hypothesis, the rebels invaded, escalated the war, and refused to compromise for more than three years because they expected that by doing so they could achieve their goal of attaining dominant political control of Rwanda. They explicitly chose to accept expected retaliatory killing of their fellow Tutsi as the cost of attaining that goal. They expected to achieve their goal by attaining military superiority over Rwanda's Hutu regime and then using that superiority either to coerce the regime to surrender political power or, if the regime refused, to conquer the country militarily. They expected to attain such military superiority so long as the international community did not intervene on behalf of the regime. Accordingly, they placed a high premium on retaining international support, which they believed required them to refrain from pursuing a quick military victory. Ironically, this military restraint by the Tutsi rebels, which they imposed on themselves in response to international pressure, inadvertently provided the extremist Hutu sufficient time to plan and perpetrate the genocide.

Thus, international diplomatic intervention, by trying to be neutral, produced the worst possible outcome. By denying military support to the Hutu government, the international community encouraged the militarily superior Tutsi rebels to be uncompromising in their demands for political power at peace talks. This unrelenting Tutsi challenge provoked the Hutu to develop a plan of genocidal retaliation in order to avoid an imminent loss of political power that they feared would be followed by violent retribution against them for perceived past offenses. At the same time, however, the international community conditioned its support for the Tutsi on their exercising military restraint. This inhibited the Tutsi from launching a preventive military offensive, which could have prevented or mitigated the extent of the genocide. Such even-handed diplomacy, although well-intentioned, had the effect of setting Rwanda ablaze while obstructing the fire engines. It was, as one observer aptly has termed it, “pyromaniac diplomacy.”¹

Testing the Theory, Part One: Tutsi Invasion

Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the Tutsi rebels invaded because they did not expect their action would provoke violent retaliation against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. There is virtually no evidence for this hypothesis and substantial evidence to the contrary. Admittedly, the Uganda-based refugee rebels had a poor understanding of domestic life in Rwanda, because they had fled nearly three decades earlier and were unable to establish many contacts inside Rwanda, even among fellow Tutsi, who were scared of being associated with potential invaders.² One RPF official even says that he thought during the planning of the invasion that the rebels could avert retaliation by “de-ethnicizing” their movement through the inclusion of a few token Hutu.³ In addition, there is no evidence that Habyarimana issued explicit deterrent warnings prior to the rebel invasion. However, as one analyst notes, “it is known that eminent Tutsi, in Rwanda and abroad (among them even the former King Kigeri V), warned the RPF leaders that an attack by them would bring carnage to the Tutsi inside the

¹ Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, *La diplomatie pyromane: (Burundi, Rwanda, Somalie, Bosnie) Entretiens avec Stephen Smith*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1996).

² Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 2.

³ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999.

country.”⁴ Moreover, all of the RPF leaders interviewed for this study say that the historical precedent was so strong from the 1960s that they were aware of an implicit deterrent threat and expected their invasion to provoke violent retaliation against Tutsi in Rwanda. The rebels also understood that this was one reason the Tutsi in Rwanda were unwilling to communicate or cooperate with them prior to the invasion. However, the rebels did not initially expect the eventual scale of retaliation.

Previous accounts that claim the rebels expected a lightning victory, which might have averted retaliation, are false. As detailed in Chapter 5, the rebels expected and had prepared for a protracted war. Patrick Mazimaka, head of external affairs for the RPF, says the rebel leadership expected that Habyarimana’s “knee-jerk reaction” would be to retaliate against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. Charles Murigande, the RPF’s representative in Washington, says “reprisals were expected.” Theogene Rudasingwa, the RPF’s deputy for external affairs, says the historical precedent was obvious to the rebels before they invaded: “the ‘90s were a repeat of the ‘60s and ‘70s, so it [retaliation] was not surprising to us.” Wilson Rutaysire, a member of the RPF’s senior decision-making executive committee, says the RPF “always expected a backlash, because we knew the character of the regime” in Rwanda.⁵ Indeed, in its internal meetings prior to the invasion, the RPF discussed the fact the Rwandan government was likely to retaliate against Tutsi civilians, as explored below in relation to the third hypothesis.

However, it appears that the RPF initially failed to anticipate the ultimate magnitude of retaliation. Rudasingwa says, “we knew the mass killings would occur,” but the RPF was surprised by “the speed and the viciousness.” Rutaysire concedes the rebels expected “maybe five to ten-thousand” reprisal killings, but insists the eventual “scale took us unawares.” One possible reason the RPF underestimated the eventual scale of retaliatory killing is that there was no historical precedent for such large-scale killing in Rwanda. As noted in Chapter 5, Tutsi rebel invasions of Rwanda in the 1960s had provoked retaliatory ethnic cleansing of about 200,000 Tutsi, but only about 20,000 retaliatory killings. The RPF also made several miscalculations that help to account for its underestimating the eventual retaliation. For example, Musoni says the RPF expected retaliation against Tutsi civilians to occur mainly “in the battle zone,” and that this

⁴ Overdulve, *Rwanda*, p. 74. [My translation from the French.]

⁵ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 2. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 3. Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 1. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 3.

could be mitigated by urging civilians to flee to safer areas. Rutaysire says the rebels expected any additional retaliation to be circumscribed and confined to well-known hardline Hutu areas of Rwanda in the northwest, southwest, and a southern area known as Bugesera. He also says the RPF failed to anticipate that the Catholic church and the rebels' erstwhile allies in the Hutu opposition would join in the killing. Finally, the RPF apparently believed that the Hutu regime would exercise some restraint in its retaliation based on moral considerations. "We expected the hostage takers had a degree of humanity," says Murigande. Thus, he says, "We expected damage, but not total evil." Still, given that the rebels did expect their invasion to provoke retaliatory killing against thousands of Tutsi civilians, the first hypothesis is not confirmed.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis predicts that the Tutsi refugee rebels invaded because they expected that they and/or their fellow Tutsi in Rwanda would fall victim to mass killing whether or not there was an invasion. This is an implicit or explicit theory in much of the literature on Rwanda, which argues that the RPF invasion was inevitable because Tutsi perennially were subject to discrimination and ethnic violence in Rwanda and Uganda. In reality, however, for several years prior to the invasion, Tutsi had not been subject to significant violence or discrimination in Rwanda, Uganda or anywhere else in the diaspora. Thus, the second hypothesis cannot explain the invasion.

As noted above, Habyarimana ended anti-Tutsi violence in Rwanda as soon as he came to power in 1973, and it did not recur until the RPF invasion of 1990. Had the RPF not launched its invasion, it appears that the Tutsi in Rwanda were at no risk because they were no threat to the regime. As a recent analysis notes:

[T]he possibility of internally Tutsi-led uprising against the regime of Habyarimana was almost impossible. The RPF invasion, therefore, put the Tutsi in Rwanda at risk. The invasion in a way contributed to providing grounds and a target for extremism in Rwanda; one could call it extremism by implication.⁶

Indeed, prior to the invasion, there was not even much discrimination against Tutsi in Rwanda, contrary to claims in some popular analyses. Habyarimana certainly favored Hutu from his northwest region, and applied quotas on Tutsi representation in government programs.

⁶ Kakwenzire and Kamukama, "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist Forces in Rwanda," p. 88.

However, the quotas were an affirmative action measure intended to rectify historic discrimination against the Hutu, and they provided the Tutsi with opportunities at least equal to their share of their population. Indeed, according to available statistics, the Tutsi “still remained over-represented” in secondary schools, despite several decades of Hutu rule.⁷ Likewise, in the mid-ranks of the public sector, “Tutsi remained represented beyond the 9 percent they were theoretically allocated. Moreover, in other sectors of society – commerce and enterprise, NGOs, and development projects – they were present beyond that proportion.”⁸

In Uganda too, the Tutsi faced no significant risk of discrimination or violence at the time of the invasion. Indeed, the late 1980s represented a high-water mark for the status of Tutsi in Uganda, in light of their role in the military, close relationship to Museveni, and economic advancement. The majority of Tutsi in Uganda had left the refugee camps and integrated into the larger society. The remainder, mostly elderly, inhabited refugee settlements that were “solid and permanent – more village than refugee camp.”⁹ Admittedly, other ethnic groups in Uganda, including the dominant Baganda, resented the Tutsi in the late 1980s, but this was precisely because the Tutsi enjoyed economic success and a close relationship to the president. Many Tutsi may have felt like outsiders but they faced no acute insecurity.

In other neighboring states, most Rwandan Tutsi refugees also were safe and secure. The largest group of refugees, about a quarter-million, lived in Burundi, where they had been treated well for decades by that state’s Tutsi-dominated government. Burundi, as well as Tanzania, had offered citizenship to Tutsi refugees. One sign of how secure the Tutsi in Tanzania felt is that less than 15 percent bothered with the paperwork and expense of applying for citizenship when it was offered in 1980. Zaire was probably the least secure environment for Tutsi refugees in the late 1980s, but they still enjoyed a good relationship with the president, Mobutu Sese Seko, who hired members of the Rwandan Tutsi elite to serve as his political administrators. As in Uganda, the Tutsi in Zaire were resented by the local population, but they were not subject to significant

⁷ Uvin, “Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide,” p. 101.

⁸ Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1998), p. 35. See also, Erny, *Rwanda 1994*, p. 83, which notes that under Habyarimana’s rule in the 1980s, Tutsi “occupied a very important place in the life of the country, principally in business, finance, industry, health, the liberal professions, the clergy, etc.” He also reveals that the Tutsi overcame the quotas in public education by discreetly establishing “an education network, with private schools, that was better equipped in the final accounting than the official network itself.” [My translation from the French.]

⁹ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 6-8.

discrimination or threats of violence.¹⁰ Outside of Africa, Tutsi refugees also were thriving in the distant parts of the diaspora where some had settled, including Belgium, the United States and Canada.

Thus, there is no evidence for the second hypothesis. The Tutsi did not invade because they were at risk of violence in Rwanda, Uganda, or anywhere else in the diaspora. Nor do RPF officials claim this was their motivation for invading. Rather, they explain that they always had wanted to return home if possible, and did so when it became feasible. The rebels ultimately preferred to return to Rwanda by force, rather than to accept Habyarimana's offer of a peaceful return prior to the invasion, because they expected they could obtain more political power in Rwanda by at least threatening to overthrow Habyarimana, if not actually doing so. However, this military option raised expected costs, which they also weighed, as discussed next.

Testing the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis predicts that the Tutsi rebels invaded because they thought that by doing so they could achieve their goal of acquiring political power in Rwanda, and because they accepted the expected retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda as the cost of achieving that goal. This hypothesis is confirmed by the evidence. The Tutsi rebels explicitly weighed the expected costs and benefits of an invasion prior to launching it. They explicitly decided that retaliatory killing was an acceptable cost of achieving their goal. They expected to achieve their goal by using military superiority either to coerce Habyarimana to hand over power or, if necessary, to defeat him on the battlefield. They shaped their military strategy and tactics and their public relations efforts to win international support, so as to inhibit military aid to the Hutu government and thereby ensure their military superiority. Finally, the timing of the invasion was determined by the rebels' conscious efforts to maximize their likelihood of success.

RPF leaders testify that they expected their invasion to spark retaliatory killing, debated whether this was an acceptable price to pay, and ultimately decided that it was. As Tito Rutaremara recalls, "You always have to balance the pros and cons." He says, "We knew if we fought, people would suffer" and that there would be "civilian atrocities." He says the RPF discussed this backlash in its cells, but decided to go ahead anyway, because: "If we worried too much about it, then we would leave the *status quo*" in Rwanda and in the Tutsi refugee

¹⁰ Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 483. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 53.

diaspora.¹¹ Although Habyarimana did offer to accept the peaceful return of Tutsi refugees from Uganda, Wilson Rutaysire says the RPF rejected Habyarimana's offers because it did not trust him. Charles Murigande says the RPF could not accept the offers because they were made only to Tutsi refugees in Uganda, while the RPF represented all Rwandan Tutsi refugees.¹² For this reason, the rebels insist that their opposition to Habyarimana's offers of peaceful return were supported by the grassroots of the Rwandan refugee community.

However, the RPF also reportedly had a policy of eliminating any moderates who entertained such compromises. An analysis by two Ugandan scholars observes that the rebels—were suspicious of anybody that had a different view from their conviction that a return could only be achieved through a military invasion. Those [Tutsi in Uganda] who, before the invasion, were not actively involved in the preparation for the invasion were actually blacklisted as traitors of the RPF cause. A common saying to such people was, “Tusagusazisha” – meaning we can make you old – eliminate you, an expression also used by the Hutu extremists in Rwanda. Doctrinaire beliefs and intolerance breed extremism.¹³

Another authoritative analysis reports that when Kagame was head of intelligence for the Ugandan army, “He is alleged to have used its resources to intimidate dissenters within the RPF . . . as well as refugees who did not favor an armed return or who had relations with the Rwandese state. Some were imprisoned.”¹⁴ Although these allegations do not disprove the RPF's claim that its hardline stance was supported by a majority of the Tutsi diaspora, they do underscore that the rebels rejected any peaceful solution to the refugee crisis, preferring to launch an invasion even though they expected it to provoke deadly retaliation.

Once RPF officials decided that an invasion of Rwanda was necessary to achieve their goals, the timing of the invasion was determined by their efforts to maximize prospects for success. For the first few years after its formation, the RPF's power and prospects for a successful invasion steadily increased, as the Tutsi gradually became richer in Uganda, raised funds overseas, and climbed up the ranks of the Ugandan army. There was no urgency for invasion because the Tutsi in Uganda were prospering economically and the RPF's relative military prospects were improving. In the late 1980s, however, three developments began

¹¹ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 3.

¹² Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, pp. 1-2. Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 2.

¹³ Kakwenzire and Kamukama, “The Development and Consolidation of Extremist Forces in Rwanda.” p. 89.

gradually to reduce the RPF's prospects for success. First, the mobilized Tutsi refugee constituency around the world that favored an invasion appeared to be a wasting asset. Tutsi troops in the Ugandan army were impatient for war, as demonstrated by the premature invasion of 1989. Likewise, Tutsi refugees in neighboring countries were ready for war, but it was not clear their enthusiasm would last. And the RPF's few Tutsi allies in Rwanda were eager for the invasion to be launched soon, before Habyarimana uncovered their clandestine activity and eliminated them. Second, the Ugandan army gradually was purging itself of Tutsi. Museveni was seeking either to inhibit their invading Rwanda or simply to assuage anti-Tutsi sentiment in the Ugandan populace. In either case, such purges were steadily reducing the access of the RPF to weapons for an invasion. According to Kagame, the Tutsi said to themselves, "Let's act quickly before being thrown out of the army."¹⁵ Third, the RPF became convinced that Habyarimana had infiltrated its ranks in the Ugandan army and would soon assassinate key rebel officials.

Thus, the timing of the RPF invasion can be explained by the rebels' perception that in mid-1990 their "window of opportunity"¹⁶ for invasion was closing for three reasons, meaning that if they did not invade soon, they might not be able to do so successfully in the future. In addition, the RPF perceived that its window of opportunity temporarily had opened wider in 1990, when the rebels received reports from high-level Rwandan defectors, including Pasteur Bizimungu, that the Rwandan army was weak and the Habyarimana regime torn by infighting. Though this intelligence did not delude the RPF leadership into expecting a quick victory, it reinforced the rebels' expectation that they could defeat the Rwandan army eventually if they launched an invasion soon. In short, the RPF decided to invade in October 1990 because it perceived that its chances of success had peaked and were beginning to decline. Having already decided in principle to invade unless Habyarimana shared power with them, they now decided to

¹⁴ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 2. Kagame says that Ugandan authorities "were thinking about kicking us out of the army. That was probably their final error. . . . We said to ourselves, 'If that's the way it is, let's act very quickly. Let's act quickly before being thrown out of the army . . . we would no longer have access to arms.'" Kagame also thinks he was going to be dismissed as head of Ugandan army intelligence upon his return from training at U.S. Fort Leavenworth. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 52, 54. [My translation from the French.]

¹⁶ The general theory of how such "windows of opportunity" can lead to war is presented in Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 73-104.

jump through their closing window of opportunity for a successful invasion before it was too late.

Gerard Prunier argues that Habyarimana's 1990 reforms on democratization and refugee repatriation also compelled the rebels to act quickly, before the opportunity was gone:

In fact, for the RPF radicals, [Habyarimana's reforms] were rather unfavorable. A democratic evolution of the Kigali regime risked depriving them of a good argument for war: that of opposing a monolithic dictatorship. Refugee repatriation risked undermining the strongest psychological motive for their action: the fear of perpetual exile. . . . In addition, they saw that if refugee repatriation were carried out under the auspices of the UN and the Red Cross, it would be a purely humanitarian operation, excised of any political content. Feeling growing pressure inside Uganda and a growing urgency to preempt unfavorable developments in Rwanda, they sped up their plan of action.¹⁷

As Belgian scholar Filip Reyntjens observes dryly, "The convergence between the progress made in Kigali on democratization and refugees, on the one hand, and the timing of the [RPF] attack, on the other, is probably not by chance."¹⁸

Wilson Rutaysire confirms that the timing of the invasion was determined by the rebels' rational deliberation about the expected outcome of various options: "The key question was what do you expect in the future? Will the situation be better [in Rwanda]? Will our means [for war] be better? No, we would have been marginalized." He says the RPF decided it did not want to make the same mistake as "the 1970s generation, which worked with Idi Amin," in Uganda, rather than returning to Rwanda.¹⁹ Likewise, Charles Murigande says the timing of the invasion was determined by the fact that the rebels had acquired a "critical mass" of support, which they expected would enable success, but "who knew what would happen if we waited longer?"²⁰

In summary, the literature's account of the long-term causes of the RPF invasion of Rwanda is close to the truth, but most of the putative short-term triggers identified in the literature are wrong. The two long-term causes that are correctly identified in the literature are the following: (1) the persistent insecurity of Tutsi refugees in Uganda; and (2) their acquisition

¹⁷ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 130. He also argues that, "Moreover, Front activists who considered themselves 'revolutionaries' disparaged these processes as the 'reformist path' because they regarded proponents of a 'new democratic politics' as merely corrupt politicians who previously had served the [Habyarimana] dictatorship and had split from it only because of personal ambition or disputes over dubious interests." [My translation from the French].

¹⁸ Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 200. [My translation from the French].

¹⁹ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 3.

of military power that they deemed sufficient to obtain political power and to compel reforms in Rwanda. However, much of the literature incorrectly identifies the third long-term cause as the refusal of President Habyarimana to negotiate in good faith on the peaceful return of refugees. This is not fully accurate because the RPF still would have invaded even if Habyarimana had accepted back the refugees peacefully, so long as he maintained his monopoly on political power. Thus, the actual third long-term cause was Habyarimana's unwillingness to share political power and the refugees' unwillingness to settle for anything less.

Most of the explanations previously proposed in the literature to account for the timing of the Tutsi invasion prove to be incorrect. It was not due to increased threats against the Tutsi group as a whole in Uganda, because the four years prior to the invasion were probably the longest period of sustained security for Tutsi in Uganda. It was not because the dismissal of Tutsi soldiers from the Ugandan army was perceived to presage violence against the Tutsi refugee community in Uganda, because the dismissals were seen mainly as a political ploy by Museveni to counter domestic criticism that he was too generous and beholden to the Tutsi. It was not due to Museveni's withdrawal of the offer of Ugandan citizenship, which occurred in August 1990, because the final invasion decision had been made several months prior. It was not due to Habyarimana's failure to make sufficient concessions on refugee return, because no amount of concessions on this issue alone would have satisfied the RPF without the further offer of political power. It was not that the RPF expected a quick victory over a fragile Rwandan regime, because in the months prior to the invasion the RPF designed a war plan and logistical arrangements for a protracted conflict. It does not appear to have been because Tutsi soldiers became more available after their successful counter-insurgency in northern Uganda, because no RPF official mentions this factor in retrospect. It was not because Fred Rwigyema and Peter Bayingana specifically had been relieved of their duties in the NRA, because they both had supported the invasion plan prior to their dismissal from the Ugandan army. It was not because aggressive elements of the RPF pushed the moderates into an attack, because the so-called moderates always had favored an attack and simply had been waiting to optimize its prospects. And it was not because Museveni sponsored the RPF invasion, because he did not.

Interestingly, the long- and short-term causes of the RPF invasion are similar to those commonly cited in the realist literature on the causes of war, including one version of "offense-

²⁰ Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 1.

defense theory.” The primary long-term cause was that the Tutsi refugees acquired considerable power in Uganda – in terms of military force – but Rwandan President Habyarimana refused to grant them a political role in Rwanda commensurate with that power. A second essential cause was that the rebels believed that by launching an invasion they could defeat the Hutu regime in Rwanda – despite its apparent quantitative advantages in troops and equipment, and qualitative advantage in the latter – so long as the international community did not intervene to bolster the regime. In other words, the rebels believed – correctly, it turns out – that the offense had the advantage, at least if they were on the offensive. These two factors appear to have made the invasion all but inevitable. The Tutsi rebels could not be deterred because they expected to gain more by launching a violent challenge than by not doing so, and because the expected costs of an invasion – the retaliatory killing of thousands of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda – did not outweigh these expected gains. Ultimately, the short-term trigger for the invasion was that the power of the RPF, which had been increasing for several years both in absolute terms and relative to the Rwandan government, suddenly appeared at risk of sharp decline. This meant that the RPF’s window of opportunity for invasion, which had been growing larger until 1990, was now perceived to be closing. The RPF decided to jump through that window before it closed.

Testing the Theory, Part Two: Tutsi Reject Compromise Despite Rising Threat

Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the Tutsi rebels repeatedly launched offensives and refused to compromise their demands for political power because they were unaware this would provoke retaliatory violence against Tutsi civilians within Rwanda. There is no evidence to support this hypothesis. The rebels expected at every stage of their tragic challenge that escalating and refusing to compromise would provoke more retaliatory killing of domestic Tutsi. Indeed, over time, the rebels’ expectations of retaliatory violence increased sharply, so that in the months immediately prior to the genocide they expected a massive retaliatory campaign that would kill many tens of thousands of civilian Tutsi. Rather than scale back their demands, the rebels prepared for war, chose to accept retaliation as the cost of victory, and tried to arm and train the Tutsi in Rwanda to reduce the expected toll of retaliation. However, the rebels never foresaw the eventual magnitude of retaliation until the third week of the genocide, by which time it was too late for concessions.

As noted above, within the first days of the rebel invasion, the government began retaliating against Tutsi and moderate Hutu. Roadblocks went up around the country, the government detained and arrested thousands, and state radio began broadcasting hateful messages. Massacres were carried out during the first month against civilians in northeast, northwest, and western Rwanda, in Mutara, Bugogwe, and Kibilira, respectively. In January 1991, the killings resumed in Bugogwe and elsewhere in the prefecture of Ruhengeri, “apparently in retaliation for the taking of [part of] Ruhengeri by the RPF.” During the next two months, the massacres spread to Gisenyi, but then appeared to end after the rebels signed a cease-fire in March 1991.²¹ During the next year, the rebels refrained from any significant offensives, and there was only one outburst of anti-Tutsi massacres, in November 1991, affecting areas south and east of the capital in Bugesera and Murambi, respectively. In March 1992, the RPF launched a mobile offensive in the northeast, and anti-Tutsi massacres resumed in the southern Rwandan region of Bugesera, a heavily Tutsi area suspected of sympathizing with the rebels. Then, as the RPF and the international community coerced concessions from Habyarimana at the Arusha negotiations, anti-Tutsi massacres erupted in August 1992 in the western Rwanda prefecture of Kibuye, and in January 1993 throughout the northwestern prefecture of Gisenyi. By March 1993, these massacres had killed an estimated 2,000 Tutsi civilians.²²

Alison Des Forges of Human Rights Watch notes that all five of the major outbursts of anti-Tutsi violence from 1990-93 were launched “in reaction to challenges that threatened Habyarimana’s control.” She identifies these challenges as follows: the original invasion of October 1990; the RPF attack on Ruhengeri of January 1991; the opposition political demands of January 1992; the first protocol of the Arusha accords of August 1992; and a subsequent protocol of the Arusha accords in January 1993. She notes that the last two rounds of massacres targeted not only Tutsi, but their allies in the moderate Hutu opposition.²³ These intermittent massacres ended after a March 1993 UN report publicized them, but not because the hardline Hutu had

²¹ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 47. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 15-16. Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” pp. 136-37. Reyntjens, *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 95. Most of the prisoners were released in March and April 1991.

²² *Africa Research Bulletin* (March 1-31, 1993), pp. 10938-39. Reyntjens, *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp. 184-88, contains a map indicating the dates and locations of all massacres from 1990-93. The massacres also are listed and described in Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, p. 87.

²³ Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, pp. 87-88.

been chastened. In fact, it was at this time that the extremists started planning for a final campaign of anti-Tutsi violence that would dwarf all previous ones combined.

Figure 6-1
Challenges to Hutu Regime Provoke Retaliatory Massacres

Challenge to Regime		Months Until Retaliation	Retaliatory Massacre	
Date	Type		Date	Location
Oct-90	Invasion	0	Oct-90	Mutara (NE) and Kibilira (NW)
Jan-91	Attack on Ruhengeri	0	Jan - Feb-91	Ruhengeri (NW)
Jan-92	Demands for power-sharing	2	Mar-92	Kibilira (NW) and Bugesera (S)
Aug-92	First Arusha Protocol	0	Aug-92	Kibuye (W)
Jan-93	Later Arusha Protocol	0	Jan-93	Gisenyi (NW), Kibilira (NW) and Kibuye (W)

Sources: Des Forges, et al., *Leave None*, pp. 87-88. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, pp. 184-88.

As the Tutsi rebels pressed their tragic challenge, they knew the Hutu government was retaliating by killing Tutsi in Rwanda, and that Hutu civilians were deathly afraid of the rebels. For a short while, some of the rebels apparently believed optimistically that the scope of retaliation would be fairly circumscribed, based on the lull in massacres from March to October 1991. However, this lull in Hutu retaliation was most likely in response to the lull in significant Tutsi rebel incursions into Rwanda during 1991. When the massacres renewed in late 1991 and early 1992, the RPF realized that the costs of its continuing to challenge would grow much larger. In the words of senior RPF political official, Protais Musoni, "After the 1991-92 killings in Bugesera, we said 'uh-oh.'" However, rather than scaling back their ambitions or use of military force, the rebels decided merely to issue declarations when they invaded in the future, urging Rwandans to seek refuge either in rebel-held territory or deeper in Rwanda to escape retaliation from the government's forces.²⁴ However, given that such retaliation often was occurring far from the battlezone, such warnings were not likely to protect domestic Tutsi from retribution. Moreover, Rwandan civilians already were fleeing spontaneously from battle zones – almost always away from the rebels rather than towards them for protection. Indeed, when the rebels finally succeeded, in June 1992, in occupying a portion of Rwandan territory – a strip of land representing perhaps one-tenth of the northern prefecture of Byumba – the zone contained a

²⁴ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 3.

mere 2,600 civilians, because all the others had fled in apparent fear of the rebels. To put this number in perspective, the population of Byumba in the 1991 census was 780,000.²⁵

Still, at this point in mid-1992, most RPF officials did not expect the scale of retaliation to grow to genocidal proportions. In June 1992, Amnesty International reported that the civilian death toll had reached 1,000, killed by both sides, since the start of civil war in 1990.²⁶ While most of this killing represented a significant campaign of anti-Tutsi retaliation by the Hutu regime, the body count by itself did not suggest that a massive genocide was around the corner. A senior RPF leader says that after the invasion, French officials warned the rebels that if they did not relent, Habyarimana would massacre Tutsi on a much larger scale. However, the RPF rejected these dire predictions for most of the civil war. "The French were warning us of this eventuality. But we took it as blackmail. We didn't expect the final extent. In the 1960s, they [the Hutu] only killed some, not the satanic thing. We never got that in our thinking . . ."²⁷

Rebel concerns about the scale of prospective retaliation grew as the number of massacres increased in late 1992 and early 1993. Ironically, the rebels claim these concerns drove them to escalate their challenge still further by resorting to the zed option of a military offensive in February 1993, intended to end the massacres once and for all. Wilson Rutaysire says, "Every time there was a deadlock in the [peace] talks, there would be massacres."²⁸ Tito Rutaremara argues that Rwanda's president was engaged in a classic good-cop/bad-cop routine. "Habyarimana's strategy was to allow small-scale killing and then stop it," so that he could look like a moderate but claim that he was unable to make any further concessions because of the violent opposition of domestic Hutu extremists. Whether or not Habyarimana was fully in charge, the pattern of retaliation was clear, as noted above. Rebel demands that led to the first protocol at Arusha, in August 1992, were followed by massacres in Kivuye. In January 1993, when the rebels and the international community again forced Habyarimana to make important concessions at Arusha, his representative Theoneste Bagosora, the chief of staff of the defense ministry, stormed out of the negotiations, saying he was going home "to prepare the apocalypse."

²⁵ Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 55. See also, Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 137. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 121.

²⁶ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 67.

²⁷ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 3.

²⁸ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 1.

The credibility of that threat was reinforced when massacres soon broke out across northwestern Rwanda.

The rebels first expected that the Hutu regime was preparing a much larger retaliatory campaign against Tutsi civilians after the final signing of the Arusha accords in August 1993, when a number of danger signs emerged in Rwanda that have been well documented elsewhere. These included creation of a new Hutu hate radio station, importation of weapons, training of militias, and media exposés of a planned “Machiavellian plan” to carry out a “final solution” against the Tutsi.²⁹ According to Kagame’s right-hand man, Emmanuel Ndahiro, “Only after Arusha did we fear that the government wasn’t serious. We got signals these people were up to something.”³⁰ The risk was so obvious that even outside observers sympathetic to the RPF warned that the group was in danger of provoking a massive backlash if it continued to push its demands unrelentingly. For example, Gerard Prunier warned (somewhat elliptically) in late 1993 that the RPF would have to “operate with the greatest tact to reach the necessary political accommodations, because if the last elements of the *Akazu* that still surround President Habyarimana are going to be weakened, one should not underestimate the persistence of hatreds nor the amount of propaganda and spilt blood over the last 35 years.”³¹ By January 1994, Kagame himself was quoted as recognizing that the recent massacres of Hutu in Burundi were being exploited by Rwanda’s Hutu extremists to spark violence and block implementation of the Arusha accords. He said: “There is also the possibility that some people in the first place who are not interested in the success of the peace agreement may use the events in Burundi to derail the very process we are starting.”³²

By early 1994, the rebels were convinced that the Hutu regime was planning a massive campaign of violence against Tutsi in Rwanda. Rather than trying to avert this killing campaign by offering concessions on implementation of the Arusha accords, the rebels instead prepared for war. The best evidence that the rebel group by this point anticipated large-scale attacks against domestic Tutsi civilians – at least if it continued its demands for political control – is that the RPF initiated multiple measures to reduce the vulnerability of Tutsi civilians. The rebels armed

²⁹ The warning signs prior to the genocide are documented in Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, pp. 102-103.

³⁰ Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999.

³¹ Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” p. 138. [My translation from the French.]

³² Scott Stearns, “An Uneasy Peace,” *Africa Report* (January/February 1994), p. 34.

and trained opposition militias and Tutsi “self-defense forces” inside Rwanda, quietly told some Tutsi inside Rwanda to flee before the outbreak of violence, evacuated some of their top political officials from the RPF battalion headquarters in Kigali, and urged the international community to push Habyarimana to rein in extremists.

Still, RPF political officials never expected the full extent of the genocidal retaliation until it already was upon them. As noted, Tito Rutaremara says the RPF did not expect “the satanic thing,” and Charles Murigande says, “We expected damage but not total evil.” Ndahiro says, “We knew that in such things the innocent die, but none of us at that stage [prior to Habyarimana’s assassination], knew the level of madness” that would be reached.³³ Rutaremara says he didn’t realize the Tutsi would face genocide until the violence started in the wake of Habyarimana’s death on April 6, 1994. That evening the rebels received phone calls from various parts of the country – before the Hutu extremists cut most of the country’s phone lines soon after – saying that anti-Tutsi violence already had erupted. The violence was not yet everywhere, he says, “but we knew it would be everywhere.”³⁴ Mazimaka says the RPF spent April 7-9 trying to piece together what was happening around Rwanda, and it realized there was “killing everywhere in the first days.”³⁵ The military wing of the RPF was somewhat more cognizant of the threat even before the genocide started. For example, the rebels’ director of military operations, Karake Karenzi, says he “saw it coming,” because he knew Habyarimana had imported machetes and distributed them around the country. However, even Karenzi admits that the final death toll surprised him, because like the other RPF officials he did not expect that the killing could be carried out faster than the rebels could conquer the country and stop it.³⁶

Several factors explain why the RPF persistently underestimated the eventual level of retaliation even after it commenced. One of the most important factors was that the rebels expected Tutsi within Rwanda to be better able to defend themselves. Throughout the war, and even prior to the invasion, the rebels expected to arm and train Tutsi and opposition Hutu within Rwanda, and infiltrate rebels into Rwanda, to defend against attacks from Habyarimana’s regime. During the three years prior to its invasion, the RPF managed to create at least 36

³³ Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 3.

³⁴ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, pp. 3, 9.

³⁵ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 2.

³⁶ Karake Karenzi, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999, p. 3.

clandestine cells in Rwanda's central and southern prefectures of Kigali, Butare, and Gitarama – the ones most strongly opposed to Habyarimana because of his favoring his own northwestern region. And by the time the Arusha accords were signed in August 1993, the rebels had infiltrated 146 supporters into Kigali alone.³⁷ However, the rebels never found the number of allies within Rwanda that they expected. They did form alliances with the domestic opposition parties, but soon realized that these parties lacked grassroots support and represented only a thin layer of political entrepreneurs.³⁸ Still, as late as 1992, the RPF continued to expect to generate grassroots support for itself in the Rwandan countryside, even among Hutu. This proved to be wishful thinking, which the rebels learned as their offensives instead compelled huge numbers of Rwandans to flee in terror deeper into Rwanda – 350,000 in 1992, and one-million in February 1993.³⁹ The RPF was further surprised later in 1993 when even the leaders of the Hutu opposition parties abandoned the rebels and instead embraced the opposing Hutu Power movement, partly as the result of bribes from Habyarimana. The rebels reject any responsibility for this schism, instead blaming the bribes and the character of their erstwhile allies. According to Protais Musoni, the RPF learned belatedly that the Hutu opposition was “only in it for the money.”⁴⁰

RPF officials offer several additional explanations for why they failed to anticipate the extent of violent retaliation. Ndahiro says the rebels believed – and to some extent still believe – that Habyarimana himself rejected the use of genocidal violence in favor of measured violence to achieve political ends. However, Ndahiro says, “The only thing that no one anticipated was that Habyarimana would be killed.” This explanation makes sense – unless it was the RPF that shot down the president's plane, which remains unclear. Karenzi offers the explanation that the RPF and Tutsi civilians in Rwanda both “thought that the UN [peacekeepers] would play a role” in limiting the violence. Likewise, Mazimaka says that although the RPF did not count on the peacekeepers to ensure total security, it did expect them to provide some protection, based on the assurances of the international community. “The international community told us, ‘negotiate and

³⁷ Reed, “Exile, Reform, and the Rise,” p. 496. Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, p. 155, indicates that the 36 cells were created in Rwanda by the end of 1987.

³⁸ Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” p. 128. Reed, “Exile, Reform, and the Rise,” p. 496.

³⁹ Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” pp. 136-37.

⁴⁰ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 4.

we won't let anything happen to you,'" says Mazimaka.⁴¹ As noted above, Wilson Rutaysire cites several underlying miscalculations, including expecting some degree of restraint from the Hutu regime and not expecting that the church and the Hutu opposition parties would join in the genocide. He says the RPF had "informants" within the church and the opposition parties, but in retrospect surmises that, "they were afraid to tell us the whole story" of extremist infiltration of these institutions.⁴²

Perhaps the most intriguing explanation of the RPF's failure to anticipate the ultimate scale of retaliation is offered by Tito Rutaremara. He theorizes that the RPF failed to anticipate the genocide, even on its eve, because the interim government did not originally intend to carry out a full-blown annihilation campaign. Instead, he suspects the Hutu extremists originally planned to carry out only a circumscribed campaign of political assassinations and anti-Tutsi massacres for perhaps a week, expecting that the international community then would pressure the two sides to agree to a cease-fire followed by elections under the terms of the Arusha agreement. "That's the way it is done everywhere. A cease-fire and elections." Under this scenario, the Hutu extremists could have expected to win new elections because they already would have wiped out most opposition politicians and a portion of the Tutsi population.

Thus, Rutaremara insists that the Hutu extremists "did not expect a total war." However, following the assassination of Habyarimana and the start of anti-Tutsi massacres, the RPF itself launched such a war and rejected appeals for cease fires, which he believes led the extremists to expand their killing to a nationwide annihilation campaign. Some evidence tends to contradict Rutaremara's thesis. For example, a senior moderate Hutu army officer insists that the interim government did not support the cease-fire offer that the moderates proposed to the rebels, as demonstrated by the fact that the government immediately dismissed the moderate army chief of staff, Marcel Gatsinzi. However, if Rutaremara's explanation is correct, it would be consistent with the entire course of the RPF's tragic challenge, in that the rebels' military escalation and refusal to compromise their demands provoked increased retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. Interestingly, Rwandan and UN investigators have yet to find a pre-prepared blueprint for the genocide among the papers recovered from the interim government. While some papers

⁴¹ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 3.

⁴² Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 3. Karake Karenzi, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999, p. 3. Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 1.

were destroyed during and after the war, if no such blueprint ever existed, it would be consistent with the theory that the extremists did not originally intend to carry out a full-blown annihilation campaign against the Tutsi.⁴³

In summary, the evidence does not support the first hypothesis. The Tutsi rebels clearly expected at every stage of their tragic challenge that escalating their military threat to the regime and refusing to compromise their demands for political power would provoke increasing retaliation against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. During the first year and a half of their challenge, the Tutsi rebels expected that retaliation might be contained to only several thousand victims. By 1992, they expected it would grow still higher. And by early 1994, the rebels had come to expect that their challenge would provoke a massive retaliatory campaign that would kill tens of thousands of Tutsi. However, the evidence also indicates that the rebels persistently underestimated the level of prospective retaliation. The RPF never suspected the eventual intensity of retaliatory violence until the first days of the genocide, and it did not expect the ultimate toll until about April 23, 1994, more than two weeks into the killing, when it realized that the killing was being carried out faster than the rebels could conquer the country and stop the anti-Tutsi violence. Still, it does not appear that this persistent under-estimation of prospective retaliation was responsible for the tragic challenge either, as will be discussed below in relation to the third hypothesis.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the RPF escalated its military challenge and refused to compromise its demands for political power because it expected that civilian Tutsi, in Rwanda or the diaspora, would suffer massive violence even if the rebels halted or reduced their challenge. There is more evidence for this second hypothesis during the civil war than there was prior to the initial invasion. However, it is typical to find more evidence for the second hypothesis later in a violent challenge, because even where the security dilemma did not exist prior to the challenge, it usually is produced by the resulting violence. For example, in times of peace, a subordinate group may well perceive an arms build-up by the state as defensive – that is, intended to deter a violent challenge – rather than

⁴³ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 9. Senior Rwandan army official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 28, 1999.

portending an attack on the subordinate group. Once the subordinate group launches a violent challenge, however, it has more reason to fear that an arms build-up by the state portends an attack on it, even if the state is only intending to deter further challenges. Still, the preponderance of evidence indicates that the second hypothesis does not explain the Tutsi rebel challenge, at least from the start of the war in October 1990 through the outbreak of genocide in April 1994. The evidence is more ambiguous during the genocide itself, because rebel officials disagree about whether the interim government was committed to an extermination campaign from the outset or might have been willing to halt violence in return for rebel concessions.

Admittedly, once they invaded, the Tutsi rebels did expect to pay some price even if they ended their challenge and returned to Uganda. Six weeks after the initial invasion, the Ugandan army announced that it was purging itself of non-citizens. Thus, most Tutsi rebels, who had been soldiers, ostensibly could not have returned to their former jobs in Uganda.⁴⁴ In addition, because they had abandoned their posts, they potentially would have been subject to desertion charges upon their return. As one rebel was quoted in 1992, “We’ve burnt all our bridges and we can’t go back.”⁴⁵ Likewise, Protais Musoni recalls that despite his growing realization in 1992 that the cost in retaliatory killings was growing bigger than he had expected, “it was too late to go back.”⁴⁶ However, these statements are exaggerated. Some Tutsi rebels did indeed return to Uganda when the invasion fared poorly during its first months. Moreover, the vast majority of Uganda’s estimated 200,000 Tutsi refugees⁴⁷ remained secure in Uganda throughout the Rwandan civil war, so that if the rebels had decided to terminate their invasion and go back to Uganda, there were communities ready to welcome them back. The returnees might have had to pay a personal cost in diminished prestige, but they and the rest of the Tutsi refugees of Uganda would have had no reason to fear genocidal violence.

Charles Murigande claims that the RPF perpetuated its challenge in the face of retaliation against Tutsi civilians because, “Going back would have been even worse, because it would not have stopped Habyarimana’s [genocidal] plan, and Habyarimana would have pursued us in other

⁴⁴ Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ Shoumatoff, “Rwanda’s Aristocratic Guerrillas,” p. 45.

⁴⁶ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, pp. 1-3.

⁴⁷ Reyntjens, *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 139, says 82,000, but Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 6, clarifies that such lower figures count only the minority of refugees who lived in camps, excluding the majority who “self-settled” elsewhere in Uganda.

states, where we would have been more vulnerable.”⁴⁸ However, no other RPF official makes this argument. Nor is there any indication that the genocide plan was developed until at least the third year of the civil war. Moreover, throughout Rwanda’s history there has been virtually no anti-Tutsi violence except during invasions by Tutsi refugees. (The only exception is the minor outburst in 1973 that was stopped by Habyarimana.) Thus, perpetuation of the tragic challenge cannot be explained by the expected cost of ending the invasion and going back to Uganda.

The rebels also might have been able to avert genocide by compromising their demands in the peace negotiations. However, not all such concessions necessarily would have been sufficient to end retaliation. For example, several previous analyses have focused on the RPF’s repeated refusal to include the extremist CDR political party in the transitional government. These analyses argue that if the Hutu extremists had been included in the peace process, they would not have become “spoilers” of it.⁴⁹ However, the RPF rejects this logic, asserting that the Hutu extremists could not have been appeased merely by a seat in the cabinet because they were unalterably opposed to sharing power with the Tutsi rebels. “If granting the CDR a seat would have averted killing, then we would have considered it,” says Wilson Rutaysire. Likewise, Patrick Mazimaka says this step “would not have assuaged them. The genocide campaign would have happened anyway.”⁵⁰ These RPF arguments are compelling because, based on the stated concerns of the extremists, it does not appear that merely giving them a cabinet seat would have addressed their concerns about falling under Tutsi control, which is what caused them to resort to genocide.

However, there is strong evidence that the rebels could have mitigated violent retaliation – and expected they could do so – by making more significant concessions, such as eschewing military escalation or reducing their demands for political power. As noted above, all five major outbursts of anti-Tutsi massacres in Rwanda from 1990 to 1993 followed immediately after RPF attacks or demands at the peace negotiations. The rebels clearly were aware of this dynamic. As noted above, Wilson Rutaysire recalls that, “Every time there was a deadlock in the [peace] talks,

⁴⁸ Charles Murigande, interview with author, Kigali, April 14, 1999, p. 3.

⁴⁹ On spoilers, see Stephen John Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 5-53.

⁵⁰ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 2. Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 5.

there would be massacres.”⁵¹ Further evidence that the RPF expected that a show of moderation would be reciprocated is that in March 1993 the rebels voluntarily withdrew from a large swath of territory they had captured the previous month. According to a senior RPF military official, the rebels withdrew because they expected that in return for doing so, the international community would pressure Habyarimana to halt violence and share power. “We had confidence that Habyarimana would listen to the international community and maybe even step aside. We thought that in the worst case, the international community would establish safe areas.”⁵² Thus, at least as late as March 1993, the rebels still expected they could mitigate violent retaliation by de-escalating militarily themselves. In addition, at this point, they still might have been able to avert genocide by relaxing their most controversial demand at the Arusha negotiations, regarding integration of the Tutsi rebels with the Hutu army. The RPF’s stubborn insistence on taking 50 percent of the officer slots and 40 percent of the ranks of the combined army – which gave the better-trained rebels effective control of the army – may have been the final straw for the Hutu extremists that triggered their preparations to perpetrate genocide.

After the rebels and the international community compelled Habyarimana to sign the Arusha accords in August 1993, it is not clear whether the rebels still could have averted massive retaliation – or expected they could – by making concessions on implementation of the Arusha accords. It is possible that had the RPF acquiesced to a transitional government that included ministers from the now-dominant Hutu Power wings of the opposition parties – thereby permitting Habyarimana to retain political control – the extremist Hutu might have been sufficiently reassured to abandon the genocide plan. However, it is also possible that at this point the Hutu extremists already were committed irrevocably to genocide because they had been convinced by the RPF’s demands at Arusha that the rebels were committed irrevocably to re-imposing Tutsi hegemony over Rwanda. In any case, the rebels apparently never considered making such concessions after the signing of the Arusha accords, because their goal was to take political control from Habyarimana, and they expected they could attain it by force if necessary.

Even after the outbreak of genocide, the Hutu extremists might have been willing to mitigate the killing if the Tutsi rebels had agreed to a cease-fire and to the seating of a

⁵¹ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 1.

⁵² Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 3. Interestingly, this official says that RPF military officials were more willing than RPF political officials to withdraw from captured territory, because they had more faith in the international community.

transitional government dominated by Hutu Power representatives. As noted, Rutaremara suspects this was the plan of the Hutu extremists. However, most other RPF officials say they believe that once the genocide started, the Hutu extremists were committed to finishing it regardless of any rebel concessions. Wilson Rutaysire correctly notes that the cease-fire was proposed by moderate Rwandan army officers who had few troops under their command. Moreover, he observes, “even those [moderate Hutu officers] with a battalion might not have been supported by their troops.”⁵³ Accordingly, he believes the moderate army officers could not have honored a cease-fire deal even if the rebels had agreed to it. Theogene Rudasingwa characterizes this scenario as the worst of all outcomes: “If we had agreed to a cease-fire, the genocide would have continued, even more people would have been killed, and the interim government would have gotten a second lease on life.”⁵⁴ However, this assertion is undermined somewhat by the fact that the RPF itself offered a cease-fire on April 23, 1994 – two and a half weeks into the genocide – which the rebels say was intended as a last ditch effort to form an alliance with the Rwandan army moderates to stop the genocide. This suggests strongly that the rebels still hoped, if not expected, that concessions could reduce the scale of retaliatory killing, even at this late date. After this offer was rejected, however, the rebels apparently gave up any further hope of mitigating retaliation through concessions during the last two months of the civil war and genocide. Thus, the second hypothesis may partly explain why the RPF kept fighting during this last period. However, the second hypothesis does not explain the tragic challenge from the time of the invasion through the first weeks of genocide.

Testing the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the Tutsi rebels repeatedly escalated their military challenge and refused to compromise their demands because they expected to achieve their goal of political power in Rwanda and accepted retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians as the cost of achieving that goal. This hypothesis is strongly confirmed by the evidence. The rebels clearly sought political power in Rwanda, not merely the return of refugees. They expected they could achieve this goal by using military force – either to coerce a handover of power or to conquer the country, if necessary – so long as they retained sufficient

⁵³ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 3.

international support to block intervention on behalf of the existing Hutu regime. Rebel officials confirm that each of their military escalations was intended either to conquer the country or to demonstrate to Habyarimana that they could and would conquer the country if he did not hand over power to them at the negotiating table. At the same time, each military offensive was constrained by the rebels' perceived need to retain international support, in order to block intervention on behalf of the Hutu regime that could interfere with their goal. The rebels clearly expected that perpetuating their challenge would provoke retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda, and over time came to expect a massive retaliation, but accepted this as the cost of attaining their goal. In the words of one rebel spokesman, "One can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs."⁵⁵ However, the rebels never expected the ultimate extent of this retaliation until several weeks into the genocide, by which time it was too late for them to avert further killing by compromising their demands.

The facts of the case, and the Tutsi rebels' own testimony, make clear that the RPF persistently refused to compromise its demand for political power. Barely two weeks into the invasion, at a regional summit on October 17, 1990, the rebels already had tabled an agenda that reads almost identically to the final settlement they achieved nearly three years later at Arusha: cease-fire, democracy, power-sharing, integration of the rebels and army, and resettlement of refugees.⁵⁶ The rebels made no substantial concessions on any of these items during the war, and clung most persistently to their demands for Habyarimana to turn over to the RPF effective political and military control of Rwanda. The rebels did so because they viewed political power as a zero-sum competition: either Habyarimana retained political power or he gave it up. In the words of Theogene Rudasingwa, "There was no middle ground. The *Akazu* [Habyarimana's ruling Hutu clique] couldn't accept change. The RPF couldn't accept no change."⁵⁷ Likewise, Wilson Rutaysire says, "There was no way to split the baby."⁵⁸ Protais Musoni recalls that Habyarimana still wanted to retain quotas limiting Tutsi access to various government programs. "We wanted to change the country. They didn't."⁵⁹ Patrick Mazimaka concurs that, "There was no deal that would have satisfied the RPF and the [Hutu] extremists." He says Habyarimana

⁵⁵ Overdulse, *Rwanda*, p. 74.

⁵⁶ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, p. 51.

⁵⁷ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 19, 1999, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 6.

refused to implement the Arusha accords as intended and instead proffered alternatives devoid of any real devolution of power, offering the rebels and the Hutu opposition merely a few token cabinets seats and military slots. “What Habyarimana would have accepted would not have been acceptable to us.”⁶⁰

The evidence also shows that the RPF expected it could attain its goal of political power, through coercion or military victory, so long as it retained the support of the international community. Each of its military escalations was intended either to conquer the country or, more typically, to demonstrate to Habyarimana that it could, so he would hand over power at the negotiating table. Rutaremara says the mid-1992 rebel offensives were intended not merely to gain a foothold in Rwanda, but “to put pressure on Habyarimana,” by demonstrating that the RPF was “now capable of mobile war – bigger than guerrilla warfare – and even conventional war.”⁶¹ According to a senior rebel military official, although the offensive provoked retaliation, it served its intended purpose: “It shook up the international community and Habyarimana. The international community said [to Habyarimana] ‘you have a real threat.’”⁶²

By the time of their February 1993 offensive, the rebels were so confident of their military superiority that they launched the attack using only half their officer corps, while permitting the other half, about 140 officers, to continue receiving education and training already in progress. Despite keeping half their officers out of the fight, the rebels captured a large swath of northern Rwanda in just a few weeks. According to one senior officer, this was when he “realized the enemy was really weak.”⁶³ According to another RPF official, “we had to demonstrate that we were good partners [to the Tutsi in Rwanda], and that we were serious militarily.”⁶⁴ Says a third, the attack was intended “to prove to Habyarimana and the international community that if you don’t give us peace, we can take it ourselves.”⁶⁵

At the same time, the Tutsi rebels deliberately constrained their military offensives so as to retain international support. They sought to preserve their image as the victim – a group of long-suffering refugees seeking only to return home and establish democracy – rather than a

⁶⁰ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, pp. 5-6.

⁶¹ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 4.

⁶² Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 2.

⁶³ Dennis Karera, interview with author, Kigali, April 27, 1999, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 3.

power-hungry aggressor. As Tito Rutaremara says, “we were confident” we could defeat the Rwandan army, but the rebels initially did not try to do so because “pursuing military victory meant big sacrifices,” including the risk of French intervention on behalf of the Rwandan government.⁶⁶ A senior rebel officer says that at the time of the February 1993 offensive against the Rwandan army, “We could have won, but the international community wouldn’t let us. France would aid the army and the international community would criticize us.”⁶⁷ Likewise, Mazimaka says the rebels “could have continued our offensive to win the war in February 1993” by besieging Kigali, but they were “afraid of international diplomatic and military opposition.”⁶⁸ Charles Murigande says that during the 1993 offensive, “the United States said it is not acceptable. Once the U.S. says it is not acceptable, you could infer that they might intervene” against us. This was especially so, he says, because the United States already “was definitely supporting France’s military intervention,” which had been launched in response to the new rebel offensive.⁶⁹ According to Protais Musoni, “without the role of the international community, we would have gone for it [military victory] in February 1993, and we would have won without [provoking] genocide, because the serious genocide preparations came afterward.”⁷⁰ International pressure also compelled the rebels to withdraw in March 1993 from most of the territory they had captured the previous month, including the strategic road linking Kigali and Ruhengeri. Ironically, this further inhibited the rebels’ ability to protect Tutsi once the genocide started.

Even after the rebels learned in late 1993 and early 1994 that a massive anti-Tutsi retaliatory campaign was being prepared, they refrained from launching a preventive attack on Kigali because they were afraid of losing international support and prompting intervention to protect Habyarimana’s regime. Charles Murigande, the RPF representative in Washington, says that in early 1994 U.S. officials urged the rebels to “refrain from any military activity.”⁷¹ Patrick Mazimaka says that once the rebels had deployed their single battalion to the capital under the

⁶⁶ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 4.

⁶⁹ Charles Murigande, telephone interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 6.

⁷¹ Charles Murigande, telephone interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 1. Interestingly, Murigande is the only rebel official who says that the RPF would have acted the same with or without such U.S. pressure.

terms of the Arusha agreement, on December 28, 1993, international considerations made it even harder for them to contemplate another attack. He explains that this was because the rebels ideally would have wanted to withdraw the battalion from its vulnerable perch in Kigali prior to launching such an attack. However, if they did so, they would have been blamed internationally for abandoning the peace process. “We were already here [in Kigali], so we became prisoners of the process. We couldn’t pull out due to so much international effort and attention – and [when we were] only a one-hour ceremony away from” installing the transitional government (that is, if the two sides ever could agree on a list of cabinet ministers). If the rebels had pulled out of Kigali, he says, the international community would have heaped “100 percent condemnation” on the RPF, blaming it for preventing a peaceful transition.⁷² Likewise, Protais Musoni says the rebels eschewed launching a final offensive preventively in early 1994, because “we didn’t want history to put the blame on us.” Instead, the rebels focused on clandestinely infiltrating forces into Rwanda in preparation for the resumption of war.⁷³

Thus, in early 1994, the RPF was preparing for war and ideally would have wanted to launch it preventively before the Hutu extremists could complete their preparations for a campaign of massive retaliation against Tutsi civilians. However, the RPF did not want to be blamed for starting the war. An almost perfect solution for the rebels would have been somehow to provoke the Rwandan army to start the war before the Hutu extremists had completed their plans for genocide. Admittedly, there is no proof that the rebels shot down Habyarimana’s plane to provoke the army into renewing the war and to eliminate a Hutu leader who they believed never would give up power voluntarily, while attempting to pin blame on the Hutu extremists. However, such a plan – to decapitate the Hutu leadership and re-start the war preventively before the preparations for genocide could be completed, while avoiding appearing as aggressors – would have been perfectly consistent with the RPF’s grand strategy, so the possibility cannot be ruled out in the absence of exculpatory evidence. Moreover, there is increasing support for this interpretation from a number of important sources, including: several self-proclaimed defectors from the RPF, some claiming to have been in the unit that attacked the plane;⁷⁴ a prominent

⁷² Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 2.

⁷³ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Steven Edwards, “‘Explosive’ Leak on Rwanda Genocide: Informants told UN investigators they were on squad that killed Rwanda’s president -- and a foreign government helped,” *National Post*, March 1, 2000. See also, English translation of testimony by Jean-Pierre Mugabe, April 21, 2000.

Belgian scholar;⁷⁵ and a French judge reported to be preparing an indictment of RPF leader Paul Kagame for ordering the attack on Habyarimana.⁷⁶

To date, however, there is no decisive proof tying the missile attack to either the rebels or the extremist Hutu. In addition, senior rebels make two claims that, if true, would tend to undercut the notion that the RPF leadership ordered the attack. First, they claim that Habyarimana's death and the renewal of violence occurred before they could complete their arming and training of Tutsi in Rwanda, and so was premature from their perspective. Second, they claim that some rebel units did not enter the war until several days after Habyarimana's death because the RPF leadership had not been anticipating his death. Even if these claims are true, however, they would not rule out another distinct possibility – that the assailants were a rogue group of aggressive Tutsi rebels, eager to kill Habyarimana and restart the war. As noted in Chapter 5, such aggressive rebels had defied the RPF leadership at least twice previously, launching premature invasions of Rwanda from Uganda in the late 1980s.

Regardless of which side actually shot down the plane and renewed the war, both sides had been playing to the international audience throughout the Rwandan conflict. Filip Reyntjens has written that, "From the beginning of the invasion, the RPF was perfectly aware of the importance of international opinion and, therefore, of the foreign press."⁷⁷ Habyarimana also focused on building international support, but as head of state, he was able to appeal more directly to the leaders of foreign governments rather than the press. Dixon Kamukama writes that following the rebel invasion, Habyarimana "immediately embarked on an intercontinental diplomatic offensive hopping from one western capital to the other," and succeeded in persuading Belgium's prime minister to fly to Africa to apply pressure on Museveni to halt the

<http://www.multimania.com/obsac/OBSV3N16-PlaneCrash94.html> [downloaded November 5, 2000]. See also, prepared statement of Wayne Madsen, meeting on "Covert Action in Africa," Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, April 6, 2001, http://www.truthout.org/docs_01/0180.McKinney.Africa.htm [downloaded April 27, 2002].

⁷⁵ Filip Reyntjens, *Rwanda: Trois jours qui ont fait basculer l'histoire* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1995), pp. 38-44.

⁷⁶ See, "RWANDA: Judge may issue warrant for Kagame's arrest," *Integrated Regional Information Networks*, October 13, 2000, <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN/cea/countrystories/rwanda/20001013b.phtml> [downloaded November 5, 2000]. See also, "Kagame rejects French judge's probe," *Integrated Regional Information Networks*, Update 1,038 for the Great Lakes, October 24, 2000, <http://www.asyl.net/Magazin/Docs/docs-15/L-24-26/L8969drc.txt> [downloaded April 27, 2002].

⁷⁷ Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*, p. 99.

rebel offensive.⁷⁸ In addition, as noted, one of the reasons that the Rwandan army shelled its own capital in the first days of the war, simulating a rebel attack, was to raise the fear that foreign nationals were in danger in Kigali, in order to spark western intervention on behalf of the government.⁷⁹

Despite Habyarimana's initial success at garnering international support, over time the RPF won the sympathy of the international community (with the partial exception of France). An early RPF campaign focused on the Belgian media persuaded Brussels to cut off military assistance to Habyarimana in 1990. By March 1991, RPF representatives had made an official visit to the U.S. State Department. Then, in June 1992, RPF military commander Paul Kagame met with U.S. assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen. By meeting with the rebels, the United States knowingly raised their stature and prestige, and thereby sent signals to Habyarimana that he would have to make concessions to them. At the Arusha peace talks, all of the key international players – the United States, Belgium, and even France – explicitly pressured Habyarimana to accept RPF demands. As leverage, these states threatened to cut off his economic and military assistance unless he accepted the rebel demands, which gave him the choice of voluntarily handing power to the rebels or being defeated by them militarily.⁸⁰ Probably the most consequential instance of coercive diplomacy was when these foreign “mediators” compelled the Rwandan president to accept a 50-50 split in the command level of the combined army – an outcome known to be unacceptable to Hutu hardliners, who soon afterwards prepared the genocide.⁸¹

Interestingly, although the rebels generally strove to retain international support, they were unwilling to meet international demands that compromised the basic principles of their grand strategy. For example, U.S. and other foreign officials repeatedly pressured the rebels to acquiesce to the inclusion of the extremist CDR party in the transitional government, in the hopes of creating a truly broad-based transition so that no party would try to block its implementation. The American position at the time, according to a U.S. official, was: “If you

⁷⁸ Kamukama, *Rwanda Conflict*, pp. 47-49.

⁷⁹ Prunier, “Elements pour une histoire,” p. 133.

⁸⁰ See Kuperman, “The Other Lesson of Rwanda.”

⁸¹ Jones, “The Arusha Peace Process,” pp. 143, 154. In fact, the foreign mediators ultimately compelled Habyarimana to accept the 50-50 split across a broader range of the officer corps than even the RPF originally had demanded. They did so despite the fact that, as noted in the text, “An American participant observed at the time that the division of the army as it stood would never be accepted by hard-line factions in the army.”

don't bring them [the CDR] into the tent, they're going to burn the tent down."⁸² The U.S. assistant secretary of state for Africa at the time of the genocide, George Moose, and his deputy, Prudence Bushnell, repeatedly "put pressure on the RPF to accept Habyarimana's demand to accept the CDR," according to the rebels. However, the rebels rejected every such request, citing two grounds: First, they said it was tantamount to asking the U.S. government to share power with the Ku Klux Klan. Second, they said Habyarimana never would be satisfied with just this concession, and if it were granted he simply would ask for others, because he was unwilling actually to share power.⁸³ The rebels' unwavering opposition to the CDR demonstrates that they were unwilling to sacrifice their core demand for political power even at the risk of losing some international support. In the event, however, the rebels did not lose such support, because the international community continued to pressure Habyarimana to make concessions even though the rebels refused to do likewise. As noted in the most detailed analysis to date of the Arusha negotiations:

The eventual exclusion of the CDR from power, as one central part of a broader marginalization of the regime, was interpreted by most western governments as a turning point away from constructive negotiations over an effective transition bargain in favor of a victor's deal which reflected RPF views much more than it did a true compromise.⁸⁴

The fact that western governments continued to pressure Habyarimana to sign and implement the Arusha accords – which they now recognized as a "victor's deal" rather than a power-sharing agreement – demonstrates how strongly they had tilted in favor of the rebels by late 1992. To retain international support, the rebels perceived that they needed only to eschew a military attack and patiently await the negotiated hand over of power. Unfortunately, this patience provided the Hutu extremists with the time they needed to plan and prepare the genocide.

⁸² Jones, "The Arusha Peace Process," pp. 139-41, which states: "The French delegation argued that it was better to have the CDR in the government, where they could be controlled, than on the outside where they could wreak havoc. Equally, the Tanzanians argued that it was better to have the extremists 'on the inside of the tent, pissing out, than on the outside of the tent, pissing in.' . . . [the United States] agreed as early as March 1992 to take the approach of bringing the extremists into the government."

⁸³ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 2. Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Jones, "The Arusha Peace Process," p. 141.

Finally, as demonstrated above in the discussion of the first two hypotheses, throughout most of the civil war the rebels expected that perpetuating their challenge would provoke retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians that otherwise could be avoided. Yet, they chose to accept such retaliatory killing as the cost of achieving their goal of political power. Interestingly, this balancing of costs and benefits continued even during the genocide and the renewed civil war following Habyarimana's assassination. As detailed in Chapter 5, the rebels sometimes deviated slightly from military doctrine in order to save Tutsi civilians – for example, dispersing troops to the countryside even though this left strategic nodes under-protected – which shows they were somewhat sensitive to the civilian toll. However, the rebels were unwilling to take larger military risks that could have saved many more Tutsi – such as launching their initial attack to the southwest rather than to the northeast – because they feared such deviations might hinder their ability to conquer the country and attain their primary goal of political power. They expected that launching their attack initially to the east would result in the deaths of many more Tutsi, who lived mainly towards the southwest, but they decided to accept this as the cost of ensuring they achieved their goal. Still, as demonstrated above, the rebels never realized how high that cost would go until it was too late to mitigate it. If the RPF had known in advance that the cost of its challenge would be retaliatory genocide against three-quarters of Rwanda's Tutsi population, it might have picked a different strategy. As Tito Rutaremara reports, “We were discussing the [potential] backlash in our cells. If we had known, some of us would have opposed” the RPF's militant strategy.⁸⁵

In summary, the third hypothesis provides a compelling explanation of why the Tutsi rebels perpetuated their tragic challenge for more than three years in the face of growing threats of massive retaliation against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda – retaliation that was not expected to occur if the challenge were halted. As Patrick Mazimaka sums it up, the rebels continually returned to the battlefield because they sought political power in Rwanda and Habyarimana refused to give it up voluntarily. “There was no peaceful solution, but we felt we had to go through the motions to satisfy the international community.” The Tutsi rebels expected their invasion, repeated military escalations, and uncompromising demands for political power to

⁸⁵ Tito Rutaremara, interview with author, Kigali, April 21, 1999, p. 3.

provoke large-scale retaliatory killing against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. “But we weren’t expecting Habyarimana to do genocide. When we realized, it was too late.”⁸⁶

Summary and Further Observations

The third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory explains the Tutsi rebels’ tragic challenge from the time of their initial invasion in October 1990 through at least the first few weeks of the genocide in April 1994. By contrast, the first hypothesis is not confirmed because the rebels always expected their challenge to provoke retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda, although they did not foresee the ultimate extent of retaliation until at least two weeks into the genocide. Had the rebels foreseen this potential extent of genocide, it appears they still would have launched their challenge, but would have pursued a quicker military victory rather than engaging in protracted negotiations that gave the Hutu extremists time to prepare the genocide. (This counter-factual is explored further below). The second hypothesis is not confirmed because at least until the outbreak of genocide, the rebels expected they could mitigate or prevent the killing of Tutsi civilians by reducing their demands on, or their military threats to, the Hutu regime. It is possible that after the first few weeks of genocide, the second hypothesis played a role during its remaining two months, because by this point the rebels apparently expected that the interim government was committed to carrying out the genocide regardless of any concessions they made.

Based on the finding that the Tutsi rebels knowingly accepted large-scale retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda as the cost of attaining political power, the question arises as to why they did so. One possibility is an explanation voiced by several RPF officials, but perhaps most poignantly by Wilson Rutaysire. He concedes that before the invasion, there was little risk of significant violence against Tutsi in Rwanda or the diaspora, including Uganda where he was in the army, and that the RPF fully expected its invasion to provoke retaliatory killing of Tutsi in Rwanda. However, he emphasizes that even before the invasion, Tutsi were considered outsiders or second-class citizens both inside and outside of Rwanda, and that Habyarimana’s regime never would have granted them full rights voluntarily. “We were not prepared to live unfree forever. That is ‘zombie-ism’” – or being dead while merely appearing to

⁸⁶ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 6.

live.⁸⁷ This argument is reminiscent of many revolutionary battle cries, including the American “give me liberty or give me death.”⁸⁸

Another possibility is that, as Fred Ikle has written, sacrifice creates value: “[A]fter months or years of fighting, many citizens will come to feel that that outcome of the war must ‘justify’ past sacrifices. Given this mood, the higher the costs incurred, the more important will it seem that the peace terms be viewed as achievement of a victory or at least a significant gain.”⁸⁹ In the Rwandan context, this would suggest that each time the Hutu extremists retaliated by killing Tutsi civilians, it added to the value that the Tutsi rebels placed on victory and thus inadvertently increased their tolerance for such retaliatory killings. By this logic, it is possible that even if the Tutsi would not have invaded in 1990 had they expected many tens of thousands of retaliatory killings, by 1994 they were willing to accept such a cost because of their sacrifice in the intervening years. Theogene Rudasingwa offers a somewhat similar explanation. He says that after the first month of genocide, in early May 1994, the U.S. ambassador to Tanzania told him that the RPF would be held accountable for refusing a cease-fire. Rudasingwa says he responded that, “There is a line beyond which you must say, ‘these guys have crossed the line.’”⁹⁰ In other words, the RPF was willing for several years to engage in a repeated cycle with the Hutu regime: RPF demand → retaliatory killing of Tutsi → RPF offensive → retaliatory killing of Tutsi → international pressure for government to halt killings and make concessions, and for RPF to halt offensive → government makes concessions, and RPF halts offensive in order to reduce the costs of its challenge → cease-fire. However, when the Hutu extremists launched the genocide, they may have raised the RPF’s tolerance for costs nearly infinitely, and thereby removed any incentive for the RPF to halt its offensive.

⁸⁷ Wilson Rutaysire, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, p. 3. In Misser, *Vers un nouveau Rwanda?*, pp. 41, 53, Kagame claims, “After being in refugee camps for 20 years . . . we had not become Ugandans, but we were not Rwandans. We were just condemned to remain refugees forever.” In fact, however, prior to the invasion most Tutsi in Uganda did not live in refugee camps but had integrated into Ugandan society. Kagame also justifies the invasion on grounds that in Uganda there were limitations on the advancement of Tutsi. However, that is a strange argument given that Rwigyema was the army’s deputy chief of staff and Kagame its head of intelligence. In another published interview, Kagame traces his thinking about an armed return to Rwanda all the way back to 1978, when he was 21 years old. However, he does not offer much insight into why he saw the invasion as worth the expected cost, stating only: “Deep in our hearts and minds we knew we belonged in Rwanda.” See, Philip Gourevitch, “After Genocide: A conversation with Paul Kagame,” *Transition*, No. 72 (1996), pp. 170-71.

⁸⁸ This was the title of Patrick Henry’s address of March 23, 1775.

⁸⁹ Fred Charles Ikle, *Every War Must End*, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 12.

⁹⁰ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 3.

A last possible explanation for the Tutsi rebels' tolerance for the retaliatory killing of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda is somewhat more cynical, and builds on the fact that the Rwandan Tutsi people were bifurcated, creating a strong principal-agent dynamic. In other words, those Tutsi who launched the challenge were not the same Tutsi who suffered the retaliatory killing. The RPF was almost exclusively an organization of refugees whose families fled Rwanda between 1959 and the early 1960s. By 1990, most of this Tutsi diaspora had not been in contact with Tutsi in Rwanda for more than 25 years. Moreover, some Tutsi in the diaspora even were suspicious of those who had remained behind in Rwanda, questioning whether they had been allowed to stay because they cooperated with the extremist Hutu regime.⁹¹ By this logic, it could be argued that the diaspora Tutsi were willing to fight to the last domestic Tutsi.⁹² Indeed, some Tutsi in Rwanda accused the RPF of this from the time it initially invaded. In reality, the RPF did value its ethnic brethren in Rwanda, if nothing else as likely supporters once the RPF entered the government. However, because of the intra-Tutsi schism it cannot be ruled out that the RPF somewhat discounted the lives of Rwandan Tutsi when making cost-benefit calculations about its challenge, thereby increasing its tolerance for retaliatory killing.

The bifurcation of the Rwandan Tutsi community also has implications for the unitary actor assumption of the rational deterrence model. Although not all diaspora Tutsi supported the invasion, the RPF did have a democratic structure for soliciting the votes of Tutsi refugees throughout the diaspora. In that sense, it is fair to model the Tutsi refugees as a unitary actor represented by the RPF leadership. On the other hand, very few Tutsi within Rwanda had input into RPF decisions, despite the fact that they were to suffer most of the near-term costs of the

⁹¹ Prunier, "Elements pour une histoire," p. 136, notes that the RPF was less deterred by retaliation against domestic Tutsi than the *inyenzi* rebels of the 1960s had been, because by 1990 the Tutsi refugees were "less connected to the interior" of the country. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 482, notes that when a small wave of Tutsi refugees fled Rwanda in 1972-73, they were not fully welcomed by the existing refugee community, in part due to "a variety of suspicions as to why the new arrivals had decided to stay [in Rwanda] while others had left 15 years earlier." Erny, *Rwanda 1994*, pp. 137-38, 147, traces this schism to the 1960s, when the *inyenzi* invasions by the early Tutsi refugees provoked a violent backlash against the Tutsi remaining within Rwanda. In response, the main Tutsi UNAR party inside Rwanda "in May 1962 condemned the 'deviancy' of its own members abroad." Likewise, he says that in the 1990s, many of the Tutsi in Rwanda "resented the RPF as a mortal menace and therefore were very scared of it . . . One of the most eminent members of the [Tutsi] royal family living in Butare begged the refugees, with the greatest insistence, to stop their attacks." He concludes, "The RPF did not represent in any manner the Tutsi in general."

⁹² Overdulse, *Rwanda*, p. 74, makes this argument, stating that the RPF was "prepared to sacrifice tens of thousands of Tutsi inside the country just to attain power, because, in any case, they considered them traitors who should not be pitied. That there were hundreds of thousands [of victims], not tens of thousands, without doubt surprised the RPF too, but did not change its plans." [My translation from the French.]

invasion. If these Tutsi in Rwanda had been able to influence RPF decisions, it is almost certain that the rebels would have pursued a different course. Thus, it is important to emphasize that in applying rational deterrence theory to this case it is the Rwandan Tutsi in the diaspora that are treated as a unitary actor, not all the Rwandan Tutsi.

What If?

The above analysis clarifies several points: why and how the Tutsi refugees launched their tragic challenge; the impact of the international community; and the consequences of that challenge. However, in order to assess this case fully, and draw lessons from it, one must consider what might have happened if different policies had been pursued by the RPF or the international community. Three counterfactual scenarios are most relevant: (1) if the RPF had not invaded Rwanda; (2) if the RPF had been willing to compromise its demands; and (3) if the international community had not intervened in an attempt to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the Rwandan civil war. In addition, it is useful to examine in retrospect what RPF officials say they would have done differently if they had known then what they do now – especially about the ultimate intent of the Hutu extremists and the role of the international community.

If the RPF had not invaded Rwanda, it is unlikely Habyarimana would have adopted all the liberal reforms he agreed to from the time of the invasion through the Arusha accords. The extent to which he would have democratized and permitted the return of refugees at all would have depended on the leverage exerted upon him by the international community, and countervailing pressure from members of his ruling clique to retain their power and privilege. Based on his record in Rwanda and a comparison with other African dictatorships in the 1990s, Habyarimana probably would have implemented some democratic and economic reforms, but not surrendered effective political control.⁹³ Given that even prior to the invasion he already had proposed to accept the return of some Tutsi refugees from Uganda, he probably would have implemented this offer, but continued to bar repatriation of most refugees from other countries. Moreover, it is doubtful that many Tutsi in Uganda actually would have returned to Rwanda. By 1990, most Tutsi refugees in Uganda had been there for over 25 years, were fairly integrated into

⁹³ Indeed, the invasion and subsequent war inhibited democratization, according to Timothy Longman, "Strong Society, Stronger State: Civil Society and the Genocide in Rwanda," paper prepared for Conference on African Renewal, MIT, Cambridge, MA, March 6-9, 1997, p. 14. He concludes: "Without the war and the opportunities it

Ugandan society, and were relatively prosperous. Moreover, the Tutsi had a special relationship with President Museveni, because of their role in his rebel movements and later his army. Some anti-Tutsi resentment persisted, including among the dominant Baganda ethnic group, but Tutsi were not at risk of physical harm, as they had been under Amin and Obote. In addition, during the 1990s, the Ugandan economy enjoyed perhaps the best economic growth on the continent and the country suffered only marginal domestic insecurity from a few fringe rebel groups. Thus, it is unlikely that most Tutsi in Uganda would have traded this secure existence to live in Rwanda under a Hutu regime with a declining economy and persistent over-population. In addition, Habyarimana probably would have tried to block the return of any Tutsi with military experience.

In Rwanda, Tutsi probably would have continued to be subject formally to quotas for government programs, but also probably would have continued in reality to thrive relative to many of their Hutu countrymen. In Uganda, Tutsi would have benefited from the country's economic growth, but probably would not have been offered citizenship because of opposition from the Baganda. In the rest of the diaspora, Tutsi probably would have continued to live relatively securely, as they had been doing for three decades. It is extremely unlikely there would have been any significant anti-Tutsi violence in Rwanda, because there had not been any during Habyarimana's 17 years of rule prior to the RPF invasion.⁹⁴ Thus, the net consequence if the RPF had not invaded probably would have been to avoid the genocide, but to perpetuate the exile of most Tutsi refugees from Rwanda.

The second counter-factual scenario posits that the rebels would have invaded and fought for several years in Rwanda as they did, but then made concessions to Habyarimana on their key demands for political and military power in Rwanda. The rebels still could have insisted on the right of refugee return, which was relatively less controversial. However, the RPF would have had to accept a minority position in the government and in the army – perhaps somewhat bigger than the 17 percent of the population represented by all Rwandan Tutsi including refugees, but much smaller than the *de facto* control the RPF demanded and won at Arusha. In terms of the

presented to Habyarimana and his supporters. I am convinced that the civil and political society in Rwanda would have been capable of forcing real changes on the state, quite possibly bringing about a democratic transition.”

⁹⁴ This is a consensus in the literature. Because the RPF also knew its invasion would provoke a backlash, some analysts go a step further and blame the RPF for the genocide. For example, Erny, *Rwanda 1994*, p. 16, states that the RPF “appears to me to bear the most responsibility . . . for the genocide committed against the Tutsi inside the country . . . because it knew very well what such a large invasion would bring.”

transitional government, the rebels could have retained the cabinet seats they were awarded at Arusha, but would have had to accept that the opposition party seats would be filled by nominees from the dominant Hutu Power wings of these parties, not the minority wings that supported the RPF. Accordingly, during the transitional government, effective control would have rested with a coalition of Habyarimana and the opposition parties – rather than a coalition of the RPF and the opposition parties, as the rebels sought. It is highly unlikely that the RPF could have shed its image as a Tutsi party, or that ethnic polarization would have receded quickly in Rwanda given the preceding civil war. As a result, the RPF likely would have been relegated to the political opposition for the foreseeable future. In addition, some anti-Tutsi violence probably would have persisted despite the rebel concessions, as a legacy of its being stirred up during the civil war. However, in the absence of any further Tutsi rebel invasions to serve as provocation, such anti-Tutsi violence likely would have petered out, and there is absolutely no reason to believe it would have escalated to genocide. Thus, the net effect if the RPF had been willing to make significant concessions at Arusha is that the genocide probably would have been avoided and many Tutsi refugees would have been able to repatriate, but the Tutsi inside Rwanda including the returning refugees probably would have remained subject to some discrimination, as well as to some violence in the immediate aftermath of the civil war.

The third counterfactual scenario envisions that the international community had not intervened to try to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the Rwandan civil war. Under these circumstances, the Tutsi rebels would not have felt constrained in their military activities by the need to preserve international support. Accordingly, it is likely that the RPF would have launched a final offensive to capture Rwanda prior to the outbreak of genocide in April 1994. Most likely, the rebels would have carried their offensive of February 1993 to fruition, rather than halting it in the face of international opposition. Based on the RPF's rapid progress in February 1993, and the fact that the RPF captured all of Rwanda in three months during its subsequent offensive in April 1994, it is likely that the rebels could have conquered Rwanda in 1993 had they tried. The speed of that victory would have depended on the degree of French intervention on behalf of the Habyarimana regime. However, given that the French refused to save the Rwandan government in 1994, it is unlikely that they would have provided sufficient support the previous year to prevent a concerted rebel offensive from prevailing. In the face of an all-out rebel offensive, Hutu extremists in Rwanda likely would have launched widespread

massacres against domestic Tutsi. However, they would not have had time to prepare as organized a genocide. In addition, because the UN peacekeeping force had not yet been deployed to Rwanda, the Tutsi there would not have felt a false sense of security, and so probably would have made more effort to protect themselves, fleeing violence either deeper into Rwanda or into RPF-controlled territory. For both these reasons, the Tutsi death toll likely would have been reduced considerably. Thus, if the international community had not intervened diplomatically in the Rwandan civil war, the main difference in the outcome is that the genocide probably would have been much smaller. Aside from that, most else would have transpired as it actually did, with the RPF conquering the country militarily, many Hutu fleeing as refugees, and most Tutsi refugees returning to Rwanda.

Alternately, if the international community had thrown its full military and economic support behind Habyarimana, it is likely that his Hutu regime could have fended off the Tutsi rebels militarily. In that case, Hutu extremists probably still would have launched some anti-Tutsi massacres. However, so long as the army could have fended off the Tutsi rebels on the battlefield it is unlikely the Hutu extremists would have launched a genocidal campaign against Tutsi civilians. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Hutu extremists only resorted to genocide after it became clear that the Rwandan army was incapable of defending the country against the Tutsi rebels, and after the French army withdrew its military presence that was the last line of defense for the Hutu regime.

Thus, as many close analysts of the Rwandan conflict have noted, the unintended consequence of the international community's well-intentioned diplomatic intervention – using its substantial leverage against both sides to coerce a power-sharing agreement rather than permitting or facilitating a military victory – was to increase the toll of killing in Rwanda. Either of the alternative policies – backing the Hutu regime militarily or staying out of the conflict entirely – likely would have averted a full-blown genocide. As Rene Lemarchand wrote in 1994, soon after the genocide:

The [Arusha] transition bargain in Rwanda emerges in retrospect as a recipe for disaster: not only were the negotiations conducted under tremendous external pressures, but, partly for this reason, the concessions made to the RPF were seen by Hutu hard-liners as a sell-out imposed by outsiders.”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Jones, “The Arusha Peace Process,” p. 147.

In 1995, Bruce D. Jones wrote:

We must ask whether efforts to resolve the civil war effectively provoked the far more violent genocide which ensued. . . . By forcing the two sides to adopt untenable positions, did the intervention of the Arusha participants thus provoke the genocide?"⁹⁶

Also in 1995, I wrote:

The mediators had a blind spot. They failed to appreciate how much Rwanda's entrenched elite had to lose under political pluralization, and the lengths to which it would go to preserve the *status quo*. The mediators' application of leverage succeeded in compelling Rwanda's President to sign and begin to implement the Arusha accords, but this very success raised the insecurity of Rwanda's elite to the breaking point. To protect the privileges they saw the international community trying to wrest from them, extremists proved willing to massacre fellow countrymen with whom they had been living in relative calm for more than two decades.⁹⁷

Likewise, in his 1996 analysis of the Rwandan case, Wm. Cyrus Reed drew the lesson that—

[E]xternal donors are likely to encounter opposition by pressing governments to pursue policies to which they are not fully committed. When these include simultaneous economic and political liberalization, including the re-entry of former exiled leaders, those groups whose social status is secured primarily through political patronage and controlled markets may well view the process as a 'zero sum game' in which they are the most likely losers. As such, they should be expected to fight the reform process with all the means at their disposal — including the creation of institutions designed to usurp the authority of the state itself.⁹⁸

In the same vein, Peter Uvin wrote in 1997 that—

in its obsession with elections as the solution to all ills, the international community neglected the existence of important and powerful factions in society that were totally opposed to any form of powersharing.⁹⁹

And in 1998, Christopher Clapham similarly concluded:

What then gave the Rwandan situation its peculiar horror was the ability of groups who sought a genocidal solution to use the time provided by peace negotiations in order to prepare it. . . . Mediators readily assume an obligation to attempt to resolve conflicts, in the belief that mediation can only have a positive

⁹⁶ Bruce D. Jones, "'Intervention Without Borders': Humanitarian Intervention in Rwanda, 1990-94," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 227, 243.

⁹⁷ Kuperman, "The Other Lesson of Rwanda," p. 222.

⁹⁸ Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise," p. 501.

⁹⁹ Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide," p. 109. See also, Uvin, *Aiding Violence*, pp. 234-36.

or neutral impact on the conflict: if mediation succeeds, it does good; but even if it fails, it does no harm. The Rwandan case demonstrates that this assumption may be tragically mistaken.¹⁰⁰

All of the RPF officials interviewed for this study were asked what they would have done differently in retrospect, if they had known then what they know now, especially about the ultimate extent of the violent retaliation and the lack of intervention by the international community during the genocide. Interestingly, none of the RPF officials said they would have eschewed the invasion or made more concessions during the peace negotiations, even though it appears that either of these steps could have averted or greatly mitigated the genocide. Instead, these rebel officials say they should have ignored the international community and pursued military victory sooner, before the Hutu extremists could have prepared the genocide, in order to reduce the cost in retaliatory violence. Patrick Mazimaka says, “in hindsight, we should have continued our offensive to win the war in February 1993. . . . We should just have kept fighting, to avoid large-scale genocide, before the [extremist] opposition got broad-based. . . . He [Habyarimana] wouldn’t have had time to realize he was losing and move to the [genocide] contingency plan. The time we spent negotiating gave him time to reflect and plan [the genocide].”¹⁰¹ Wilson Rutaysire adds that the RPF more prominently “should have advised the target population [domestic Tutsi] to flee” to rebel-controlled areas prior to the outbreak of genocidal violence, which he says would have reduced the ultimate death toll. Emmanuel Ndahiro says, “Perhaps we wouldn’t have listened so much to the mediators. We should have relied on ourselves. The [Habyarimana] regime wouldn’t have had the time, resources, and plan to execute the genocide. . . . We knew better our own situation. People [from elsewhere] don’t understand.”¹⁰² Likewise, as noted above, Protais Musoni says that, “without the role of the international community, we would have gone for it [military victory] in February 1993, and we would have won without [provoking] genocide, because the serious genocide preparations came afterward.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Clapham, “Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 35, no. 2, (1998), p. 209.

¹⁰¹ Patrick Mazimaka, interview with author, Kigali, April 15, 1999, and interview with author, Kigali, April 23, p. 5.

¹⁰² Emmanuel Ndahiro, interview with author, Kigali, April 23, 1999, p. 4.

¹⁰³ Protais Musoni, interview with author, Kigali, April 26, 1999, p. 6.

The main lessons that RPF officials say they have drawn from this searing experience are to reject liberal doctrine about the feasibility of positive-sum outcomes and collective security, and henceforth to rely on military force to maximize their share of zero-sum outcomes. Aloysie Inyumba, in addition to being in charge of finance for the RPF, also was in charge of political education. She says, "I believed in the power of education for a long time, but now I think that was naïve. . . . I didn't realize the magnitude of the hatred and the level that morals had degenerated to. If I had known about the possibility of genocide, I would have focused on the military, not education so much."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Theogene Rudasingwa, says the experience has caused him to lose some of his liberal ideals. "I'm now a realist. I don't believe in morality in foreign policy, or UN interventions, etc. I believe only in self-reliance."¹⁰⁵ Finally, a senior RPF military official sums up his main lesson succinctly: "you can't trust the international community."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Aloysie Inyumba, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Theogene Rudasingwa, interview with author, January 13, 1999, p. 4. It seems likely that these lessons of 1994 contributed to the RPF's subsequent belligerence in neighboring Zaire (now known as Democratic Republic of Congo), where it invaded twice, overthrew one government, and established a prolonged military occupation. The RPF claims that these actions were driven by Zaire's harboring of Rwandan Hutu militants, but the RPF also has benefited economically from the extraction of natural resources from its neighbor.

¹⁰⁶ Senior RPF military official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Kigali, April 16, 1999, p. 4.

CHAPTER 7

KOSOVO: EXTREMISM – NOT PACIFISM – GARNERS FOREIGN SUPPORT

Kosovo¹ is a fascinating case of the dog that did not bark – or at least did not bark when it was expected to. From 1989 to 1997, Kosovo's Albanians had far greater grievances and justification for a violent challenge of central authority than did the Bosnian Muslims or the Rwandan Tutsi when those groups launched such challenges. Unlike in Bosnia and Rwanda, the subordinate group in Kosovo, ethnic Albanians, were wholly disenfranchised by central authorities – losing their political autonomy, being fired from state jobs *en masse*, and suffering persistent police harassment. Moreover, unlike the subordinate groups in Bosnia and Rwanda, the Albanians represented a clear majority of the population in Kosovo, some 80 to 90 percent. Yet, during this initial period, Kosovo's Albanians did not launch a violent challenge against state authority. Instead, they pursued a course of passive resistance, declaring themselves separate from Yugoslavia and establishing a shadow state, but not arming to secede by force. Although this peaceful challenge provoked retaliatory administrative and police measures by the Yugoslav state, intended to coerce the Albanians to accept the state's authority, it did not provoke genocidal retaliation. Moreover, the initially pacifist Albanian strategy gradually succeeded at re-establishing *de facto* autonomy from Yugoslavia.

Despite this progress, in 1998 Albanian rebels calling themselves the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) spearheaded a switch to a strategy of violent secession from Yugoslavia. This armed challenge initially provoked a retaliatory Yugoslav counter-insurgency campaign, which contained the rebellion but in the process also killed dozens of Albanian civilians. NATO, outraged by the Yugoslav retaliation and the refusal of Yugoslav authorities to concede to the Albanians' demands, in 1999 launched a coercive bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, thereby effectively supporting the Albanians' violent challenge. In response to this mounting challenge, Yugoslav authorities retaliated with a full-blown ethnic cleansing campaign. During three months of NATO bombing, the Yugoslav retaliation killed approximately 5,000 of

¹ Serbs call the province "Kosovo" (or "Kosovo-Metohija") with the accent on the first syllable. Albanians call it "Kosova" with the accent on the second syllable. For purposes of standardization, this study uses the more common Western terminology of "Kosovo" throughout, except in direct quotes from Albanians, without intending

Kosovo's Albanians, and led to the flight from the province of another 850,000, or about half their population, as refugees. Interestingly, although this case is tailor-made for comparative analysis with other Balkan cases, there has been little investigation of why Kosovo's aggrieved Albanians originally eschewed a violent challenge while Bosnia's less aggrieved Muslims launched one. Nor has there been a thorough investigation or satisfying explanation of why the Albanians switched to violence in 1998 – at a time when their situation actually was improving – and thereby provoked the forced migration of half their population.

This chapter provides background on the case, including the details of both the Albanians' initial passive resistance and their subsequent violent challenge. The succeeding chapter attempts to explain this variation in the Albanians' strategy over time by testing the three proposed hypotheses of rational deterrence theory. In both chapters, I build on secondary sources and rely heavily on interviews with Kosovo's leading Albanian officials from the period, including: the leader of the passive resistance party and president of the shadow state of Kosovo (Ibrahim Rugova); four of the five founders of that party who forged its strategy from 1989-92 (Mehmet Kraja, Xhemajl Mustafa, Ibrahim Berisha, and Milazim Krasniqi); the party official in charge of foreign affairs from 1991-98 (Edita Tahiri); a leading challenger within the party, who favored a more confrontational strategy (and who requests anonymity); leaders of three small Albanian opposition parties that favored more accommodation with Belgrade (Vetton Surroi, Blerim Shala, and Shkelzen Maliqi); the information minister of the shadow state who eventually came to support the rebel KLA movement (Xhafer Shatri); a founder of the KLA (Emrush Xhemajli); the eventual vice-commander of the KLA's general staff (Jakup Krasniqi); and an official of a competing Albanian rebel group that initially opposed the launching of the violent challenge (Shukri Klinaku). For additional perspective, I draw on interviews with two Serbian officials who were members of Belgrade's political opposition during most of this time (Predrag Simic and Dragor Hiber).

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four parts. First, I provide background to the case, including: the history of the Serb and Albanian presence in Kosovo; the repeated cycles of inter-ethnic domination and retribution in the province from Ottoman times through the aftermath of World War II; and the discrimination against Kosovo's Serbs by Albanian

any bias with regard to either group's past or future sovereignty over the province. *Opstine*, city, and town names are cited in either Serbian or Albanian in this study without intending any bias.

secessionists starting in 1966 that triggered revocation of the province's autonomy in 1989. Second, I detail the origins and consequences of the Albanians' passive resistance strategy that was dominant from 1989 to 1997. Third, I detail the five grand strategies advocated by competing Albanian factions in response to the loss of autonomy. Fourth, I detail the origins and consequences of the Albanians' violent rebellion strategy that was dominant from 1998 to 1999.

Historical Background

Unlike Bosnia, Kosovo has no halcyon past of peaceful and cooperative inter-ethnic relations. Rather, the province's history is of an 800-year struggle between Serb, Albanian, and imperial forces, replete with repeated instances of mutual atrocities and forced migration. Throughout this history, whichever ethnic group has held power or has been favored by an occupying imperial force has oppressed the other and exacted revenge for past offenses. This dynamic continues to the present day.

Albanian-speaking people have lived in the region since at least the sixth century, originally under control of the Roman empire, and later the Byzantine. Serbia took control in the late 12th century, when it pushed back Byzantine forces and expanded its territory to include parts of present-day Kosovo, Albania, and Croatia. Albanians already had embraced Catholicism, so they were distinct from the Orthodox Serbs both linguistically and denominationally, and they opposed Serbian rule with support from the Catholic powers of western Europe. Despite such opposition, Serbian power continued to grow until reaching its apex in the mid-14th century, by which time there were Orthodox churches throughout Kosovo, establishing it as the spiritual center of the Serbian people. However, Serbian dominance of Kosovo ended soon afterwards.²

Invading Ottoman forces won their first key victory in 1371 and took control of the region by the end of the 14th century. In Serbian mythology, the turning point was the 1389 Battle of Kosovo Polje, when Serbian forces ostensibly were defeated by the Ottomans – supposedly abetted by Serb traitors – thereby ushering in centuries of Ottoman and Albanian dominance of Kosovo. In reality, the Serbs and Albanians actually were allied in this battle and managed to fend off successfully, albeit temporarily, their common Ottoman enemy. The Serbs

² Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 7-10.

were not in fact defeated until a few years later, after the Ottomans deployed additional forces. The Albanians did not align with the Ottomans until centuries later.³

During the 15th century, the Muslim Ottoman occupation initially triggered significant out-migration of both Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo. Orthodox Serbs retreated north toward Hungary, while Catholic Albanians fled mainly west to Italy. The Albanian exodus was greater, and the Ottoman presence was relatively small, so that by the mid-15th century Serbs represented the bulk of Kosovo's populace. The Albanians, who were still overwhelmingly Catholic, began to trickle back in the following century. Both the Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Albanians who remained in or returned to Kosovo were permitted to retain their distinct Christian communities within the Ottoman empire's "millet" system, although as non-Muslims they were subject to additional military and financial burdens. Starting in the 17th century, however, large numbers of Albanians began to convert to Islam in order to avoid these penalties and partake of the spoils of rule. Ottoman authorities also encouraged the Albanians to convert to reduce the threat that they would represent a "fifth column" in an anticipated future war with Europe's Catholic powers.⁴

The conversion of Albanians to Islam was sufficiently successful that, ironically, when Catholic Austria invaded the Balkans late in the 17th century, it was the Orthodox Serbs who feared persecution by the Ottomans as a suspected fifth column sympathetic to the Christian (though non-Orthodox) invaders. Accordingly, Serbs fled north toward Hungary in such great numbers that the core of the Serb nation shifted out of Kosovo, eventually to Belgrade. Filling the space evacuated by Serbs, Albanians returned to Kosovo from centuries of exile. As the Serbs had feared, those of them who remained in Kosovo suffered increasing oppression under the Ottomans as suspected traitors, especially after the outbreak of war in the late 18th century against the Russians, who were Orthodox Slavs like the Serbs.⁵

In this manner, over the course of four centuries in Kosovo, the Serbs devolved from the dominant majority into an oppressed minority. For obvious reasons, the Serbs came to resent the Albanians as Muslim collaborators in an Ottoman occupation that had expelled the Serbs from their homeland. Exacerbating this antagonism, the Ottoman authorities – assisted by their Albanian subordinates – began early in the 19th century forcibly to convert Kosovo's remaining

³ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 10-16.

⁴ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 17-23. Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo* (Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 31, says such Islamification of the Albanians accelerated after 1690.

⁵ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 26-29, 42.

Serbs to Islam, sometimes under penalty of death. Then, as the empire began to falter seriously later in the century, the Ottomans attempted to hold on to the Balkans by giving the Muslim Albanians even greater authority. This had the effect of “encouraging the Albanian population to settle scores with the local Slav-Orthodox element,” which only further fueled ethnic tensions.⁶

The first actual combat between Serbs and Albanians occurred during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, when Serbia and Montenegro opportunistically attacked the preoccupied Ottoman forces to their south. The Albanians of Kosovo fought for the Ottomans while the Serbs of Kosovo evaded conscription and sneaked north to fight for Serbia. By war’s end, the Serbian and Montenegrin invaders occupied half of Kosovo. These changes were codified in the subsequent peace of San Stefano, which granted Serbia its formal independence from the Ottomans and recognition of its territorial gains in northern Kosovo, and granted Montenegro control of the western part of the province.⁷

The Albanians reacted to the return of Serbian sovereignty over parts of Kosovo a few months later, in June 1878, by forming the first organized Albanian nationalist movement, known as the Prizren League. Just as the Albanians were doing so, however, Serbia lost its recently regained dominion over these conquered areas. European powers, worried about the encroachment of Russian influence, returned control of Kosovo to the enfeebled Ottoman empire at the Congress of Berlin, also in June 1878. However, the Albanians’ nationalism already had been awoken, so they now turned against their former patron, the Ottomans. In August 1878, 16,000 armed Albanians of the Prizren League launched a campaign for independence, and three years later the Albanian rebels succeeded at taking control of most of Kosovo. However, they then made the mistake of turning south to capture present-day Albania, where Ottoman forces crushed them.⁸

In the following three decades prior to World War I, Kosovo and the surrounding southern Balkans became the object of an intense struggle for control between many of Europe’s second- and third-tier powers. Albanian nationalists sought independence for the lands where their ethnic group was predominant – which included, in terms of today’s borders: Albania;

⁶ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 26-29, 42.

⁷ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 42-43.

⁸ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 43-48. Hugh Poulton, “The Albanian Question in the Balkans,” in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), p. 107.

Kosovo and other parts of southern Serbia; and parts of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Greece. Serbia sought to regain control of its historic heartland in Kosovo. Russia and Bulgaria supported Serbia's aspirations, and sought to control Macedonia themselves. The Ottoman empire, the "sick man of Europe," strove mightily to retain its last holdings on the continent. Italy sought entrée into the area by supporting the Albanian nationalist drive for independence. Finally, Austria also sought to control the Albanian areas as a counter-weight to Serbia's growing power and aspirations in Bosnia.⁹

The pre-WWI period also was characterized by strange and rapidly shifting alliances. Because the Ottomans suppressed Albanian nationalism, they ironically came to be perceived, momentarily, as allied with the Serbs. For example, in 1900, Albanians attacked Serbs in Kosovo in the name of "independence," even though the Ottomans were in control. Albanians also accused Serbs of taking their jobs, apparently because in 1902 the Ottomans outlawed use of the Albanian language, which benefited the employment prospects of Serbs who unlike Albanians generally spoke both Serbo-Croatian and Albanian. In 1908, the Young Turk rebellion in the Ottoman empire momentarily gave hope to Albanian nationalists, but they soon were disappointed by the new "Turkification" program and so launched another rebellion. Adding further irony, Serbia and Montenegro provided weapons and refuge to these Albanian rebels in 1909 in the name of defeating the Ottomans. This temporary alliance of convenience with the Serbs eventually gave rise to a huge Albanian insurrection against the Ottomans in January 1912. Two months later, the Balkan states – Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece – formed an alliance to evict the Ottomans and divide up the imperial possessions between them. Then, in October 1912, Montenegro led this new Balkan League into what became known as the First Balkan War, by launching an invasion of Ottoman-controlled Albanian lands. In another ironic twist, the Albanians, who had been battling the Ottoman empire intermittently for decades, now became more scared of being swallowed by the Balkan league, and so fought on the Ottoman side.¹⁰

Serbian troops moved south and quickly defeated Ottoman troops, occupying the majority of Kosovo's territory for the first time in five centuries, while Montenegro took the western part of the province. The Albanians initially resisted the Serbian advance, but were

⁹ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 56-75. Poulton, "The Albanian Question in the Balkans," p. 108.

outmatched militarily and soon fled to the mountains. The Serbs then took vengeance on the Albanians by burning, looting, and committing atrocities. As Miranda Vickers notes, “The Albanian population were paying the price for having sided with the [Ottoman] Porte against Belgrade.” Notably, in regard to future demographic controversies, when Serbia recaptured Kosovo in 1912, Serbs represented over 40 percent of its population.¹¹

As Serbian troops headed south, the Austro-Hungarian empire worried that they would reach the Adriatic Sea and effectively establish a port for Russia. Thus, when the Austrians perceived the total collapse of Ottoman forces in November 1912, they supported an Albanian declaration of independence, in order to block Serbian claims to a sea port. Then, at the end of the First Balkan War, Russia and Austria reached a deal that recognized Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo but also recognized a new state of Albania encompassing about half the lands (specifically, those along the sea) in which ethnic Albanians predominated. Shortly after, the Balkan League victors turned on each other and fought the Second Balkan War, but this did not affect significantly the new borders of Serbia and Albania, which were codified in December 1913. These new borders left both the Serbs and Albanians disgruntled: the Serbs because they had been denied access to a sea port they had won in battle; and the Albanians because their new state was only half as large as they sought. The western powers rejected Albanian pleas to transfer dominion over Kosovo from Serbia to the new state of Albania because of the Serbian history and religious monuments in the province.¹²

During World War I, Kosovo’s traditional cycle of Albanian-Serb relations – namely, alternating ethnic domination, oppression, and retaliation – was magnified in speed and intensity. The initial trigger was the invasion of Serbia by both Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, which forced Serbian troops and Serb civilians to retreat southward through Serb-controlled Kosovo and into Albania. The Serbs suffered terribly during this retreat, enduring an estimated 100,000 military and civilian deaths. Meanwhile, the Albanians benefited when the Austrians occupied

¹¹ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 77-78. Alekša Djilas, “Imagining Kosovo,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5, (September/October 1998), p. 130.

¹² Raymond Detrez, “Bulgarian attitudes toward the Kosovo Question,” in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), p. 135, points out that Bulgaria started the Second Balkan War because it wasn’t able to gain control of Macedonia in the first. Ironically, in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria obtained only about 10 percent of Macedonia, while the rest was divided between Greece and Serbia. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 79-84. Hugh Poulton and Miranda Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians: Ethnic Confrontation with the Slav State,” in Hugh

Kosovo in 1916, because the new authorities favored the Albanians, for example permitting the opening of 300 Albanian-language schools. Within two years, however, the tide of the war had turned. Serb forces recaptured Kosovo in October 1918, and took revenge on Albanians for their perceived collaboration with the Austrian occupying forces, burning villages and killing thousands of Albanians in late 1918 and early 1919. The Albanians responded with guerrilla attacks on Serb forces, which in turn spurred more atrocities by Serbs.¹³

After the war, the newly established state of Yugoslavia – originally known as the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes,” which included Kosovo – was dominated by the Serbs. (For more details, see Chapter 3) Accordingly, Yugoslav authorities quickly closed all Albanian-language schools. Kosovo’s Albanians, who represented 64 percent of its population in the 1921 census, sought for their region to be transferred from Yugoslavia to Albania, and resorted to guerrilla attacks to further that aim. This *Kachak* movement launched attacks from its stronghold in the Drenica region of Kosovo, as well as from neighboring bases in Albania. In 1923, however, the rebels overstepped by trying also to overthrow the government of Albania. The Albanian government responded by forging an alliance with Yugoslavia against the rebels. Yugoslav authorities managed to stamp out most of the rebel movement in 1924 through a combination of cooperating with Albania, offering amnesty offer to rebels who surrendered, and resorting to terror tactics against those who refused. As Vickers writes, “Serbian authorities stepped up their suppression of the *Kachaks* by rounding up many extended families of up to fifty members and detaining them all together on pain of death until their ‘outlaw’ relatives surrendered.” In one typical instance, when a suspected rebel escaped, the Serbs set fire to his village. “The authorities held responsible not only the relations of Mehmet Konio, who were all massacred, but the entire village. In this fire, twenty-five people died, of whom almost all were women, children under the age of ten, and men over fifty.” Although terribly brutal, Vickers concedes that “this method was probably the only way to bring the *Kachaks* to heel and it proved highly effective since these very small highly mobile [*Kachak*] units, which enjoyed such immense popular support, were [otherwise] able to disappear with ease into the mountains after skirmishes with the police or army”¹⁴

Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki, eds., *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State* (New York: NYU Press, 1997), pp. 140-41.

¹³ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 86-93.

¹⁴ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 95-101.

For the remainder of the interwar period, Belgrade employed three unsuccessful tactics to suppress Albanian nationalism and re-assert Serb dominance in Kosovo. First, it attempted a variety of education policies. The initial policy required all Albanians to be educated in the Serbo-Croat language in state schools. Soon, however, Belgrade realized that his policy, rather than assimilating the Albanians, was actually educating an opposition Albanian elite. So, Belgrade switched to requiring that all education be conducted in religious schools, based on its assumption that the Albanians would be unable to educate an elite by themselves. In the event, however, the Albanians proved quite capable – not for the last time – at establishing their own “underground parallel Albanian education” institutions. Belgrade’s second tactic was to increase the Serb population of Kosovo by providing incentives for Serbs to move there. From 1922-1938, however, Serbian authorities managed to settle only approximately 11,000 new families in Kosovo. Belgrade’s third tactic, in the mid-1930s, was to reduce Kosovo’s population of Albanians by expelling some of them to Albania or Turkey. This campaign was spearheaded by the Serbian academic, Vasa Cubrilovic, who wrote in 1937: “At a time when Germany can expel tens of thousands of Jews and Russia can shift millions of people from one part of the continent to another, the shifting of a few hundred thousand Albanians will not lead to the outbreak of a world war.” In 1938, Turkey agreed to accept 200,000 Albanians, ethnic Turks and other Muslims from Kosovo and Macedonia – in part to enable Turkey’s own demographic engineering in restive Kurd areas – but the deal was never implemented, due in part to a shortage of funds. The actual number of Albanians who left during this period is unknown, but in any case was too small to alter substantially Kosovo’s demographic mix. (The estimated total emigration of all ethnic groups from all of Yugoslavia during this period was only 200,000 to 300,000.) Thus, Belgrade’s three tactics failed to achieve their intended goal. On the eve of World War II, Kosovo continued to have an Albanian majority that resented Serb rule and that sought to wrest the territory from Yugoslavia to join a greater Albania.¹⁵

¹⁵ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 34. Marco Dogo, “National Truths and Disinformation in Albanian-Kosovar Historiography” in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), pp. 38-39, points out that there had never been Albanian language schools under the Ottomans, so the Serbs were not revoking a right, but rather perpetuating a pre-existing imperial policy that denied the right. Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” pp. 145-47, estimates that 40,000 Serbs immigrated to Kosovo during the first Yugoslavia. Poulton, “The Albanian Question in the Balkans,” pp. 108-109 estimates that a half-million Albanians were compelled to emigrate. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 103-119.

In April 1941, Nazi Germany attacked Yugoslavia and forced its surrender in 11 days. Most of Kosovo was put under administration of Italian-occupied Albania, thereby creating temporarily a greater Albania, albeit under foreign authority. Kosovo's Albanians collaborated with the occupiers and were rewarded by introduction of the Albanian language in schools and government. Albanians in Kosovo also launched reprisal attacks against those Serbs who had arrived under the settlement programs of the preceding two decades, although they spared longtime Serb residents. The occupying powers, however, viewed the remaining Serbs as enemies, killing thousands of them and arresting thousands more.¹⁶ In September 1943, Nazi Germany replaced a weakened Italy as the administrator of Albania and Kosovo. Both the Germans and their local opponents, the communist partisans, tried to attract the support of the Albanians by making promises about the region's future status, but the Albanians overwhelmingly sided with the Nazis. In spring 1944, the Nazis collected Albanian volunteers to form the 21st SS "Skanderbeg Division" (actually two battalions), which attacked Serb and Montenegrin civilians, killing some and ethnically cleansing an estimated 10,000 Slav families. However, in November 1944, the Serb-led partisans turned the tables, re-capturing Kosovo from the Nazis and taking revenge against the Albanians, especially those identified as former collaborators (most notably 250 Albanians who were slaughtered in the Drenica region). Kosovo's Albanian nationalists responded immediately by launching an armed uprising, but the Serb-led partisans crushed it mercilessly. Over the course of six months, some 30,000 partisan troops eventually defeated the estimated 2,000 rebels, but in so doing also killed an estimated 50,000 Albanians. In perhaps the most infamous instance, some 1,670 Albanians were killed by sealing them inside a tunnel.¹⁷

In the second Yugoslavia, after World War II, the treatment and status of Albanians in Kosovo resembled a roller-coaster ride. Initially, despite the inter-ethnic violence that had occurred during the war, Yugoslavia's new communist leader, Joseph Broz Tito, was remarkably generous to the Albanians of Kosovo. Indeed, Tito actually favored the Albanians, in stark contrast to other wartime collaborator ethnic groups in Yugoslavia – such as ethnic Germans, Hungarians and Italians – who were deported from the country. Tito's generous treatment of the Albanians was driven by two main motivations: attracting the neighboring state of Albania to

¹⁶ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 121-22.

¹⁷ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 132-43

join the Yugoslav federation; and combating the perennial Yugoslav problem of Serbia growing too strong and dominating the other republics. Accordingly, Tito took several steps in Kosovo to support the Albanians and constrain the Serbs. First, in March 1945, he temporarily prohibited the return to Kosovo of the 50-60,000 Serb and Montenegrin “settlers” who had been ethnically cleansed by the Albanians during the war. Second, from 1945-48, he permitted open immigration from Albania to Kosovo, leading to an influx of approximately 25,000 Albanians, adding to those who had crossed the border during the war and were permitted to remain. Third, in August 1945, he granted Kosovo the status of an autonomous province within Yugoslavia. (He even would have been willing to let Kosovo be annexed by Albania, if the latter would have agreed to join the Yugoslav federation.) In addition, over 150 new schools were opened in Kosovo to teach Albanians in their native tongue.¹⁸

In 1948, however, Yugoslavia’s treatment of Kosovo’s Albanians shifted dramatically due to larger geopolitical forces. That year the communist world suffered a major schism, as Tito split from Soviet leader Stalin, who retained the support of Albania’s leader Enver Hoxha. As a result, Kosovo’s Albanians now were perceived as a dangerous fifth column for a possible Albanian invasion. Indeed, Albania’s leaders urged Kosovo’s Albanians to overthrow Tito. Accordingly, Belgrade adopted a policy of “Turkification,” attempting to transform Kosovo’s Albanians into ethnic Turks either by educating them in Turkish-language schools in Kosovo, or expelling them to Turkey. In 1953, Belgrade even renewed its agreement with Turkey, under which the latter would accept expelled Albanians. That same year, a new Yugoslav constitution effectively eliminated Kosovo’s autonomy. Yugoslav authorities downgraded the legal status of the Albanian language; likewise, they banned the display of Albanian flags, the celebration of Albanian holidays, and the teaching of Albanian culture and history. Moreover, in 1956, Yugoslav authorities rounded up weapons from the province’s Albanians and began a new program to re-settle Serbs in Kosovo. In addition, Yugoslav vice-president Rankovic, who was

¹⁸ Svetozar Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), p. 109, writes that after WWII, “The [Yugoslav communist] authorities practically speaking accepted the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the Serbs.” The subsequent roller-coaster ride is exemplified by the fact that in 1953, autonomy was reduced for Kosovo and Vojvodina, but in 1963 autonomy was restored for both provinces to the original level of 1946. Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” pp. 148-49. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 144-46.

in charge of the secret police, led a brutal effort to root out Albanian separatists in Kosovo, and in so doing terrorized the population.¹⁹

In 1966, the roller-coaster ride for Kosovo's Albanians again turned upward. First, Rankovic was purged, and the Albanians were given control of the province's police department. This taste of liberation ignited Albanian nationalism in Kosovo and led to violent demonstrations in 1968, calling for restoration of autonomy. In response, Belgrade made additional concessions to the nationalists, first permitting reintroduction of the Albanian flag in Kosovo, and later in 1968 adopting a new constitution that restored some of the province's autonomy, including the right to use the Albanian language to teach in secondary schools. In addition, in 1970, the University of Prishtina was established with courses taught in both Albanian and Serbo-Croatian. The province's Albanian nationalists were unsatisfied, however, and continued to agitate for full autonomy. Soon, the Serbs in the province began increasingly to report harassment and discrimination by Albanians in the province's government, courts, and schools. Despite this, Belgrade upgraded Kosovo's autonomy further in 1971, in part as a political payoff to Albania, which had made a rapprochement with Yugoslavia by agreeing to form a defensive alliance against any potential threat from the Soviet Union.

Finally, in 1974, Yugoslavia adopted yet another constitution that granted Kosovo full autonomy. This status provided Kosovo most of the privileges of a Yugoslav republic, except the right to secession, and even provided some privileges unavailable to the republics. Indeed, the asymmetric rights granted to the province under the constitution were remarkable: Kosovo could veto decisions made by Belgrade, but Belgrade had no reciprocal veto right in Kosovo. Moreover, the Albanians – who represented only eight percent of Serbia's population – now were the most privileged "minority" in any Yugoslav republic, enjoying far greater rights than, for example, the approximately 15-percent Serb minority in Croatia at the time. Affirmative action programs reserved 80-percent of the province's public-sector jobs for Albanians.

¹⁹ While the Turkification policies may well have been inhumane, they were not necessarily farfetched. As noted by Poulton, "The Albanian Question in the Balkans," pp. 107-109, following WWII, Greece succeeded at a similar policy (which could be termed "Greekification") – assimilating much of its Christian Albanian population and cleansing many Muslim Albanians to Albania. Poulton also says that some emigration of Albanians from Kosovo to Turkey was voluntary and started even in the immediate post-war years, when the Albanians were favored by Belgrade. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 37. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 148-51, 155-57. Dusan Batakovic, "The Serbian-Albanian Conflict: An Historical Perspective," in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), p. 10.

Moreover, as the result of Yugoslav education programs, the literacy rate of Albanians had risen from 6 percent to 70 percent in just two decades. All this led an Albanian professor at Prishtina University, Hajredin Hoxha, to declare in an interview in 1981 that, “not a single minority in the world has achieved the rights that the Albanian nationality enjoys in Socialist Yugoslavia.”²⁰

Despite this unprecedented degree of autonomy, Kosovo’s Albanians only increased their demands. For example, the Albanians demanded more federal aid from Belgrade on grounds that Kosovo had the lowest standard of living in Yugoslavia. However, Yugoslavia’s other republics actually sought to reduce such aid because Kosovo already was the greatest beneficiary of transfer payments at their expense. (In reality, the province’s backwardness stemmed mainly from its being largely agricultural, rather than from ethnic discrimination, and the Serbs in the province had to endure the same poor economy.) Kosovo’s Albanian nationalists also demanded that the province be permitted to annex Albanian-inhabited areas of neighboring Montenegro and Macedonia to form a greater Kosovo, which in turn would secede from Yugoslavia and be annexed by Albania. Thus, ironically, Kosovo’s Albanians simultaneously were demanding more federal aid from Belgrade and secession from Yugoslavia.²¹

Albanian Discrimination Compels Serb Emigration

Perhaps inevitably, in light of the province’s history of inter-ethnic oppression, the Albanians abused their increasing autonomy by discriminating against and harassing the province’s Serbs. As a study by one of the first multi-ethnic, pro-democracy political groups in Yugoslavia concluded in 1990:

The core of the Serbian-Albanian relationship has been characterized by a pattern of domination – Serb over Albanian or Albanian over Serb – ever since Kosovo was part of the Ottoman empire. Under Tito . . . [there was] a thinly disguised dictatorship of the ruling ethnic group. This absolute domination, which Serbs

²⁰ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 163-80, 193. Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” p. 149. Shkelzen Maliqi, “The Albanian Movement in Kosova,” in David A. Dyker and Ivan Vejvoda, eds., *Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth* (New York: Longman, 1996), p. 140. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 35, 39. Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp. 109-113, writes that Tito “replaced the indisputable domination of Serbian and Montenegrin communists in Kosovo with the complete supremacy of Albanian communists.” He says that Tito expected that autonomy and economic aid would encourage Kosovo’s Albanians to integrate themselves in Yugoslavia. Instead, it backfired.

²¹ Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” p. 149, argue that Kosovo was relatively poor in part because Yugoslav authorities chose not to industrialize the region because it was vulnerable to capture in the event of war. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 180-81, 187.

exercised by controlling the Kosovo Communist Party from 1945 to 1966 and Albanians from 1966 to 1988, exacerbated inter-ethnic intolerance.²²

Serbs began to flee the province in considerable numbers starting in the late 1960s. In part, this was due not to discrimination but to the province's poor economy. However, economic conditions alone cannot explain why Serbs fled the province at such a higher rate than did Albanians. From 1971-81, the estimated number of Serbs leaving Kosovo was nearly 60,000, according to Kosovo's Albanian-led government, and more than 100,000 according to Serbian statistics. By contrast, during this same time, only 45,000 Albanians departed Kosovo. Given that the Albanians outnumbered Serbs in the province at the beginning of this period by at least 3 to 1, the Serbs were emigrating at a rate at least four times as high as the Albanians, and perhaps more than seven times as high. Moreover, from 1966-86, some 46,000 Albanians immigrated to Kosovo from other regions of Yugoslavia. Assuming a steady rate of such in-migration, approximately 23,000 Albanians entered Kosovo from 1971-81, which means that the net outmigration of Albanians during this period was only 22,000. This indicates that the net outmigration rate from Kosovo during the period was 8 to 14 times higher for Serbs than for Albanians. Considering that Kosovo's poor economy affected both ethnic groups, these statistics suggest strongly that there was some other factor that compelled the disproportionate departure of Serbs.²³

Nearly all Serbians, across the political spectrum, attribute this out-migration to a campaign of anti-Serb discrimination by Albanian nationalists in Kosovo. For example, even liberal Serbian academic, Aleksa Djilas, writes: "Many Serbs left Kosovo during World War II and in the 1970s and 1980s, when Kosovo enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, because Albanian extremists forced them to – by murdering, threatening, taking their jobs and land, killing their cattle, felling their orchards, and even occasionally attacking their women."²⁴ Yugoslavia's

²² Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 14. The study was by the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI). Its Kosovo branch was founded in 1989 by an ethnic Albanian, Veton Surroi.

²³ Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 151-52, write that, "Despite the upgrading of Kosovo in the 1974 Constitution and the corresponding increase in Albanian control, albeit within Tito's Communist system, Albanian demands for greater control increased. . . . economic problems exacerbated nationalist unrest. The setting-up of an Albanian university in Pristina in 1968 compounded this." Unemployment in Kosovo was 29 percent, compared to a Yugoslav average of 12.7 percent. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, pp. 195-96.

²⁴ Djilas, "Imagining Kosovo." Similarly, Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 109, states: "From 1966 onwards the Albanian minority [in Serbia] has been placing increased pressure on the Serbs to move out of Kosovo." See also, Batakovic, "The Serbian-Albanian Conflict," p. 10.

longtime ruler Tito, who was half Croatian and half Slovene, in 1979 denounced the “various nationalists, irredentists, hostile clergy and other ideological enemies . . . [trying] to provoke dissatisfaction among the Albanians in Kosovo and to stir up disunity among its multinational population.”²⁵ Even ruling ethnic-Albanian communist party officials in autonomous Kosovo during this period acknowledged the existence of an anti-Serb forced-migration campaign by extremist Albanian nationalists. For example, in 1982 the *New York Times* quoted Becir Hoti, the ethnic-Albanian executive secretary of the party in Kosovo, stating that, “The nationalists have a two-point platform: first to establish what they call an ethnically clean Albanian republic and then the merger with Albania to form a greater Albania.”²⁶ Likewise, in 1987, the same newspaper reported that:

Ethnic Albanians in the Government [of Kosovo] have manipulated public funds and regulations to take over land belonging to Serbs. . . . Slavic Orthodox churches have been attacked, and flags have been torn down. Wells have been poisoned and crops burned. Slavic boys have been knifed, and some young ethnic Albanians have been told by their elders to rape Serbian girls. . . . Last summer, the [Albanian-led] authorities in Kosovo said they documented 40 ethnic Albanian attacks on Slavs in two months.²⁷

Both Serbian and Albanian scholars agree that some such reports of violence were exaggerated. For example, Albanian scholar Muhamedin Kullashi reports that the total level of murder and reported rape was relatively low in Kosovo, so that the inter-ethnic rate of such crime must have been still lower.²⁸ Although such low rates of reported crime may have stemmed partly from under-reporting by victims of rape – and especially inter-ethnic rape, which

²⁵ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 41.

²⁶ Marvin Howe, “Exodus of Serbians Stirs Province in Yugoslavia,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1982, p. 8. The article also states, “Privately, some officials acknowledge that the rise of Albanian nationalism in a society that is based on the principle of the equality of nationalities is the result of past errors - at first neglect and discrimination, and more recently failure to act against divisive forces or even recognize them.”

²⁷ David Binder, “In Yugoslavia, Rising Ethnic Strife Brings Fears of Worse Civil Conflict,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1987, p. 14. This history has not been revised, but it is rarely reported in Western media accounts of the subsequent Kosovo crisis. One exception is Chris Hedges, “Kosovo’s Next Masters?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (May/June 1999), p. 38, which states: “Between 1966 and 1989 an estimated 130,000 Serbs left the province because of frequent harassment and discrimination by the Kosovar Albanian majority.”

²⁸ Muhamedin Kullashi, “The Production of Hatred in Kosova (1981-91),” in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), pp. 60-63. Kullashi also attempts to disprove that there was any disproportionate Serbian out-migration from Kosovo because there was a marginally higher absolute level of Serb out-migration from Vojvodina. However, these statistics are misleading because the Serb population of Vojvodina was at least three times higher than that in Kosovo. Thus, the relative rate of Serb out-migration was in fact much higher in Kosovo than in Vojvodina, which is consistent with the existence of a forced-migration campaign in Kosovo by extremist Albanian nationalists.

carried an extra stigma – it also is likely that some high-profile reported inter-ethnic crimes may have been fabricated or exaggerated.²⁹

The fairest assessment is probably that presented by Serbian demographer Marina Blagojevic, who co-authored a 1986 Yugoslav government study of Serb emigrants from Kosovo that raised Belgrade's concern. Blagojevic concedes there was some exaggeration of anti-Serb abuses at the time in the media and by Serb political entrepreneurs who sought a revocation of Kosovo's autonomy. However, her study found that "Serbian emigration from Kosovo is a reality, and that Albanian pressures and discrimination have been an important motive for Serbs to leave the area." Indeed, she reports, "our main finding was that in 75 to 85 percent of cases the main motive for migration was discrimination rather than economic push and/or pull factors." Her team's interviews with Serb migrants "evoked a clear image of a consistent, successful and all-embracing system of discrimination, which existed in all segments of society, gravely affecting everyday life." These qualitative accounts were confirmed by several of the study's statistical findings, including that Serbs often abandoned higher-paying jobs in Kosovo for lower-paying ones elsewhere in Serbia.³⁰

The campaign of gradual ethnic-cleansing by Kosovo's extremist Albanian nationalists employed three broad tactics, according to Blagojevic. Most important was "informal discrimination," cited by 88 percent of emigrants interviewed, which included verbal threats in the streets, intimidation of children, physical violence, and economic damage to households. For example, "out of 500 households interviewed . . . members of 208 households had been victim to physical violence." A second factor was "institutional discrimination" by the autonomous Albanian-led government, including disparate treatment by the police and the judiciary and disparate hiring by the government. For example, the provincial government effectively imposed bilingualism requirements only on Serbs. The third factor was "ideological discrimination," such as anti-Serb propaganda in the media, schools, and social and political organizations. Blagojevic

²⁹ Julie A. Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), discusses both sides' versions of several prominent cases, although without attempting to pinpoint the truth. Indeed, Mertus's post-modern analysis appears to deny the importance (and possibly even the existence) of an objective truth. For a critique of her approach, see Alan J. Kuperman, "Review essay of *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* and *The Battle of Kosovo*," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 117-119.

³⁰ Marina Blagojevic, "The Other Side of the Truth: Migrations of Serbs from Kosovo," in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), pp. 70-73.

concludes that this three-pronged campaign pointed to “only one and essential objective – the creation of an ethnically ‘pure’ Kosovo.”³¹

Albanian discrimination contributed to dramatic demographic changes in Kosovo, which then had the effect of further exacerbating the discrimination. From 1961 to 1991, the proportion of Serbs in Kosovo’s population dropped from 23.5 to 9.9 percent. This sharp decline resulted mainly from a combination of three factors: Serb out-migration, Albanian in-migration, and high Albanian fertility levels (the highest in Europe). Interestingly, Blagojevic also found that discrimination was worse in regions with lower concentrations of Serbs. Thus, the decline in Kosovo’s overall proportion of Serbs was expected to intensify discrimination against those who remained.³² Not coincidentally, the Albanian nationalist movement was centered in two *opstine*, or cantons, in the Drenica valley of Kosovo, whose population is 99 percent ethnic Albanian.³³

Although the existence of such extreme Albanian nationalism in Kosovo is clear, the precise causes of it are not. One apparent cause, according to Poulton and Vickers, was the 1968 decision by Kosovo’s Albanians, who speak the Gheg dialect of Albanian, to adopt the Tosk literary dialect for written materials. This led to an influx of written materials from Albania, including romantic nationalist histories. “The setting-up of an Albanian university in [Kosovo’s capital] Pristina in 1968 compounded this,” they add.³⁴ Eventually, and perhaps inevitably, the rise of extreme Albanian nationalism led to a concomitant rise in Serbian nationalism in Yugoslavia, starting in Kosovo. In 1977, the province’s Serbs published a “Blue Book,” demanding that Belgrade revoke Kosovo’s autonomy.³⁵ This growing nationalist sentiment soon spread to the rest of Serbia, as Blagojevic notes:

³¹ Blagojevic, “The Other Side,” pp. 73-76.

³² Blagojevic, “The Other Side,” pp. 77-80. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 36.

³³ Stefan Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo: Failure of Prevention? An Analytical Documentation, 1992-1998*, ECMI Working Paper #1 (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 1998), http://www.ecmi.de/doc/public_papers.html [downloaded 2000]. The on-line version of the working paper is not paginated, so I reference it by its footnotes. The *opstine* are Srbica and Glogovac. Interestingly, this fact tends to disconfirm another hypothesis – that the security dilemma caused ethnic violence in Kosovo – because Albanian militants emerged during the period of Albanian autonomy in areas with little or no intermingling of ethnic groups. In other words, the original militants were under no security threat, and their goals were offensive rather than defensive.

³⁴ Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” pp. 150-53.

Once the long-hushed problem of migrations from Kosovo was made a public issue, it became the main axis for strengthening Serbian nationalism in the late 1980s. . . . The system of [anti-Serb] discrimination in Kosovo highly contributed to the destruction of the former Yugoslavia; it added greatly to the introduction of an intolerant and extreme nationalism, on the Albanian as well as the Serbian side, and to the spreading of the general idea of the impossibility of coexistence and the inevitability of ethnic conflict.³⁶

1981 Demonstrations Trigger Nationalist Spiral

By the early 1980s, each of Kosovo's two main ethnic groups believed it was oppressed by the other. The Serbs' grievances already have been detailed. The Albanians expressed three main complaints: first, that Albanians were disadvantaged relative to Serbs within Kosovo; second, that Kosovo was disadvantaged with regard to other areas of Yugoslavia; and third, that both problems resulted from the fact that Kosovo was merely a province within the republic of Serbia, rather than a co-equal republic within Yugoslavia. In some respects, these grievances were legitimate. For example, within Kosovo, Serbs held 30 percent of jobs in state-run enterprises despite representing only about 10 percent of the population. In addition, Kosovo as a whole suffered from an unemployment rate of 29 percent, compared to the Yugoslav average of 12.7 percent. Moreover, Kosovo was denied republic status despite the fact that the Albanians were the third or fourth largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia – bigger than the Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins, each of which already had its own republic in the federation.³⁷

On the other hand, each of these disparities had plausible explanations other than persistent anti-Albanian discrimination. First, Serbs held a higher proportion of state jobs than their 10 percent of the population in the 1980s partly because many of them were hired at an earlier time when Serbs were closer to 24 percent of the population. Serbs also generally were better educated, and thus better qualified for jobs, than the Albanians. In addition, there was some legacy from the pro-Serb discriminatory hiring policy that had been in place prior to 1966.

³⁵ Gazmend Zajmi, "Kosova's Constitutional Position in the Former Yugoslavia" in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), p. 98.

³⁶ Blagojevic, "The Other Side," pp. 77-78.

³⁷ Zajmi, "Kosova's Constitutional Position," p. 95, points out that Yugoslavia's Albanians also were relatively highly concentrated, with two-thirds living in Kosovo. Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (NY: NYU Press, 1998), pp. 336-37. Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 151-52. Alexis Heraclides, "The Kosovo Conflict and Its Resolution," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1997), pp. 317-31.

Second, as noted above, Kosovo's backward economy resulted from its lack of industry, which affected both Serbs and Albanians, and which stemmed partly from a strategic decision in Belgrade to locate heavy industry in more defensible areas of Yugoslavia. Third, it is true that some smaller ethnic groups within Yugoslavia had been "given" their own republics, but these groups had not been considered secession threats at the time. By contrast, there was a widespread fear in Yugoslavia that if Kosovo were given republic status, it would not be long before the Albanians would demand the republic's secession and then unification with Albania. As Clark notes, "In view of the rights Kosovo had under autonomy, it was not surprising that the Slavic nations [that is, peoples] of Yugoslavia should see the demand for a republic as a demand for secession."³⁸

The complaints of Kosovo's Albanians also seemed to disregard the very high level of autonomy that they already enjoyed in the province. As noted by Poulton and Vickers:

In the early 1980s the Kosovo Albanians were not suffering cultural repression. Kosovo was in effect an Albanian polity with the Albanian language in official use, Albanian television, radio and press, and ethnic Albanian government leadership. Even the courts which were used to persecute those calling for a republic of Kosovo had ethnic Albanian judges. . . . the Albanians of Kosovo enjoyed a better situation in terms of representation and cultural autonomy than at any time since the collapse of the Ottoman empire.³⁹

Ironically, despite this relatively secure status, Kosovo's Albanians launched confrontational protests in 1981, which backfired by triggering a spiral of escalation that eventually produced significant declines in their status and welfare. The initial demonstrations were launched in March 1981 by Albanian students at Prishtina University, who demanded social reforms and republic status for Kosovo. Yugoslav federal police initially crushed the protests, triggering still greater demonstrations by the Albanian workforce and populace on April 1-2, 1981, which drove Belgrade to deploy the Yugoslav army to Kosovo to restore order. Estimates of the number killed during the turmoil range wildly from 11 to 300. Belgrade also declared a state of emergency, which it maintained in the province for most of the next 10 years, and sentenced the protesters to prison terms of 8 to 15 years.⁴⁰

³⁸ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 40. Batakovic, "The Serbian-Albanian Conflict," pp. 11-12, points out that republic status conferred with it a nominal right of secession from Yugoslavia.

³⁹ Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 151-52.

⁴⁰ Maliqi, "The Albanian Movement in Kosova," pp. 140-41. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 42.

Yugoslav authorities blamed the uprising on the failure of Kosovo's communist party leaders to suppress Albanian nationalism. Accordingly, they purged 500 Albanian members of the local party and its leader, Mahmut Bakalli, and replaced him with another Albanian, communist youth leader Azem Vllasi.⁴¹ Some Albanians viewed the state of emergency as a revocation of autonomy, and many fled the province – either for economic reasons, to avoid conscription, or to avoid incarceration for nationalist activities.⁴² For militant nationalists, the fear of incarceration was real, because thousands of Albanians were imprisoned for advocating republic status during this period. Otherwise, however, Kosovo's institutions continued to function relatively normally and to be led by Albanians for the meantime. Indeed, as noted by Amnesty International's observer for Kosovo, most of the province's Albanian intellectuals remained loyal to Yugoslavia through 1987, and were rewarded for doing so. "Many Albanians received important posts in the government, party, police, bureaucracy, education, justice, and so on. . . . [T]he maltreating of Albanian political prisoners in Kosovo was mainly done by fellow Albanians loyal to Yugoslavia."⁴³

However, the protests, discrimination, and demands for independence by Kosovo's Albanian nationalists continued to give rise to a reactive Serbian nationalism throughout the republic. As Poulton and Vickers note: "The position of the Serbs in the region [Kosovo] had begun to come to the fore in mainstream Serbian public opinion by the end of 1985, helping to fuel rising Serbian nationalism." In January 1986, 200 Serbian intellectuals from across the political spectrum presented a petition to the Yugoslav assembly, claiming that Serbs in Kosovo were victims of "genocide." In September 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences produced its now infamous draft memo, which is often cited by western critics as a Serbian nationalist manifesto that led to the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. Rarely noted, however, is that the

⁴¹ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 336-37.

⁴² Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 166-67, notes that Albanian sources claim 250,000 Albanians left the province from 1981-88.

⁴³ Jan Jansen, "Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo in the 1980s and the Response from the West," in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996). Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," p. 151. The number of Albanians imprisoned during this period is a matter of dispute. Kullashi, "The Production of Hatred in Kosova (1981-91)," pp. 56, 66, reports that from 1981-88, prior to revocation of Kosovo's autonomy, some 22,000 Albanians received prison sentences of two to 14 years for "counter-revolutionary" political activities. However, Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 43, reports that only 7,000 were imprisoned, of whom only 1,800 ultimately were convicted. Clark does also report that, during this period, approximately one-half of the province's Albanian population was at some point "arrested, interrogated, interned, or reprimanded."

memo declared itself a response to Albanian nationalist extremism, which it warned, correctly, could trigger a spiral of competing nationalisms that would destroy Yugoslavia. The memo argued that Kosovo's Albanians had declared "a very special but total war" against the Serbs. This "demand for an ethnically pure Albanian Kosovo is not only a heavy and direct threat to all the peoples who are in a minority there but, if achieved, it will set off a wave of expansion threatening all the peoples of Yugoslavia."⁴⁴

Notably, all of the preceding events took place prior to the ascendance in Serbia or Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosevic, who often has been blamed erroneously for spurring the rise of Serbian nationalism and Albanian secessionism. As Johnstone corrects the record: "The ethnic Albanian demand for secession is not at all, as commonly portrayed, a reaction to repression by Slobodan Milosevic. It was there first." Likewise, Serbian historian Dusan Batakovic clarifies that, "The secessionist movement of the Albanians . . . led to the homogenization of Serbs in Yugoslavia, directly producing the ascendance of Milosevic. This in turn had a domino effect in the rest of the former Yugoslavia, leading to further homogenization of other nations." Stojanovic also argues that it was this structural factor – repression of the stronger Serbs by the weaker Albanians – rather than any particular Serbian politician or ideologue that gave rise to the backlash against the Albanians. "It was only a question of time before the Serbs' power *de facto* predominated, and also essentially changed the situation *de jure*." By discriminating against Serbs rather than appeasing their legitimate demands, Kosovo's Albanians "enabled Slobodan Milosevic's breakthrough to leadership."⁴⁵

Repression and Revocation of Autonomy in Kosovo: 1989-92

It is relatively simple to understand why Serbia revoked Kosovo's autonomy, but more complicated to explain why Belgrade cracked down so hard on the province's Albanians. Serbia's leaders had at least three strong reasons to revoke Kosovo's autonomy. First, a growing tide of Serbian nationalism demanded the measure in order to protect the province's Serbs. In addition to the memo from the Serbian academy and the sensational media reports about anti-

⁴⁴ Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 152-53. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 338-40. Diana Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem and the International Community," *Dialogue*, No. 25 (Spring 1998), <http://www.bglink.com/business/dialogue/diana.html> [downloaded 1999] Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem." Batakovic, "The Serbian-Albanian Conflict," p. 12. Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp. 110-13.

Serb violence, from 1985 through 1989 a grassroots group called the Movement of Kosovo Serbs, or the Committee of Serbs and Montenegrins, lobbied Belgrade for the revocation of autonomy.⁴⁶ By autumn 1985, it had collected 2,016 signatures in Kosovo on a petition demanding change in the province. The number of signatures increased to 50,000 in 1986, and 60,000 by the time the petition was presented to Belgrade in 1987.⁴⁷ When Milosevic visited Kosovo in April 1987, members of the group threw stones at the local Albanian police, successfully provoking a violent response, which prompted Milosevic to pledge famously to the assembled Serbs: “no one should dare to beat you.” This ostensible *ad lib* brought Milosevic great acclaim throughout Serbia, reinforcing his belief in the political potency of the nationalist card.⁴⁸

The second incentive for revoking the autonomy of Kosovo (and Serbia’s other autonomous province, Vojvodina, as well) was to enable centralized economic reform in the republic at a time when Yugoslavia was suffering grave economic troubles. This factor, which had nothing to do with Serbian nationalism, was one reason that the other republics of Yugoslavia acquiesced to Serbia’s revocation of its provinces’ autonomy.⁴⁹ The third incentive for Milosevic to revoke the autonomy of both provinces is that it gave him control of their votes in Yugoslavia’s collective presidency, where each of the six republics and two provinces had one vote. By gaining effective control of four of the eight votes – those of Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina, and Kosovo – Milosevic was able to deadlock the presidency or, with the support of just one of the other four republics, to push through his proposals.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Maliqi, “The Albanian Movement in Kosova.”

⁴⁷ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 35. Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” pp. 152-3.

⁴⁸ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 37-39. In fact, Milosevic had visited the province four days earlier, so the entire event may have been staged and scripted.

⁴⁹ Johnstone, “Notes on the Kosovo Problem,” cites this factor. In addition, Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995), argues that the main cause of Yugoslavia’s disintegration was economic troubles that were exacerbated by the coercive policies of international financial institutions. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 47, 70, claims that Croatia acquiesced to Serbia’s internal changes as part of a political deal that made the Croatian Ante Markovic prime minister of Yugoslavia. However, they also quote Stipe Suvar, Croatia’s representative on the Yugoslav presidency in 1987, explaining why Croatia supported Milosevic at that time: “You must remember he [Milosevic] was clearly not a nationalist – everything he did was in the name of Yugoslavia – and his argument that the Albanians were secessionists was basically right.”

⁵⁰ Milosevic gained control of Montenegro’s vote in early 1989. See Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 61

However, none of these factors explains why Serbia instituted such harsh repression on the Albanians of Kosovo, especially considering that there was no equivalent repression in Vojvodina. Imposed gradually from 1988-92, Serbia's repression in Kosovo ultimately included the following: dismissing 90 percent of the Albanians who held jobs in state enterprises; re-establishing the notorious special police force (that had been dismantled in 1966) to conduct daily harassment of Albanians; outlawing the Albanian language in state offices and schools; imposing a new Serbian school curriculum; imposing controls on the media; restricting sale of property from Serbs to Albanians; and providing incentives for Serbs to return to the province while trying to reduce growth of the Albanian population.⁵¹ A number of factors may account in part for this severity, including the following: the historic tradition of ethnic retribution in Kosovo; anti-Albanian racism that was prevalent in Serbia; the desire of Serbian nationalists to restore the traditional ethnic demographic balance of the province; Milosevic's desire to outbid nationalist political competitors in Serbia; Milosevic's desire to reward political supporters in Kosovo with patronage jobs; Milosevic's desire to curry favor with the leadership of the Yugoslav army who opposed Kosovo's secession; and Milosevic's desire to make an example of Kosovo to deter secessionists in Slovenia and Croatia.⁵²

However, close examination of the case reveals that Serbian repression also was greatly exacerbated by the repeated refusal of Kosovo's Albanians to accept the reimposition of Belgrade's authority. Thus, a spiral of escalation accounts for the ultimate extent of most categories of repression, including the loss of autonomy, firing of state employees, restrictions on education, and control of the media. Milosevic's original goal in Kosovo (as in Vojvodina) appears to have been merely to reassert Serbian central authority over the province. Accordingly, the initial measures were relatively mild: reintroducing the use of the Serbian language and curriculum in state offices and schools, arresting extremist Albanian nationalists who were using violence and intimidation to pursue secession, and taking control of the province's vote in the federal presidency. However, Albanian resistance to these initial measures compelled Belgrade to exacerbate its crackdown across the board. In several instances, Belgrade offered concessions to the Albanians if they would acquiesce to Serbian authority, but the

⁵¹ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 71-72.

⁵² Predrag Simic, interview with author, Belgrade, July 28, 2000. Dragor Hiber, interview with author, Belgrade, July 30, 2000.

Albanians refused to sacrifice their principle of self-determination, and as a result paid a heavy penalty. As Clark writes, “Every public act asserting the right to self-determination, every challenge to the legitimacy of Serbian rule, brought repression.”⁵³

The spiral dynamic is evident, for example, in the gradual evisceration of autonomy. The first step occurred in the summer of 1988, when Milosevic spearheaded a law declaring Serbian the official language of Kosovo and barring use of the Albanian language for official business.⁵⁴ Soon after, in October 1988, Milosevic gained control of Vojvodina (in an orchestrated populist protest known as the Yogurt Revolution) and aimed to do likewise in Kosovo by dismissing its leader Azem Vllasi whom Belgrade had installed in 1981. Unlike the populace of Vojvodina, however, the Albanians of Kosovo refused to acquiesce to Belgrade’s seizure of power. From November 1988 to March 1989, led by mineworkers from the province’s north, the Albanians staged a series of marches, work stoppages, and massive protests (at least 300,000 attended one such event) to try to save their autonomy. Undeterred, Serbian authorities proceeded not only to dismiss Vllasi, but subsequently to arrest him and some of the mine workers for their protests.⁵⁵ Then, on March 23, 1989, Belgrade compelled the Albanian-led Kosovo parliament to revoke its own autonomy by a vote of 168-10. The Albanian populace responded initially with six days of confrontational protests, but this only provoked a violent crackdown by Serbian authorities that left at least two-dozen Albanians dead.⁵⁶

Within weeks, in April 1989, Belgrade made significant concessions to the Albanians in an attempt to halt the escalatory spiral, by lifting the state of emergency, releasing Vllasi and his co-defendants from prison, and freeing Kosovo’s most famous Albanian political prisoner, Adem

⁵³ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 73. Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” pp. 154-162, illustrates the escalatory spiral. Serbia also reportedly closed down 90 percent of private shops in Prishtina, in August 1993, in an attempt to punish the Albanians for defying Belgrade’s authority.

⁵⁴ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 23.

⁵⁵ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 47-48. Maliqi, “The Albanian Movement in Kosova,” p. 141. In November 1988, 3,000 Albanian miners marched to Prishtina to protest Vllasi’s impending dismissal, and 300-400,000 Albanians marched in sympathy throughout the province, but they could not prevent Milosevic from installing a puppet government on November 17, 1988.

⁵⁶ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 47-52. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 344. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring* (Sarajevo: International Crisis Group, March 1998), <http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=178>, [downloaded April 1998]. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 25. There were two abstentions in the vote to rescind autonomy. Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000, reports that pro-autonomy Albanian leaders made a furious effort to lobby the legislators to vote the other way, but the legislators reported that they and their children had been threatened with harm by the Serbian security services if they did not vote to rescind autonomy.

Demaci. At just this time, however, Albanians began attacking Serbs in several areas of Kosovo, based on the allegation that the Serbs poisoning Albanian schoolchildren – a bizarre charge that never has been substantiated. Belgrade responded by transferring 25,000 more Serbian policemen to the province. Then, in July 1989, Serbia restricted the sale of property in Kosovo from Serbs to Albanians to stem the rapid out-migration of the province's Serb population. In early 1990, as Serbia considered legislation to give itself veto control over Kosovo's laws, the Albanians launched a series of street protests that provoked another crackdown and left another 32 dead. Serbia proceeded to pass the veto legislation in March 1990, and then purged Albanian police officers the following month.⁵⁷

Because the Serbian crackdown had again demonstrated to the Albanians the fruitlessness of aggressive protests, they now switched to a policy of passive resistance, spearheaded by their newly formed political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). Once the Albanians halted their agitation, the Serbs eschewed further violent crackdowns. However, the spiral of escalation continued in the administrative arena. First, the LDK initiated a policy of refusing to acquiesce to the Serbian seizure of state institutions; accordingly, in May 1990, all Albanians resigned from the provincial government. The LDK also mobilized the Albanian legislators of the Kosovo assembly – whose membership had changed considerably since it voted to rescind the province's autonomy a year earlier – persuading them to reverse course and defy Serbian control. Belgrade caught wind of this planned defiance and retaliated on June 26, 1990, by announcing a temporary shut-down of the parliament. The LDK proceeded anyway, on July 2, 1990, defiantly organizing 114 of the 123 Albanian legislators to meet outside the locked assembly to pass a resolution declaring the secession of Kosovo from Serbia (although not from Yugoslavia). Belgrade retaliated on July 5, 1990, by making permanent the suspension of Kosovo's assembly and closing Prishtina's radio and television station.⁵⁸

The spiral of escalation over autonomy continued for two more years. On September 7, 1990, 111 of the Albanian legislators met in Kacanik to approve a new constitution for the

⁵⁷ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 345. Seska Stanojlovic, ed., *Kosovo: Law and Politics, Kosovo in Normative Acts Before and After 1974* (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 1998), p. 98. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 56. For a comprehensive discussion of the school-poisoning incident, see Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War*, pp. 175-213.

⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 346. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 27. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 73. Stanojlovic, *Kosovo: Law and Politics*. Maliqi, "The Albanian Movement in Kosovo," p. 147, confirms that Milosevic pursued the full revocation of Kosovo's autonomy, including closing its assembly, only after he failed to control the assembly.

“Republic of Kosova,” an event filmed and broadcast by neighboring Albania’s television station.⁵⁹ Serbia’s parliament responded on September 29, 1990, by adopting a new constitution that formally abolished the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. A year later, on September 22, 1991, the Albanians’ shadow assembly met again to authorize the holding of an independence referendum, which was approved the following week by 99 percent of Albanians who voted (with a reported turn-out of 87 percent). Following up, on October 19, 1991, the shadow parliament proclaimed the sovereignty and independence of the province. By so doing, Kosovo effectively seceded from Yugoslavia – as Slovenia and Croatia had done three months earlier and Bosnia would do six months later – but with the crucial difference that the Albanians did not arm themselves to make that secession a reality. Another difference was that the Albanians did not receive international support or recognition for their declaration of independence.⁶⁰

In May 1992, the Albanians continued their defiance of Serbian authority by holding elections in Kosovo for a new assembly and president, ignoring the fact that the province already had a government that had been imposed by Belgrade. On May 22, just prior to the elections, Serbian authorities again made a concession by inviting Albanian leaders to Belgrade to arrange a compromise. However, the Albanians refused even to come hear the Serbian offer, on grounds that international mediators were not invited to attend. Instead, the Albanians went ahead with their vote on May 24, electing the LDK’s Ibrahim Rugova as president, and an assembly also dominated by the LDK. Belgrade reiterated its offer of negotiations on June 10, and even made the major concession of effectively recognizing the legitimacy of the recent shadow elections by inviting the newly elected legislators. However, the Albanians again refused to negotiate. This time, Serbian authorities retaliated by preventing the newly elected shadow parliament from convening as scheduled, on June 24, 1992, or anytime thereafter. Serbia made one last effort to compromise on autonomy, in August 1992, when the moderate prime minister of Yugoslavia, Milan Panic, offered to return Kosovo to its pre-1989 autonomy status. However, Rugova refused, insisting now that only independence would be acceptable. Soon afterwards, Milosevic

⁵⁹ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 28. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 347. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 73.

⁶⁰ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fns. 28-29. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 73. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Ibrahim Berisha, et al., eds., *Albanian Democratic Movement in Former Yugoslavia* (Prishtina: Kosova Information Center, 1993), p. 17. Maliqi, “The Albanian Movement in Kosova,” p. 147. Stanojlovic, *Kosovo: Law and Politics*.

managed to remove Panic, and the offer never was renewed.⁶¹ At that point the spiral over autonomy essentially froze for the next six years. The Albanians claimed they were independent and refused to cooperate with Serb authorities, while Serbia ignored the Albanian actions and continued to rule the province from Belgrade.

A similar spiral of escalation in the realm of labor led Serbia eventually to dismiss the vast majority of Albanian workers in state enterprises. The process started in mid-1990, when Kosovo's recently formed Albanian federation of unions protested the curtailment of autonomy by holding a series of half-hour daily strikes. Serbia retaliated by enacting legislation authorizing the dismissal of managers of state enterprises and by firing 15,000 workers. The union federation protested the dismissals by holding a one-day general strike on September 3, 1990, but this merely provoked Serbia to fire another 5,000 workers for striking. To reinforce its sovereignty, Serbia then required that state employees sign loyalty oaths recognizing Belgrade's authority, and in most cases dismissed Albanians who refused to sign. As Salla observes, "When Albanian police and judges refused to recognize the authority of Belgrade, all were sacked and replaced by Serbs." Teachers were fired for protesting or for refusing to teach the new Serbian curriculum. Other Albanians reportedly were fired for providing financial assistance to their dismissed colleagues. Still others quit their jobs in solidarity with those who had been fired. Of the 164,000 Albanians employed in 1990, approximately 75,000 (45 percent) lost their jobs by 1991, 115,000 (70 percent) by 1992, and ultimately 146,000 (90 percent).⁶²

The leaders of the LDK at the time concede that the dismissals were provoked by the actions of Albanians, but they blame the union federation. "Rugova was against the strike," says Milazim Krasniqi, one of the party's founders. "We asked [Albanian union officials] not to hold this general strike and to delay it, because the counter-reaction of Serbs would be very savage. The effects of that strike are the fault of that union." He also implies that the party quietly encouraged Albanians to sign the oaths. "We couldn't come out publicly with this view. We never said directly [to sign the oaths], but we said to try to keep your jobs.' By contrast, the union urged workers not to sign, which cost them their jobs. Mehmet Kraja is similarly critical

⁶¹ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 84, 93. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 29, 73, 96, 125. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*.

⁶² Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 74-75, 81-82, reports there was another one-day general strike on July 1, 1991. Stanojlovic, *Kosovo: Law and Politics*. Michael Salla, "Kosovo, Non-violence and the Break-up of Yugoslavia," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1995), p. 430. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 349. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 28.

of the union leaders, saying: “This was a dumb Albanian strategy.” However, Xhemajl Mustafa confesses that the LDK, after initially opposing the calling of the strike, subsequently supported it in public. This rhetorical shift apparently was dictated by the fact that the LDK viewed the union federation as a political competitor, which required that the party show solidarity with the dismissed workers. Nevertheless, Mustafa says the party still urged remaining Albanian workers not to express such solidarity by quitting their own jobs, but many did so anyway. As Krasniqi says, “We recommended constantly to workers not to leave their jobs, but the union had another view.” Stojanovic reports that when Albanians quit their jobs, it was “welcomed by the Serbian authorities,” because it ended the prospect of strikes and enabled the hiring of Serbs in the province. However, there is no evidence Belgrade would have dismissed nearly so many Albanian workers if not for their persistent defiance of Serbian authority.⁶³

The same sort of escalatory spiral explains the gradual exclusion of Albanians from state education in Kosovo. Belgrade initially sought to address the province’s Albanian school curriculum that it viewed as a primary cause of secessionism. Accordingly, Serbia’s first education reform in September 1989 was to segregate Kosovo’s schools between Albanians and Serbs – either in different buildings or separate shifts during the day – to ensure that Belgrade controlled the education of Serbs in the province. In August 1990, Serbia went a large step further, imposing a uniform curriculum throughout all of Serbia. Even in Kosovo, it was to be taught mainly in Serbo-Croatian and to include the teaching of Serbian history and culture, rather than Albanian history and culture. Albanian teachers, however, ignored the new Serbian law and continued to teach the old curriculum in Albanian.⁶⁴

Serbia retaliated to this defiance by instituting a series of measures that at their peak nearly halted all state education for the Albanians. In early 1991, Belgrade stopped paying Albanian teachers, and in May 1991 it abolished half of Kosovo’s secondary schools. In addition, half of the remaining slots in secondary education were reserved for the province’s small Serb minority, which left space for only 28 percent of Albanian students who finished

⁶³ Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000. Mehmet Kraja, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Stojanovic, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp. 113-14. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 74-75, makes the interesting observation that Serbia was unable to find replacements for the Albanian workers in the mines and other enterprises. Thus, Serbian officials proved more willing to give up production than to concede to the Albanians.

⁶⁴ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 96-102. Stanojlovic, *Kosovo: Law and Politics*. Poulton and Vickers, “The Kosovo Albanians,” pp. 162-63.

primary school. However, Belgrade's most draconian step came in September 1991, when armed Serbian police blocked the opening of many schools and purged Albanian professors from Prishtina University, thereby effectively excluding most Albanians from the education system. Finally, in March 1992, Serbia mandated that all secondary education be conducted in Serbo-Croatian.⁶⁵

Serbia's first concession on education came at the start of the next school year, in September 1992, when Kosovo's primary schools were re-opened to Albanian students, on grounds that the Serbian constitution mandated universal primary education. The schools nevertheless remained segregated, and Belgrade continued to withhold pay from the Albanian teachers on grounds that they refused to teach the Serbian curriculum. Another more significant concession was made at the same time by the Yugoslav government of Milan Panic, who offered to reopen all of Kosovo's schools and to permit the teaching of a compromise curriculum that the province's Albanian teachers already had agreed to in 1990. However, the Albanians rejected the offer on grounds that it required them to acknowledge that Kosovo was part of Serbia and that the Albanians were a minority within Serbia. Apparently, they had decided to reject any compromise, even at the near-term cost of sacrificing infrastructure for their children's education, in order to continue making the case for full independence. According to the journalist and opposition Albanian politician, Shkelzen Maliqi, LDK leaders "rejected the offer. They would not compromise unless the international community told them to." Yugoslavia's president, Dobrica Cosic, characterized the situation accurately, albeit selectively and provocatively, when he testified before the European Parliament in March 1993: "The whole world, all the human rights champions are saying that the Albanians have been banned from the schools. That is a pure lie! They are the ones who refuse to attend the schools governed by the program of the Serbian state, which nevertheless guarantees them courses in Albanian history and culture and the use of their language."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 96-102. Stanojlovic, *Kosovo: Law and Politics*. Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 162-63, reports that, "Thousands of Albanian professors and teachers who refused to teach the new curriculum or who lectured in Albanian were sacked and replaced by Serbs, or had their schools closed." The new curriculum introduced in September 1990 required that most primary school courses, except Albanian language instruction, be taught in Serbo-Croatian. In secondary schools, some courses were permitted to be taught in Albanian until the reform of March 1992.

⁶⁶ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 96-102, also notes that from November 1993, there was a standing offer by Serbia to accept the Albanians back into the Serbian schools, recognize their credits from the parallel schools, and provide Albanian language instruction in music arts, history, and geography, if the Albanians otherwise would

Finally, the same pattern of spiraling escalation is evident in the contest over media control. Belgrade originally closed Kosovo's state television and print media in July-August 1990 for reporting that the shadow Albanian assembly had voted to declare Kosovo independent from Serbia. Belgrade subsequently offered several compromises on media control, but the Albanians rejected them. Interestingly, a June 1993 analysis by the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) concluded that the Albanians, not the Serbs, were seeking more extreme goals and demonstrating less willingness to compromise:

In drawn-out education talks and more recently in the negotiations to retain an independent press, they [the Albanian leaders] have been less flexible than their Serbian counterparts. The latter have offered significant concessions but asked in return for some form of acknowledgment of Serbian law and order. The former rejected all conditions that in the narrow and at times inconsistent perception of their people could be interpreted as acceptance of Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo.⁶⁷

There is no denying the harshness of the Serbian repression instituted from 1989-92. However, there is also no denying that the Albanians intensified their own suffering by refusing to make the concession of acknowledging Belgrade's nominal authority over the province.

The Mixed Record of Passive Resistance

Parallel Institutions and Albanian Revival

Not widely understood in the west at the time is that the condition of Kosovo's Albanians improved markedly from 1993-97. After declaring Kosovo independent from Serbia, the Albanians established parallel state institutions that enabled them both to regain *de facto* autonomy and to improve the welfare of their people. In addition to a parallel government, the Albanians established their own free-market economy, as well as autonomous institutions for taxes, education, healthcare, and the media. Although the Albanians continued to suffer from persistent Serbian police harassment, they succeeded at regaining control of their lives and laying the groundwork for an eventual return of formal autonomy, if not outright independence.

accept the Serbian curriculum. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*. Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem."

⁶⁷ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 99. The CSCE report, dated June 29, 1993, also states: "Serbian authorities face a dilemma. If they eliminate police repression, the separatist opposition will quickly get out of hand . . . [but] if they continue human rights violations, their claim along with their capacity to govern the province will continue to erode."

The parallel government initially was formed from a coalition of Albanian political parties dominated by the LDK in October 1991, with a cabinet of six ministers. All but the minister of health lived abroad, to avoid Serbian interference with their fundraising and lobbying activities.⁶⁸ In May 1992, the Albanians elected a new assembly that also was dominated by the LDK, although other parties were represented. Because Serbia blocked the shadow assembly from meeting as a whole, the Albanians formed 13 smaller assembly commissions, ostensibly intended to manage the entire range of government affairs. However, only four of the commissions actually functioned, and during the next six years the LDK made no further effort to activate these government institutions. Instead, the LDK party itself effectively served as the *de facto* government of the Albanians in Kosovo. The party's pyramidal structure extended throughout the province, included 46 branches in major municipalities, 498 sub-branches in big villages, and 1,500 "actives" in small villages, each of which had a "presidency" comprising 5 to 15 members, who each were responsible for a substantive area such as education or health. Opposition Albanian parties and some internal party critics claim the LDK rejected any effort to activate the government institutions because it did not want to surrender its monopoly of political control to other Albanians. Rugova retorts that he was striving to avoid provoking any further retaliatory Serbian repression. Accordingly, rather than activate the institutions, the LDK focused on administering the educational system and other parallel institutions in Kosovo, while attempting to build international support for its cause. Indeed, Rugova's main activity from 1992-97 consisted of welcoming foreign dignitaries to Kosovo or traveling abroad to meet with them, which succeeded at building international sympathy and support for the Albanians, but failed to win international endorsement of their single-minded goal of independence.⁶⁹

The most prominent of the parallel institutions was the education system. Starting in January 1992, the Albanians established their own classrooms either in private houses or in school buildings made available by Serbia, staffed by Albanian teachers who had quit their jobs or been fired, and funded by taxes assessed mainly within Kosovo, but also from the diaspora. They established 441 parallel primary schools, most of which (400) were in school buildings

⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. The Prime Minister was Bujar Bukoshi, and the other ministers as follows: Information: Xhafer Shatri; Education: Muhamed Bicaj; Finance: Isa Mustafa; Justice: Halid Muharremi; Health: Adim Limani.

⁶⁹ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 83-84. Xhemajl Mustafa, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000.

provided by Serbia in accordance with its constitutional mandate for primary education. They also established 66 secondary schools, most of which (60) were in makeshift classrooms because the Serbian constitution did not require the provision of secondary education. For university education, they utilized 250 private buildings for an annual enrollment of 14,000 students. Most of the funding was raised from local businesses that sprang up after the demise of communism and autonomy, and that usually focused on trading rather than production. Individual families in Kosovo also were assessed token contributions. (In addition, Albanians in Kosovo's diaspora were asked to contribute three percent of their income, which was collected by the shadow government abroad, but these funds generally went to projects other than education.) About 90 percent of locally raised funds went to education. As a result, from 1992-98, the Albanians managed to pay 18,000 teachers a cumulative total of more than 90 million German marks to educate an annual load of about 330,000 pupils. This calculates to a salary of between \$500 and \$1000 annually per teacher. As Clark points out, these wages actually compare favorably to those in Serbia's state schools at the time, due to Yugoslavia's fiscal crisis.⁷⁰

In many other respects as well, the welfare of Kosovo's Albanians revived during these years, sometimes exceeding that which they had enjoyed prior to the revocation of autonomy, and even that enjoyed by Serbs in the province. For example, the Albanians established a parallel healthcare system that provided three types of service: (1) fee-for-service care, in non-profit clinics, for Albanians who could afford it; (2) free care for children in schools, funded by the LDK, (3) free care for adults in clinics sponsored by the charitable Mother Theresa Association (which had no actual institutional connection to the famous nun), and supported by Medecins Sans Frontieres and Catholic Relief Services. As Clark notes, "With this international support, Mother Theresa Association clinics tended to be better stocked with medicines than their Serbian counterparts, and a growing number of Serbs began to come for treatment – a recognition that Albanian self-activity could be more effective than the regime in caring for people of all ethnic groups." The International Crisis Group reports that by the late 1990s, some Albanians also were returning to Serbian doctors when necessary and affordable. The

⁷⁰ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 96-103. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*, claims that one-third of the school funding came from abroad, but LDK officials deny this. LDK officials, interviews with author, Prishtina, August, 2000.

combination of these facts suggests that by 1997 at least some of Kosovo's Albanians (and Serbs) had access to the best of two medical systems.⁷¹

In terms of the economy, Clark similarly notes that, "During sanctions against [Yugoslavia] . . . Kosovo was much better supplied than Serbia." He also observes that the "Albanian-controlled private business sector was apparently thriving," judging from an increase in the number of registered small firms from 1,700 to 18,500 during 1987-95. "In trade, as in the payment of teachers and provision of medicines, the oppressed Kosovo Albanians seemed again to be outperforming Serbs." As early as 1994, Feim Rexhepi likewise observed that the layoffs from state enterprises, although initially traumatic, had turned out not to be devastating. "The Albanians discovered they were not as dependent on state salaries for their livelihood as they feared. . . . Even before the repressive policies adopted nearly four years ago, only about one out of every 12 Albanians had been employed in the public sector. . . . The majority of Albanians make a living from petty trade based on smuggling and selling goods of all sorts." In 1996, Duijzings likewise cited "the economic predominance of the Albanians, who have turned a desperate situation into their own advantage by developing a thriving private sector." Moreover, Maliqi reports that after 1995, because of manpower shortages, the Serbs were trying to "woo back Albanian engineers and managers" for state-owned enterprises, especially those related to defense, such as metals and mining.⁷²

Under the parallel institutions, Kosovo also enjoyed a more vibrant media than prior to the revocation of autonomy. For example, although Serbia usurped state-run newspapers, new independent ones sprang up in Kosovo and its diaspora that were much more critical of the Serbian regime than the state media ever had been. These new journals included *Koha* and *Zeri* – which gave voice to two of Kosovo's leading young intellectuals, Veton Surroi and Blerim Shala, respectively – as well as *Bujku* and the news bulletin of the LDK. In addition, Prishtina Radio broadcast in Albanian for sixteen hours daily. Moreover, neighboring Albania's television

⁷¹ Salla, "Kosovo, Non-violence and the Break-up of Yugoslavia," pp. 429-30. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 107-108. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*.

⁷² Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 113-14. Ger Duijzings, "Introduction," in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), p. xxi. Feim Rexhepi, "Economic Warfare on Albanians," *War Report*, February 1994, p. 11. Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," pp. 166-67. Dusan Batakovic, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000, also says the Albanian economy was more efficient.

network set aside two hours every evening to broadcast a news program about Kosovo, which was half funded by the LDK and was viewed in the province.⁷³

During this period, Kosovo's Albanians also continued to enjoy benefits from Serbia without bearing the same responsibilities as the republic's other residents. For example, as of 1989, Kosovo's Albanians almost completely ceased serving in the Yugoslav army or submitting for conscription. Yet, as the International Crisis Group reported in 1998, "Draft dodgers are not punished."⁷⁴ Similarly, throughout this period, most Albanians refused to pay taxes to Serbia.⁷⁵ Yet, most of them also continued to benefit from the subsidized utilities provided by Serbia, including electricity. As Feim Rexhepi wrote in 1994, "Life in Kosovo would be far more difficult still if the government did not subsidize electricity and communal services at a basic level."⁷⁶

Notwithstanding this revival of the Albanians' welfare and autonomy, they also continued to suffer from some forms of oppression. For example, Serbian police routinely harassed students and extorted money from small businesses (in what was essentially a harsh and arbitrary form of informal taxation). Also, many of Kosovo's Serb civilians had obtained arms and thereby posed another persistent threat of violence, especially if the Albanians rebelled. Albanian draft dodgers were denied inheritance rights. In addition, because of the fear that draft-dodgers eventually would be prosecuted, as well as for economic reasons, young male Albanians emigrated in droves, pushing total émigré estimates during these years to 350,000, or about one-fifth of the province's Albanians. Meanwhile, by 1996, some 19,000 new Serbian settlers had arrived in Kosovo, an influx that was numerically insignificant, but highly provocative to Albanian nationalists. Despite these persistent problems, however, life for Albanians was improving. As Maliqi says, "Things were better in 1996 than 1992."⁷⁷

⁷³ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," p. 164. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 109-111, notes that the television program had a habit of "magnifying any sign of international support" for Kosovo. "Their perpetuation of wishful thinking about what Kosovo might expect from foreign powers ultimately did a disservice to their cause."

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. says, "We made a decision to tell Albanian officers in the army to leave, and we stopped supplying conscripts."

⁷⁵ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 30.

⁷⁶ Feim Rexhepi, "Economic Warfare on Albanians."

⁷⁷ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 113. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Duijzings, "Introduction," p. xxii. Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," p. 160. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 353. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000.

This dichotomy led Kostovic to observe in 1998: "The Albanian parallel system has thus played a contradictory role. Never have the Kosovo Albanians felt more oppressed by the Serbs but at the same time enjoyed more freedom to run their own affairs. Albanian national leader Ibrahim Rugova described the Albanian system as 'internal liberation.'" Indeed, in light of the Albanians' success in re-establishing *de facto* autonomy, and their high population growth rate, by 1996 even nationalist intellectuals in Belgrade began to favor some form of formal autonomy or partition for Kosovo. In 1992 and 1993, Dobrica Cosic, while president of Yugoslavia, publicly advocated partition of the province and privately negotiated with Albanians in Kosovo to redraw borders such that most of Kosovo would leave Serbia but stay in Yugoslavia. Likewise, in August 1996, Aleksandar Despic, the head of the Serbian Academy of Sciences – which a decade earlier had drafted the infamous nationalist memo advocating retention of Serb lands – now called for a "peaceful civilized separation and demarcation" of Kosovo.⁷⁸ Meanwhile Milosevic, and leading officials from Serbia's other political parties both in and out of his ruling coalition, had come around to supporting, at least rhetorically, the restoration of some type of formal autonomy for the province.⁷⁹

However, Kosovo's Albanian leaders rejected any discussion of partition or restoring autonomy, because they insisted that all of Kosovo must become fully independent of both Serbia and Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the fact that Belgrade was compelled to explore such alternatives is undeniable testament to the effectiveness of the Albanians' strategy. By eschewing violence and building parallel institutions they succeeded in restoring high levels of Albanian autonomy in Kosovo, while avoiding the bloodbaths that had consumed Croatia and Bosnia.

⁷⁸ Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem." Denisa Kostovic, "The Trap of the Parallel Society," *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (May 1998), pp. 20-21. Heraclides, "The Kosovo Conflict," p. 322. Duijzings, "Introduction," p. xxi, notes that Despic warned that because of differential fertility rates, in 20 to 30 years, Albanians would outnumber Serbs in all of Serbia. Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 307, reports: "While he was president of Yugoslavia in 1992 and 1993, Dobrica Cosic made discreet contact with Kosovo Albanian leaders. He wanted to discuss the territorial division of the province, with the Albanian part, except for a number of Serbian enclaves, leaving Serbia. This was rejected by Albanian leaders." Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 55, notes that even the infamous 1986 Serbian academy memo had included a potential partition map for Kosovo.

⁷⁹ Dusan Janjic, "Towards Dialogue or Division," *War Report*, No. 41, May 1996. Heraclides, "The Kosovo Conflict."

Five Grand Strategies of Albanian Factions

Although the LDK dominated Kosovo's politics for the first eight years after Serbia revoked autonomy in 1989, the province's Albanians actually developed five competing grand strategies to restore self-determination. Most prominent were, initially, the LDK's strategy of passive resistance to achieve independence, and subsequently the KLA's policy of armed rebellion to achieve independence. However, three other strategies also competed, ultimately unsuccessfully, for the support of Kosovo's Albanians: compromise with Serbia to restore autonomy; more confrontational yet still unarmed resistance to achieve independence, and preparation for a future mass armed uprising to achieve independence. The LDK, from the time of its creation, monopolized the province's political space because it came to symbolize the solidarity of Kosovo's Albanians in resistance to Serbia. Accordingly, several of the other Albanian factions infiltrated the LDK and tried to take it over from within. For example, from 1994-98, the vice-president of the LDK advocated a more confrontational approach toward Serbia and eventually tried to oust Rugova as party leader. Similarly, as early as 1993, some senior officials of the LDK were also secretly members of the KLA. In order to understand the actions of Kosovo's Albanians throughout the decade of Serbian domination, it is necessary to explore in somewhat greater depth these five competing strategies, as well as how the factions competed inside and outside the LDK for the support of the province's Albanians. The strategies are discussed below in order from least to most confrontational.

Compromise for Autonomy

Those Albanians favoring compromise formed several political parties, most notably the Social Democratic Party of Kosova (SDP), headed by Shkelzen Maliqi from 1990-92, and the Parliamentary Party of Kosova (PPK), headed by Veton Surroi from 1991-93. They believed that independence was unattainable in the short run and that by insisting on independence the LDK was only perpetuating the suffering of the province's Albanians. Instead, they favored the restoration of autonomy and the building of functioning democratic institutions in Kosovo in the short-run, while deferring independence to a long-term goal. However, the LDK and other Albanian parties harshly criticized the autonomists as virtual collaborators with Belgrade for

their willingness to accept something less than independence, and the autonomists were resoundingly defeated in the shadow elections of 1992.⁸⁰

The following year, Maliqi advocated that the Albanians abandon the LDK's boycott of Serbian elections, in order to elect delegates that could go to Belgrade to advocate for the province's self-determination. However, he again was pilloried by Albanian critics for even suggesting that the Albanians acknowledge Serbian sovereignty by voting in elections. As Clark notes, "Simply proposing this tactic had put him beyond the pale." Likewise, Poulton and Vickers report that the autonomists were "seen as traitors by their compatriots [and] were numerically insignificant." Surroi says the criticism was so harsh because the province's "political culture was immature, so that anything unorthodox was subversive and less Albanian." Having marginalized themselves completely, both Surroi and Maliqi abandoned politics for journalism, although they continued to advocate compromise with Belgrade and to participate in several meetings with Serbia's opposition in search of such solutions. Ultimately, in 1998-99, the United States included Surroi in Kosovo's Albanian negotiating delegations, because he was perceived as more reasonable and sophisticated than either the LDK or KLA.⁸¹

Passive Resistance

The LDK's strategy of passive resistance was intended to achieve the independence of Kosovo as an ethnic Albanian state by utilizing three main tactics: (1) avoiding provoking violent Serbian retaliation; (2) establishing parallel Albanian institutions; and (3) attracting international support. As noted by Clark and Malcolm, this was a political strategy of "as if." The LDK believed that if the Albanians continued to act "as if" they were independent, eventually it would become true. This was not merely wishful thinking, because demographics were on the Albanians' side. So long as they could avoid provoking killing or ethnic cleansing, the Albanians' higher fertility rate and the continued emigration of Serbs meant that the Serb fraction of Kosovo's population would continue to decline rapidly from its already low 1991

⁸⁰ Shkelzen Maliqi, *Kosova: Separate Worlds* (Prishtina, Dukagjini PH, 1998), pp. 33-34. Shkelzen Maliqi, "The Albanian Movement in Kosova," p. 148. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Veton Surroi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Kosovo's most famous former political prisoner, Adem Demaci – considered by some to be the Albanian Nelson Mandela – later proposed a related compromise in which Kosovo would become a republic but remain within Yugoslavia. He then assumed the presidency of the PPK in 1997. However, he too has been marginalized in Kosovo's politics.

⁸¹ Poulton and Vickers, "The Kosovo Albanians," p. 155. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 88. Veton Surroi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

level of 10 percent. At some point, Rugova believed, the Serbs would become such a small proportion of Kosovo, and the Albanians such a large proportion of Serbia, that the international community would support Kosovo's independence and Belgrade would acquiesce to it. In the meantime, therefore, the three tactics were intended to: (1) keep the Albanian population alive and within the territory of Kosovo; (2) preserve the "Albanian" nature of the populace by rejecting the Serbian school curriculum regardless of the cost and inconvenience entailed; and (3) attract international support for independence by highlighting Serbian oppression and refusing to accept any compromise solution.⁸²

As part of its strategy, the LDK also urged Albanians not to participate in Serbian and Yugoslav elections. The party took this stance for at least four reasons. First, the party was skeptical whether Milosevic could be deposed even if the Albanians voted, fearing that their participation would simply prompt Serbian voters to rally around Milosevic in a show of nationalistic solidarity. Second, the LDK rightly was skeptical about whether any of the Serbian opposition parties were more moderate than Milosevic. Third, the LDK was not looking to compromise, by negotiating restoration of autonomy, but to achieve total victory by gaining independence. The party believed that no government in Belgrade was likely to agree to this voluntarily, so it decided there was no point in trying to elect a more moderate leadership there. Fourth, the LDK believed that participating in the elections would signal tacit acceptance of Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo and thereby undercut its appeals to international audiences to support Kosovo's independence. As Milazim Krasniqi says, "If we participated in elections, we would lose international community support for independence and hopes for Kosova."⁸³ The LDK knew that only the international community could force Serbia to give Kosovo independence, so the party did everything possible to strengthen its case in international eyes. Indeed, a cynical fifth reason not to vote was because the LDK perceived that the Albanians benefited from the repeated election of Milosevic, because he was so reviled internationally that it increased their chances of receiving western support for their goals.

⁸² Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 347-48. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 69-71, 116, says the strategy "required Kosovo Albanians to persist in behaving as if the Republic of Kosova existed until others – and they primarily had international centers of power in mind – recognized the emerging reality that Kosovo was indeed not part of Serbia." Tim Judah, "Inside the KLA," *New York Review of Books*, June 10, 1999.

⁸³ Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000. Of course, the international community never expressed support for Kosovo's independence in any case.

All four of the LDK's five co-founders that were interviewed for this study make clear that the party's pacifism was not rooted in any philosophical aversion to violence but rather in the practical expectation that a resort to militancy would be hopelessly counter-productive. For example, Mehmet Kraja says, "We weren't for the military option, not because we were peaceful, but because it was impossible." Likewise, Ibrahim Berisha says the party was "non-violent for two reasons: first, we were unarmed; second, the outside world didn't yet know the Albanian issue," so a resort to violence would have provoked retaliation without bringing international intervention. The party's official for foreign affairs, Edita Tahiri, confirms that pacifism "was not a moral belief, but a practical matter." Even Rugova, who did have a strong moral affinity for pacifism, insists that "pacifism was strategic more than philosophical."⁸⁴

Further evidence that the LDK was not philosophically opposed to violence is that it supported the shadow government's efforts to create a self-defense structure in Kosovo from late-1991 until mid-1993. The official plan involved three main components: (1) organizing the populace in advance through the "LDK Commission for Unexpected Circumstances," to enable quick mobilization in the event of a Serbian attack; (2) sending small numbers of Albanian militants from Kosovo to clandestine training camps in neighboring Albania, where they received four weeks of training in demolition, communications and close-combat; and (3) establishing a general staff of former Albanian members of the Yugoslav army, whose responsibilities included researching international arms markets, while the party stockpiled funds raised in the diaspora to enable quick acquisition of weapons if that proved necessary. Attempts were made to disguise the effort from Serbian authorities by hiding it within the structure of the province's Albanian police union. The secret minister of defense was initially the LDK's vice-president Anton Kohle, and subsequently Hajzer Hajzeraj. The entire project was funded by contributions from the diaspora, which were mobilized by LDK official Ali Aliu and administered by shadow prime minister Bujar Bukoshi. The military training was carried out at two camps in Albania, reportedly belonging to the Albanian army near Kuks and Tropoje adjacent to Kosovo. The militants sent for training included Adem Jashari, as well as members of the nominally pacifist LDK party and more militant LPRK. The training was organized by

⁸⁴ Mehmet Kraja, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Ibrahim Berisha, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Edita Tahiri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

Sali Ceku, Agim Ramaddani, and Zahir Pajaziti, all of whom later joined the KLA and were killed.⁸⁵

In addition, a small group of Albanian officials from various parties actually began to import small quantities of weapons without the official approval of the LDK, which still opposed such imports as overly provocative and likely to endanger international support. The weapons came mainly from Croatia and Slovenia because neighboring Albania was too worried about provoking cross-border retaliation from Milosevic. However, the total number of weapons acquired prior to 1997 appears to have been less than a few hundred – in contrast to the tens of thousands acquired by Bosnia’s Muslims prior to their secession – so these early Albanian activities did not pose a similar threat of a violent challenge to Serbian control.⁸⁶

A small group of Kosovo Albanians also held several secret talks with officials from Croatia from April 1991 through that summer, exploring a Croatian offer of a joint alliance against Serbia, as Croatia was in the process of seceding from Yugoslavia. The liaison was established by two former Albanian members of the Yugoslav army who subsequently became senior officers in Croatia’s army, Agim Ceku and Tom Berisha. Ultimately, however, the Kosovo Albanians rejected the offer because they lacked weapons and feared that the better-armed Croatia might abandon them by cutting a deal with Milosevic, leaving them vulnerable to massive Serbian retaliation. Nevertheless, some of Kosovo’s Albanians did join Croatia’s army where they gained valuable military skills that they later applied by returning to Kosovo to join the KLA after March 1998. Ceku himself returned from Croatia in March 1999 to command the KLA during NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia, when his experience enabled the rebels to coordinate closely with the western military alliance.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Edita Tahiri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Mehmet Kraja, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Ibrahim Berisha, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000. Fazli Balaj, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

⁸⁶ Fazli Balaj, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000, reports, “There were efforts to import weapons in small caches. I can now speak of it.” Interestingly, Balaj was the lawyer that headed the Albanians human rights organization.

⁸⁷ Ibrahim Berisha, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Mehmet Kraja, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Fazli Balaj, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000.

In 1993, Serbia's security forces caught wind of the Albanians' self-defense operation and rolled it up harshly. They arrested the secret defense minister Hajzer Hajzeraj and much of the general staff. Other implicated members of the LDK – including Anton Kohle, Ali Aliu, and Mehmet Kraja – were forced to flee to the LDK's liaison office in neighboring Albania. The LDK was permitted to continue to operate in Kosovo, but the more militant LPK party was banned and became mainly an exile party in Europe, where it gave rise to the KLA. After this harsh crackdown, the LDK and shadow government abandoned any further military efforts until after the KLA provoked a war against Serbia in 1998. As Milazim Krasniqi reports, "Rugova was disappointed with the failure of all this and so didn't allow any more efforts in this direction." Even in 1998, when the shadow government in Europe broke ranks with Rugova to join the KLA's war against Serbia, its military efforts were feeble. Despite seven years of fund-raising, and plans dating back to 1991, it managed to mobilize only one small company of about 100 soldiers and 20 former Yugoslav army officers – the so-called Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (FARK). This force, led by Colonel Tahir Zema, entered Kosovo in July 1998 and fought under the command of the KLA for three months. Apparently, it recruited more than one-thousand Albanians in Kosovo to join its ranks, because in September 1998, the FARK retreated with 1,200 men to Albania, where they sat out the rest of the war, financed by Bukoshi.⁸⁸

Some of Rugova's loyal allies within the LDK tried to push him to adopt a more active form of passive resistance by establishing more shadow state institutions and implementing some of those that were dormant. For example, Milazim Krasniqi, who was the party's vice-president until 1994, says he favored beefing up the shadow government in exile, establishing embassies abroad, increasing propaganda efforts (by establishing a full-fledged national news agency), printing a currency, and convening the shadow assembly, if necessary by taking into exile. However, Rugova rejected all such initiatives as raising too much risk of provoking Serbian retaliation. As Rugova explained in retrospect, "we had to attach more attention to saving the [Albanian] political elite here in Kosova. Otherwise there would have been a major exodus by political elites, in the wake of a clampdown by Belgrade – imprisonments and compelled flight. That would have been an irreparable loss. We would not be here today."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Edita Tahiri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000.

⁸⁹ Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

Of crucial significance, the LDK's strategy, both in its broad outlines and details, was shaped explicitly to attract international support. For example, the Albanians initially did not declare themselves independent of Yugoslavia, but merely of Serbia, because the international community had yet to indicate its support for the secession of Croatia and Slovenia from Yugoslavia. Once Germany and other European powers came out clearly in support of the secession of these two republics in fall 1991, the LDK held a referendum and likewise declared its independence from Yugoslavia. Similarly, Rugova was quoted in 1992 as saying that his party had chosen pacifism because, "We have learned that nonviolence is the modern European preference." In addition, the LDK avoided cultivating links with the Muslim world, which had provided arms to Bosnia's Muslims and likely would have done so for Kosovo's largely Muslim Albanians as well, because the party worried that such a move might undermine its first priority of attracting western support. To build western support, during his trips abroad, Rugova made sure to establish relationships with U.S. congressman from districts that had large Albanian constituencies. The only two parts of its strategy that the LDK would not conform to international preferences were its insistence on independence rather than autonomy and its refusal to vote in Yugoslav and Serbian elections. For example, when the Carnegie Foundation organized talks between Kosovo's Albanian leaders and moderate members of Serbia's opposition in 1997, "the Albanians rejected anything but independence. They even rejected becoming a third republic [independent of Serbia but still within Yugoslavia]," according to one participant.⁹⁰

Confrontational but Unarmed Resistance

A prominent faction within the LDK favored a more confrontational, yet still non-violent form of resistance against Serbia. This faction agreed with Rugova that militancy posed too great a risk of provoking Serbian retaliation,⁹¹ but they felt that Rugova's totally passive policy allowed both Belgrade and the international community to ignore Kosovo. Instead, they

⁹⁰ Mustafa Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 66, 90. Tihomir Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks." *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (May 1998), p. 27. Dragor Hiber, interview with author, Belgrade, July 30, 2000.

⁹¹ A former senior LDK official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Prishtina, August 8, 2000, says Hyseni considered militancy "a big danger for Kosovo," and he equated the KLA with "adventurism, terrorism, anarchism." Ironically, Hyseni was a hero to many members of the LPK, KLA, and LKCK because he had led the confrontational 1981 protests. But the LKCK's Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000 says, "We criticized Hyseni [and other former political prisoners] for joining the LDK . . . when pacifism was going to fail. This hurt our cause more than the pacifists, because these were our leaders."

prescribed an “active passive resistance,” including boycotts of Serbian goods, civil disobedience, protest strikes, and mass demonstrations. They believed such actions would provoke small-scale retaliation from Serbia, which would win them international support without risking massive retaliatory killing or ethnic cleansing.⁹²

The faction was led by Hydajet Hyseni, a former student leader who had been imprisoned for a decade for his participation in the 1981 demonstrations. Upon his release from prison in 1991, he joined the LDK but soon became frustrated with its extreme passivity. Hyseni was a student of non-violence and believed that past successful movements had required some degree of confrontation. The shadow prime minister, Bujar Bukoshi (based in Germany), shared Hyseni’s frustration with the passive approach, and the two worked together to take over the party. They were supported by other former political prisoners and activists within the LDK, including Jakup Krasniqi, Rame Buja, Ukshin Hoti, and Mahmet Hajrisi. In 1994, when the LDK held internal elections, Hyseni won the most votes and compelled Rugova to name him party vice-president in place of one of the LDK’s co-founders, Milazim Krasniqi. From that perch, Hyseni tried to push the LDK into more confrontational policies, such as finally convening the shadow assembly, but Rugova blocked him. Accordingly, Hyseni planned to challenge Rugova for leadership of the party prior to new shadow government elections in 1996, but Rugova avoided the challenge by postponing the elections.⁹³

In 1997, the mantle of confrontation was taken up by Kosovo’s student union. The shadow government’s prime minister Bujar Bukoshi stopped providing funds from the diaspora to Rugova and instead redirected them to the student union. As Milazim Krasniqi characterizes it, Bukoshi was leading an internal government “rebellion” against Rugova. On October 1, 1997, the students organized Kosovo’s first mass demonstration in years. Rugova urged them to cancel

⁹² Tihomir Loza, “Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks,” p. 30, quotes student leader Albin Kurti as saying Rugova “should organize the Albanian population here and demonstrate, and then the international community would be naturally attracted to deal with the problem of Kosovo.”

⁹³ *Economist*, November 1, 1997. Isuf Berisha, “Pristina’s One-Party Rule,” *War Report*, February 1994, p. 12. Former senior LDK official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Prishtina, August 8, 2000. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Ramiz Kelmendi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Mehmet Kraja, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000, lumps Hyseni together with more militant members of the LDK and accuses them of being left-wing hijackers of the party. “The militants, instead of trying to build their own party in ‘91-’92, tried to [take over the LDK]. They purged the initiating group from the LDK – except Agani and Rugova.” Tihomir Loza, “Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks,” p. 29, quotes an example of Bukoshi criticizing Rugova’s pacifism: “If the Lithuanian parliament was able to gather in front of the Russian tanks, then why couldn’t we hold our parliamentary sessions in Kosovo?”

it to avoid provoking Serbia, but they proceeded and 20,000 protesters turned out without incident, earning the student leaders international acclaim. In particular, American officials appear to have viewed the student movement as a pragmatic and prudent middle path between the static Rugova and the small but growing militant movement. Indeed, U.S. diplomat Robert Gelbard publicly touted Albanian student leaders Albin Kurti and Bujar Dugoli as the future of Kosovo's Albanian movement.⁹⁴

However, when Hyseni and his allies finally tried to oust Rugova as leader of the LDK in the lead-up to shadow elections in early 1998, Rugova outmaneuvered him and retained party control. As Rugova's close associate Muhamet Hamiti characterizes it, Hyseni and Bukoshi "were testing the waters for a coup within the party. But they couldn't do it, because Rugova was elected and an icon." After losing the internal fight, Hyseni's entire faction left the LDK in February 1998 – prior to the scheduled shadow elections and on the eve of war in Kosovo – with many of them subsequently joining or at least supporting the KLA. Rugova, despite the escalation of fighting between the KLA and Serbian forces at the beginning of March 1998, insisted on going ahead with the shadow elections that month. Virtually all of the other Albanian parties boycotted, but 80 percent of eligible Albanian voters turned out to elect Rugova, whose grassroots support remained remarkably strong.⁹⁵

Preparation for Future Mass Armed Uprising

The LKCK was a political party and rebel group that favored extensive preparation for an eventual mass armed uprising to achieve independence, but rejected the KLA's strategy of an immediate armed rebellion as reckless and likely to fail while provoking massive retaliation.

⁹⁴ Blerim Shala, interview with author, Prishtina, August 10, 2000. Tihomir Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," p. 30. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 222, reports that U.S. ambassador Gelbard started favoring the students over the LDK in November 1997. On February 25, 1998, Gelbard said: "I am concerned that the leadership, the political leadership in Kosovo is not acting positively. It's not acting. They're sitting back passively thinking that some kind of . . . United States *deus ex machina* will descend and rescue them, sort of like Superman flying in and picking them up. It's not going to happen. Their fate has to be worked out with the leadership of [Yugoslavia] and they have to work together to do this." According to Muhamet Hamiti, interview with author, Prishtina, August 5, 2000, the LDK greatly resented the United States promoting confrontational activists after urging the LDK for years to remain pacifist.

⁹⁵ Muhamet Hamiti, interview with author, Prishtina, August 5, 2000. Tihomir Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," pp. 30-31. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring*. Rugova's procedural maneuver prior to the internal party leadership vote was to dismiss the LDK's entire 55-member presidency (also known as its "general council") – removing both his longtime associates and those of Hyseni, to lend the appearance of an even-handed personnel rotation – but then to replace them all with grassroots supporters of his.

Both rebel groups had roots in another group formed in 1982, known as the LPRK, or Movement for a Kosova Republic, which was an umbrella organization of various militant Albanian factions of different ideological stripes. (It is worth recalling that in 1982 Kosovo's Albanians still enjoyed autonomy, yet these groups already favored armed rebellion, which indicates the extent of their nationalist extremism.) When Serbia broke up the LDK's nascent self-defense force in 1993, and Rugova terminated any future such efforts, the LPRK wanted to create an alternate force, but could not agree on strategy and ideology. As a result, the LPRK split into the LKCK, which formed its own rebel force, and the LPK, which created the KLA. The LKCK envisioned a massive grassroots political education campaign that would lead to a popular front uprising, in the spirit of Yugoslavia's WWII partisan movement or the Palestinians' first *Intifada*.⁹⁶

By the beginning of 1998, the LKCK about 150 rebels, compared to the KLA's approximately 200 at the time. Until 1997, weapons were so difficult to acquire that the groups had more rebels than weapons; then suddenly, after neighboring Albania's armories were flung open during its 1997 civil war, the groups had more weapons than rebels. However, the LKCK still viewed an armed uprising as premature because the Albanian masses continued to support the pacifist Rugova. By contrast, "the LPK and KLA wanted to go for it now," according to LKCK official Shukri Klinaku. "They said we needed to start a fire in Kosovo." The LKCK warned the KLA that Serbia's response to a premature rebellion would be brutal. "We said don't tease the Serbs, but organize," and educate the Albanian people first, because "it won't be a small war after which the Serbs concede, but rather a big war."⁹⁷

However, the KLA thought that waiting to organize grassroots support prior to launching the rebellion was hopeless. As the KLA's Jakup Krasniqi explains in retrospect: "The LKCK was more like a theory of long-gone times – like anti-fascist fronts in World War II. But the LDK had the most support and could block a more active response. So it was impossible to create a popular front." After the KLA did manage to "start a fire" in Kosovo, the LKCK decided to merge with the rebels in May 1998 rather than be left on the sidelines, despite still

⁹⁶ Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem," details the LKCK's four-phase model for the "liberation of the occupied areas."

⁹⁷ Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Heraclides, "The Kosovo Conflict," p. 320. Hedges, "Kosovo's Next Masters?" p. 34. Although not a member of the LKCK, Rexhep Qosja (who along with Demaci and Rugova is one of the most respected Albanian nationalist figures in Kosovo) also called for an *Intifada*.

feeling that a rebellion was premature. As Klinaku puts it, “We had to cut the bread before it was baked.”⁹⁸

Armed Rebellion

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) favored an immediate armed rebellion even though the rebels knew they were not militarily able to defeat Serbian forces on their own. The KLA strategy was to provoke Serbian retaliation in order initially to build domestic support for the rebellion and subsequently to attract international intervention sufficient to attain the goal of independence. As KLA co-founder Emrush Xhemajli explains:

When we took the decision to start the war in 1993, we didn't have the international community on our side. We thought with time we would convince the world we were right. We knew that during the first years the international community would be against us. We thought it was essential to get international support to win the war. You could not stand against the world.⁹⁹

The rebels targeted Serbian police, as well as Serbian civilians and Albanian civilians accused of collaboration, although Xhemajli claims that the killing of civilians was not officially authorized by the group.

As noted, the KLA's roots go back at least to the extreme nationalist LPRK, founded in 1982. As early as 1983, while Kosovo's Albanians still enjoyed autonomy, future members of the KLA were importing small quantities of weapons and rounding up vintage WWII-era weapons in preparation for a rebellion to achieve independence. A few individual rebels started attacking Serbian targets early in the 1990s, before the creation of the KLA. Several of these rebels also underwent military training in Albania, during 1992-93, which as noted above was organized by Kosovo's shadow government and financed by contributions from the diaspora. In 1993, after the demise of the shadow defense force and the split of the LPRK, the LPK appointed four of its members – Kadri Veseli, Hashim Thaci, Xhavit Haliti, and “Abuaz Xhuka” (a pseudonym) – to organize a new Albanian rebel group that would be unaffiliated with any political party in order to maximize its appeal. On July 28, 1993, this new rebel group held its founding meeting, attended by 35 LPK members, in Prishtina. In retrospect, members of the

⁹⁸ Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

⁹⁹ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

group say its first attack was an ambush that killed two Serbian policemen in May 1993, even before the group's formal founding meeting. However, the group did not publicly take credit for an attack until November 1994, when it issued its first communiqué. In addition, it was only then that the group picked a name for itself, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), after rejecting several alternative proposals. From its founding, the KLA also gradually incorporated many of the individual anti-Serb militants who had been operating in Kosovo since the early 1990s and who had received training in Albania.¹⁰⁰ As reported in a January 1993 press account, the strategy of these early militants bears a striking resemblance to that eventually employed by the KLA:

In light of [President George H.W.] Bush's admonitions [the "Christmas warning" of 1992], the Kosovo Albanians are counting on foreign military intervention after the outbreak of hostilities; it is expected that international troops will provide air cover. Once conflict erupts, Kosovo Albanians plan to withdraw their troops to the mountains near the Yugoslav-Albanian border, from where they will mount guerrilla attacks and defensive actions until the Western allies attack. The Kosovo army will then undertake full-scale offensive activities, providing ground support for the interventionary forces. . . . Any Yugoslav Army resistance will be overcome by international forces. Or so it is hoped."¹⁰¹

To fund its operations, the KLA initially relied on the fundraising arm of the LPK, run by Jashar Salihu and known as Homeland Calling, which collected funds in the diaspora starting in 1992, even prior to the breakup of the LPRK and founding of the LPK and KLA. Although Homeland Calling's main fundraisers were members of the LPK, all funds were earmarked for the nominally non-partisan KLA, once it was established, rather than for the LPK. Thus, it was not unheard of for members of the LDK or LKCK to contribute to Homeland Calling, even though both parties also had their own fundraising efforts in the diaspora. Still, in 1995-96, the KLA remained short of funds to buy weapons, and so LPK officials asked shadow prime minister Bukoshi to disperse to the rebels some of the funds he had earmarked for defense, which had been building up at least since the closure of his shadow defense ministry in 1993. However, despite Bukoshi's belligerent rhetoric, he refused to provide the rebels any funding. Bukoshi's excuse to the LPK was that he did not believe the party was responsible for the rebel attacks in Kosovo. However, it appears that Bukoshi actually was hesitant to provoke retaliation

¹⁰⁰ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Hedges, "Kosovo's Next Masters?"

¹⁰¹ Aleksander Vasovic, "Braced (and Armed) for Confrontation," *War Report*, January 1993, p. 19.

from Serbia. As his Information Minister, Xhafer Shatri, told a reporter at the time, “We don’t have a mandate to start a war.” Once the KLA itself managed to start the war by provoking Serbian retaliatory attacks in March 1998, financial contributions from the diaspora skyrocketed. By May 1998, it was reported that Homeland Calling had raised \$3 to \$4 million for the KLA. The shadow government’s fundraising also increased, and Bukoshi – after three more rounds of negotiations with the KLA in 1997-98 – did eventually disperse some of his funds to the rebels. However, this represented only a small fraction of the KLA’s total funding.¹⁰²

Through 1997, the KLA relied on guerrilla tactics of “attack and retreat,” without any front lines, expecting that the conflict “would last years like this” until growing to more conventional operations. Soon, however, the timetable accelerated rapidly for two reasons. First, the KLA acquired more and heavier weapons from Albania starting in 1997, which enabled the rebels to escalate their attacks. Second, Serbia’s retaliation to this escalation sparked an outpouring of contributions from the diaspora, as well as new recruits in Kosovo. As the war escalated, the KLA was based in the municipality of Decani. Its logistics base was in neighboring Albania, in the Tropoje region bordering Kosovo, which provided the rebels their sole supply line from early 1997 through the initial phase of the war. Subsequently, the KLA bought weapons from Croatia and Bosnia (and reportedly from Serbs in the region too). Although the KLA could not match the Yugoslav army’s mechanized forces, the rebels report that they were able to acquire an assortment of medium-weight weapons, including: recoilless 75mm artillery, 160mm mortars, shoulder-fired 90mm rockets, 40mm and 60mm rocket-propelled grenades, and first-class sniper rifles from the United States (7.9mm and 12.7mm) and Finland that the rebels brag were better than those in the Yugoslav army. Basic AK-47 ammunition (7.62mm) was available inexpensively from Albania, for 1DM (approximately \$0.50) per 100 rounds.¹⁰³

Organizationally, the KLA was split between warriors (the “executive wing”) and civilian administrators (the “general staff”). However, until 1998, the LPK served as a third, political wing of the KLA, even though the rebel group was envisioned as a non-partisan army for all of Kosovo’s Albanians. Finally, in mid-1998, to broaden the KLA’s appeal, it was spun off as a

¹⁰² Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Stacy Sullivan, “Albanian Americans Funding Rebels’ Cause,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 1998. Tihomir Loza, “Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks,” pp. 33-34. Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

¹⁰³ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

separate entity by creating a political directorate within its general staff, headed by Hashim Thaci, and by severing its formal ties to the LPK (although Thaci and many other KLA officials and rebels remained members of the LPK). Interestingly, when the KLA signed the Rambouillet accords in March 1999, the LPK expelled Thaci and the rest of the KLA political directorate from the LPK for compromising the longstanding goal of independence, under international pressure, in favor of an interim autonomy. However, by expelling the rebels – who were patriotic heroes among Kosovo’s Albanians for attracting the international support that enabled the end of Serb occupation – the LPK marginalized itself politically within Kosovo and has never recovered. As one official admits in retrospect, “the LPK was not fully informed at the time of the political nuances.”¹⁰⁴

The Switch to Militancy

Frustration, Arms Imports, and the Rise of the Kosovo Liberation Army: 1993-97

Despite gradual improvement in conditions, some Kosovo Albanians began to feel growing frustration with Rugova’s non-confrontational strategy by the mid-1990s. From their perspective, the independence he promised them appeared no closer, despite his numerous photo opportunities and press releases with foreign dignitaries. The international community paid lip-service to the plight of the province’s Albanians, but when the United States convened an international conference and forged the Dayton accords to resolve the Bosnian war, the Albanians were not invited and the Kosovo issue was left unresolved. Serbian police remained a persistent source of harassment, and many young Albanian males continued to feel compelled to emigrate for economic reasons or to escape potential punishment for draft-dodging. The resulting frustration manifested itself in at least three ways from 1993-97. First, a permanent schism arose between Rugova and the prime minister of his shadow government. Second, the LDK eventually conceded one of its core principles by agreeing to a compromise with Belgrade on the education issue prior to achieving independence. Third, a small, extremist militant movement began to grow, especially after weapons became more readily available from neighboring Albania in 1997.

¹⁰⁴ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

The growing frustration did not result from any dearth of compromise proposals or mid-level mediation efforts. Writing in early 1998, Stefan Troebst cited at least 15 international initiatives of so-called “track-two” diplomacy that typically brought together Kosovo’s leading Albanian intellectuals and Belgrade’s opposition parties. None of them produced tangible progress. In addition, he cited at least six different proposals that had been tabled or pursued by one of the sides or a mediator to resolve the impasse: (1) “1974 Plus,” a return to autonomy without independence; (2) “International Protectorate,” a two-year trusteeship, replete with peacekeeping troops, that was proposed by the LDK as a bridge to independence; (3) “Balkania,” a proposal by Adem Demaci for Kosovo to secede from Serbia and become a republic but remain in Yugoslavia; (4) Ethnic partition of Kosovo; (5) “Regionalization,” a combination of autonomy and cantonization intended to protect Serb enclaves within Albanian-dominated territory; and (6) “Ethnic Cleansing,” an option that Serbia might resort to unilaterally, as Troebst noted prophetically in April 1998:

The project of expelling up to 2 million people from their homes and of driving them into neighboring Albania and Macedonia seems much less utopic than it did before. . . . The journalist [Veton] Surroi suspects that ‘between 700,000 and 1 million people would have to be moved from the northeast toward the southwest’ of Kosovo in case the Serbian regime tried to stage a partition of the region. . . . Swift and robust Western intervention in Kosovo is unlikely. Also a partial or complete cleansing of Kosovo would probably not take more than several weeks. . . . For several years, Macedonia and since more recently also Albania are preparing for the arrival of several hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees.¹⁰⁵

When the international community first intervened decisively in the Balkans in the 1990s, leading to the Dayton accords of November 1995, it failed to resolve the Kosovo issue. The Dayton accords troubled Kosovo’s Albanians for two reasons. First, despite longstanding rhetorical support from the international community for Kosovo’s Albanians, the accords barely touched on the Kosovo issue, including it on a list of other problems that would have to be resolved prospectively before Washington would lift the “outer wall” of sanctions on Yugoslavia. Second, many Albanians were concerned because the accords barred the independence of ethnic enclaves, specifically the Serb Republic of Krajina in Croatia, the Republika Srpska in Bosnia, and the Croatian Herzeg-Bosna in Bosnia. This appeared to set a

¹⁰⁵ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fns. 62, 64.

precedent that also would bar international recognition of Kosovo's independence from Serbia, a final status that the LDK had been promising its constituency for years. The LDK official in charge of foreign affairs, Edita Tahiri, says she warned foreign officials of the growing frustration in Kosovo. "We told the international community that the nonviolence strategy may not be sustainable."¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, like the international community, Belgrade appeared in no hurry to resolve the Kosovo issue. The LDK's passive strategy had succeeded in avoiding violent retaliation, but it also had permitted top officials in both the international community and Belgrade essentially to ignore Kosovo. As noted by Dragor Hiber, a Serbian opposition politician at the time, "Milosevic didn't do much in Kosovo because it wasn't a problem. Kosovo was pacified. . . . If you look at the [Belgrade] newspapers from 1991-96, Kosovo was the third or fourth problem after Croatia, Bosnia, and Sandzak [a Muslim area within Serbia]." Indeed, the *status quo* appeared to suit both Rugova and Milosevic, who had developed a strange symbiosis. Maliqi says that Milosevic tolerated Rugova because the LDK president kept Kosovo passive and boycotted elections, which facilitated Milosevic's continuing to win elections. As Serbian historian Dusan Batakovic notes, it is remarkable that Milosevic never jailed Rugova, who illegally declared Kosovo independent from Serbia and Yugoslavia, while he jailed Vuk Draskovic, a nationalist Serbian politician who at one point served in Milosevic's own coalition government. Similarly, Loza notes that although the LDK leader's activities could have earned him a sentence of 20 years under Serbian law, "Rugova has never been personally touched by the repressive instruments of his [Milosevic's] regime."¹⁰⁷

The schism in Kosovo's shadow Albanian government resulted from the growing frustration of its prime minister, Bujar Bukoshi, based in Germany, with the failure of Rugova's passive policy to achieve Kosovo's independence. The final straw for Bukoshi was that none of Kosovo's Albanian leaders was invited to attend the negotiations of the Dayton accords, despite Rugova's claims of widespread international support. By 1995, Bukoshi had begun to criticize

¹⁰⁶ Predrag Simic, interview with author, Belgrade, July 28, 2000. Edita Tahiri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000

¹⁰⁷ Dragor Hiber, interview with author, Belgrade, July 30, 2000. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Dusan Batakovic, interview with author, Belgrade, July 27, 2000. Tihomir Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (May 1998), p. 28. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 83-84, also notes that Serbian police did not interfere with the shadow elections of May 1992, and even permitted them to be monitored by eight western election organizations and 82 international agencies.

Rugova publicly. In addition, he started to withhold funds raised in the diaspora community, the only source of discretionary spending for Rugova's shadow government because funds raised in Kosovo were earmarked for the parallel education program. In 1995, two of Rugova's closest advisers, Edita Tahiri and Fehmi Agani, quit the party over Rugova's reluctance to fire Bukoshi for insubordination. They returned to the party when Rugova agreed to dismiss Bukoshi, but Rugova then proved unable or unwilling to do so. When Tahiri is asked who really was running the party, she replies, "Very fair question. In fact, really, looking at the money, Bukoshi was the head." Aside from frustration with Rugova, however, it is not clear that Bukoshi had any alternate platform or strategy of his own. He often declared that the Albanians needed to take a more confrontational or even militant approach towards Serbia, but from 1993-97 he took no action in that direction. His information minister Xhafer Shatri concedes that both Rugova and Bukoshi were persuaded by the international community to eschew militancy. "We both listened to the big powers who didn't want violence. Rugova was silent. Bukoshi also did nothing, but shouted."¹⁰⁸

Growing Albanian frustration also compelled Rugova to compromise one of the LDK's core principles in September 1996, when he signed a compromise agreement with Belgrade for Albanian students and teachers to return to state classrooms despite the absence of independence. The agreement, mediated by the Italian Community of St. Egidio and much touted in the West as a diplomatic breakthrough, was actually little more than a statement of mutual intent, which failed to resolve the core dispute over curriculum. Moreover, both Milosevic and Rugova were pilloried by their domestic constituencies for perceived acquiescence to ethnic opponents. Rugova was criticized by Albanians for recognizing Serbian sovereignty merely to achieve a marginal gain. Rugova defended himself by arguing that the agreement addressed only the use of buildings and did not prejudice the ultimate goal of independence. Milosevic was criticized by Serbs for legitimizing the shadow Albanian government. However, Milosevic had successfully insisted that Rugova sign the agreement as a private citizen rather than as president of Kosovo, to avoid any formal legitimation of the shadow government. Nevertheless, the criticism in Belgrade was so intense that Milosevic refused to implement the agreement for nearly a year and a half. Only in March 1998, when he was faced with intense international

¹⁰⁸ Edita Tahiri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," pp. 28-29. Xhafer Shatri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 10, 2000.

pressure after the brutal attacks by Serbian forces against Albanian rebel strongholds in Drenica, did Milosevic start implementing the agreement. At that point, Belgrade divided the school day in half, so that Serbs and Albanians each could have one shift daily during which to teach their own curriculum. Belgrade still refused to pay teachers of the Albanian curriculum, but it did implement the agreement, despite protests from Serb students and from the Serb rector of Prishtina University, who was so opposed that Milosevic had to fire him. By this point, however, the cycle of violence in Kosovo already had begun, and such marginal concessions were unable to stop it.¹⁰⁹

The third major consequence of Rugova's failure to achieve independence through passivity was the emergence of more militant Albanian groups. As noted, the LDK itself originally had attempted to set up a rudimentary self-defense structure starting in 1991, but it was uncovered and destroyed in 1993 by Serbian security officials. Other Albanian rebels originally emerged in the early 1990s as several tiny autonomous groups that later came together under the banner of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), established in 1993. The first attack for which the KLA retrospectively takes credit was against a Serbian police vehicle in May 1993, which killed 2 officers and wounded five. Rebel attacks were sporadic until 1996, when 31 political assassinations were carried out in Kosovo, against not only Serbian police and civilian officials, but also Albanians accused of collaborating with Serbia. LDK leader Ibrahim Rugova publicly denied the existence of any rebels and accused Serbia of perpetrating the attacks itself as an excuse for a crackdown in Kosovo. In January 1997, Serbia arrested 61 Albanians accused of being at the "core of Albanian terrorism." Despite this, the number of assassinations increased to 55 that year. Even more troubling to Serbian officials, in September 1997, the rebels managed to carry out 11 simultaneous attacks against police stations across the province, indicating that the KLA had grown substantially in scope and sophistication. In November 1997, the KLA was sufficiently emboldened to make its first public appearance, at a funeral. The pace of attacks then accelerated. During the first two months of 1998, rebel attacks claimed 66 victims. A major Serb response was anticipated. As Diana Johnstone has written, "No government on earth

¹⁰⁹ Kostovic, "The Trap of the Parallel Society." Astrit Salihu, "An Education in Profit," *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (May 1998), pp. 22-23. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 249. Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Heraclides, "The Kosovo Conflict," p. 327, says that, "Milosevic was accused of legitimizing Rugova and the secessionists; Rugova, of accepting that Kosovo was part of Serbia." Veton Surroi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000, who had favored negotiating a restoration of autonomy with Belgrade, says that even he criticized Rugova for the deal, because it achieved so little.

could be expected to remain passive in the face of armed bands that have claimed 152 lives in a little over two years.”¹¹⁰

Counterinsurgency, Humanitarian Intervention, and Ethnic Cleansing: 1998-99

The 17 months from February 1998 to June 1999 are a case study in the ways that well-intentioned but misguided humanitarian intervention – both diplomatic and military – can exacerbate ethnic conflict. The progression of events is remarkable for at least three perverse dynamics. First, in a matter of months, the international community switched from labeling the Albanian rebels “terrorists” to allying with them. Second, when the rebels broke a cease-fire that Serbia was observing, they were rewarded by the international community with promises of military support. Lastly, when the international community eventually did intervene militarily, with the intention of averting a humanitarian emergency, it instead inadvertently triggered and magnified that emergency many-fold.

Ironically, the period began with a high-water mark in U.S.-Yugoslav relations. On February 23, 1998, the United States lifted some sanctions on Yugoslavia in recognition of Slobodan Milosevic’s help in persuading Bosnia’s Serbs to implement the Dayton accords. The same day, U.S. diplomat Robert Gelbard condemned the Albanian rebels in Kosovo as “terrorists.” The Yugoslav army thought likewise, and two months earlier had decided to address the security situation in Kosovo as its priority. Accordingly, during the first five days of March 1998, Yugoslav forces engaged the rebels in several large firefights and brutally attacked the compound of the legendary Albanian rebel, Adem Jashari, in Donji Prekaz, located in the traditional Albanian militant stronghold of Drenica. The attacks claimed an estimated 84 victims – rebels, supporters, and their families – including approximately 20 women and ten children. The Albanians immediately publicized the incident to attract international support. Journalist Veton Surroi recalls: “As soon as we got the photographs, we put them on the Internet.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Johnstone, “Notes on the Kosovo Problem.” Loza, “Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks.” p. 32, reports that the victims up until 1998 included 20 Serb police dead and 62 wounded, in addition to the more numerous civilian dead and wounded.

¹¹¹ Hedges, “Kosovo’s Next Masters?” p. 36. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*. Transcript, Allan Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War,” *BBC2*, March 12, 2000, http://ncws.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/panorama/transcripts/transcript_12_03_00.txt [downloaded March 2000]. Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 139-40. Veton Surroi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

Virtually overnight, the international community, led by the United States, began to threaten and punish Yugoslavia. On March 3, Gelbard threatened Milosevic with military intervention and overthrow if he continued such attacks against the rebels. "President Milosevic is well aware that the United States will not tolerate violence, and violence will be met by the most dire consequences imaginable. That will be the end of his government without any question." On March 7, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared: "We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia." On March 9, 1998, the U.S.-led Contact Group imposed sanctions on Yugoslavia, meaning that Belgrade had enjoyed warmer relations with the United States and a respite from some sanctions for a mere two weeks before they were re-imposed. The Contact Group also threatened to impose further sanctions.¹¹² Even at the time, some astute observers noted the tensions inherent in a U.S. policy that condemned both terrorism and the response to terrorism: "This ambiguous position has encouraged secessionists to provoke armed encounters which are promptly and vehemently blamed on the Serbs."¹¹³

The Serb attacks increased support for the rebels among Kosovo's Albanians, both inside the province and in the diaspora, helping to build the KLA ranks. As the rebels escalated their attacks, and Yugoslavia its counterinsurgency, international diplomats arranged the first direct negotiations ever between Milosevic and Rugova, joined by other Kosovo Albanian leaders, on May 15, 1998. However, during a follow-up meeting between the Albanian negotiators and U.S. President Clinton, news came of a second brutal retaliatory attack in Kosovo by Yugoslav forces, at Decani. The Albanians immediately walked out of the negotiations on grounds that, in the words of one of their negotiators, Blerim Shala: "We couldn't be sipping coffee with Serbs while other [Albanians] were being killed." In June 1998, U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke traveled to the region, where he met with the KLA – a group that his colleague Gelbard had labeled terrorists just four months earlier. U.S. officials claimed at the time that the meeting was accidental, but it was not. However, the photograph of Holbrooke meeting with the rebels, which became a propaganda coup for the KLA, apparently was not planned. As Holbrooke

¹¹² R. Jeffrey Smith, "Yugoslavia Will 'Pay a Price,' Albright Warns," *Washington Post*, March 8, 1998. Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 148.

¹¹³ Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem." The same point was made, less eloquently and a few months later, by Alan J. Kuperman, "False Hope Abroad: Promises to Intervene Often Bring Bloodshed," *Washington Post*, Outlook Section, June 14, 1998.

recalls, "This photograph became the first official photograph of an American official with a member of the KLA. . . . Milosevic was furious."¹¹⁴

By the summer of 1998, Yugoslavia had intensified its counterinsurgency, sealed most of the border with Albania that served as the main arms corridor for the rebels, and regained control of virtually the entire province. In the process, however, tens of thousands of Albanians had fled the fighting, taking refuge mainly in the hills of Kosovo. As winter approached, international aid agencies expressed concern that a humanitarian emergency was imminent unless the displaced could go home. Accordingly, Holbrooke returned to the region to forge a cease-fire by threatening Serbia with western military intervention. In October, he obtained Milosevic's signature on an agreement for a cease-fire, withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from their front-line positions, and the introduction of a multilateral Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) to observe the cease-fire. Significantly, however, Holbrooke did not obtain the KLA's signature on the agreement, and it is not clear why. Blerim Shala says Holbrooke had told him at the time that the United States was willing to have the KLA sign the agreement on a separate page, so as not to offend Milosevic. Moreover, Shala says the KLA would have been willing to sign the agreement.¹¹⁵

Although the Holbrooke agreement was touted as a neutral humanitarian intervention, and originally may have been motivated by such benign motives, its effect was heavily biased in favor of the Albanian rebels. The cease-fire protected the rebels from further devastation, and the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces enabled the rebels to reoccupy strategic positions. Because the rebels had not signed the agreement, they were not violating any formal pledges, even though they clearly were violating its spirit. A senior KLA official, Emrush Xhemajli, says the agreement saved the rebels heavy losses. For example, prior to the agreement, his unit was trapped in the woods of Dukagjini by a 5-kilometer ring of Yugoslav troops. He believes that an impending Yugoslav combined armor-infantry attack would have inflicted heavy losses and broken his force into several smaller units, dealing them a heavy setback. He says the same is true for other KLA units throughout Kosovo. Similarly, Agim Ceku, the KLA's eventual military leader, says: "The cease-fire was very useful for us, it helped us to get organized, to

¹¹⁴ Veton Surroi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Blerim Shala, interview with author, Prishtina, August 10, 2000. Transcript, Allan Little, "Moral Combat: NATO at War."

¹¹⁵ Stacy Sullivan, "From Brooklyn to Kosovo, With Love and AK-47's," *New York Times Magazine*, November 22, 1998, p. 55. Blerim Shala, interview with author, Prishtina, August 10, 2000.

consolidate and grow. We aimed to spread our units over as much territory as possible. We wanted KLA units and cells across the whole of Kosovo.”¹¹⁶

By the end of 1998, repeated violations of the cease-fire had led to the renewal of widespread fighting. The KLA was responsible for most of these violations, according to the confidential minutes of NATO’s governing body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC). These records cite the KLA as “the main initiator of the violence,” stating that, “it has launched what appears to be a deliberate campaign of provocation.” Similarly, the German vice president of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Willy Wimmer, says the organization’s observers agreed that it was the KLA, not Yugoslav forces, that had “systematically evaded” the Holbrooke agreement. Likewise, General Klaus Naumann, chairman of NATO’s military committee, says that the head of the verification mission, American Ambassador William Walker, “stated in the NAC that the majority of violations was caused by the KLA.” However, Walker never said so publicly at the time, nor has he since. Indeed, according to one member of the verification team, Capt. Roland Keith, Walker was hardly a neutral observer, but rather, “part of the American diplomatic policy that was occurring which had vilified Slobodan Milosevic, demonized the Serbian Administration and generally was providing diplomatic support to the KLA leadership.”¹¹⁷

The KVM’s bias is illustrated by the fact that Walker proved unwilling to condemn the KLA for its alleged attacks on civilians, but quick to condemn Yugoslav forces for their alleged crimes. For example, when six Serb teenagers were gunned down in a café in Pec in December 1998, Walker refused to blame the KLA on grounds that, “when you don’t know what has happened, it’s a lot more difficult to sort of pronounce yourself.” By contrast, the following month, when he visited the site of a Serbian attack on Albanian rebels at Racak, at which 45 corpses (including two women and an adolescent boy) were found, he immediately condemned the Serbs for a massacre, thereby triggering a series of international diplomatic actions that culminated in NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Transcript, Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War.”

¹¹⁷ Transcript, Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War.” Diana Johnstone, “Hawks and Eagles: ‘Greater NATO’ Flies to the Aid of ‘Greater Albania.’” *Covert Action Quarterly* (Spring-Summer 1999).

¹¹⁸ Transcript, Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War.”

The United States led the international diplomatic response to the Racak attack, drafting a proposed peace agreement and calling both sides in the conflict to a conference in Rambouillet, France to coerce them into signing it. Again, the diplomacy ostensibly was carried out neutrally and with humanitarian intent. For example, Madeleine Albright asserted at the time: "If the talks crater because the Serbs do not say yes, we will have bombing. If the talks crater because the Albanians have not said yes, we will not be able to support them and, in fact, will have to cut off whatever help they're getting from the outside." Rugova claims Albright was even more blunt in coercing the Albanians, asking them: "Do you want this agreement with the U.S. and NATO in Kosovo, or is it that do you not want it, in which case you'll be left under Serbian oppression and at their mercy?"¹¹⁹

In practice, however, the mediation effort was biased in favor of the Albanians for two reasons. First, the agreement came much closer to meeting Albanian demands than those of Yugoslavia. Indeed, it resembled closely Rugova's longstanding request for the deployment of peacekeepers to establish an international protectorate in Kosovo for two years, to be followed by the province's independence. In the original Rambouillet proposal, NATO peacekeepers were to occupy the province for three years, after which the Albanians would hold a referendum to determine the province's final status, which almost assuredly would have been independence. After vehement complaints from Belgrade, the referendum guarantee was removed from the written version of the revised Rambouillet proposal, but Albanian negotiators say that U.S. diplomats continued to hint that the referendum would be forthcoming. KLA negotiator Jakup Krasniqi says: "We believed it was a three-year agreement, after which there would be another meeting where Albanians would be given the right to choose self-determination." He adds that, "We knew it didn't reach our every desire, but there were some promises" – smiling at this last word. "It is not said fully that in three years there will be a referendum, but that Kosovars would be able to decide their status. This could have been read as a referendum."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Transcript, "War in Europe," Parts 1 and 2, *Frontline*, Air date: February 22, 2000 and February 29, 2000. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/ctc/script1.html> and <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/ctc/script2.html> [downloaded 2000]. Similarly, Veton Surroi says: "She was saying you sign, the Serbs don't sign, we bomb. You sign, the Serbs sign, you have NATO in. So it's up to you to say. You don't sign, the Serbs don't sign, we forget about the subject. It was very explicit." See Transcript, Little, "Moral Combat: NATO at War."

¹²⁰ Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

The second way in which the negotiation was biased to favor the Albanians is that the U.S. threats effectively were asymmetrical because those against Yugoslavia had much higher credibility. By contrast, it was not credible that if the Albanians rejected the proposal, the United States would stand aside while Yugoslav forces brutally crushed them, especially in light of the repeated American pledges to prevent such an outcome. As Johnstone observes, the KLA's "intransigence was largely the result of their certitude that they ultimately commanded full United States and NATO support."¹²¹ In addition, because the U.S. negotiators and the Albanians both knew that the United States probably could not carry out its coercive threat against the Albanians, the best hope of reaching an agreement was for U.S. negotiators to satisfy the basic demands of the Albanians rather than those of Yugoslavia – which is precisely what happened.

At the initial round of Rambouillet talks, the Albanian negotiators delayed any decision on the agreement because they first had to make sure it was supported in Kosovo. As Jakup Krasniqi explains, "we couldn't sign without consulting a wide spectrum. Albanian intellectuals were urging us to sign. But it was better to come back and check common people and KLA commanders."¹²² At the second round of talks, the Albanians signed, so the United States issued an ultimatum to Yugoslavia to sign as well, or be bombed, and Holbrooke traveled to Belgrade to deliver the threat to Milosevic in person.

Despite this explicit warning, Milosevic refused to sign the agreement. It is impossible to know precisely why, but one contributing factor may have been the agreement's military annex, which granted NATO troops freedom of movement throughout all of Yugoslavia rather than just Kosovo – an unjustifiable intrusion into Yugoslavia's sovereignty.¹²³ Jan Oberg, the representative of a Swedish foundation that had been mediating the Kosovo issue between the Serbs and Albanians, says that Milosevic would have signed earlier drafts of the Rambouillet accords but balked at changes added subsequently by the United States to accommodate Albanian demands.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Johnstone, "Hawks and Eagles."

¹²² Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

¹²³ For a discussion of this issue, see Alan J. Kuperman, "Albright Painted Milosevic Into a Corner," *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 1999.

¹²⁴ Johnstone, "Hawks and Eagles."

NATO started bombing Yugoslavia on March 24, 1999. U.S. officials expected that Milosevic would acquiesce to signing the agreement after three or four days of bombing. Instead, Yugoslav forces responded by initiating a rapid campaign of ethnic cleansing, as this author and others had predicted months earlier would be the response to NATO bombing.¹²⁵ In three months, the Yugoslav offensive killed 5,000 Albanians and forcibly expelled 850,000 from Kosovo, mostly in the first few weeks.¹²⁶ Tim Judah writes: "Once the bombing started Milosevic then decided to put into action his plans for clearing Kosovo of as much of its population as he possibly could."¹²⁷ Although Judah may exaggerate slightly, during the NATO bombing Yugoslav forces did employ throughout much of Kosovo the ethnic cleansing tactics that they had honed previously in Croatia and Bosnia. As one Serb soldier recalls:

There was a system that was applied throughout all the Yugoslavian wars. You would surround the village on three sides, and the fourth would be left for the civilians to run out of, so they had the opportunity of leaving the village. When a young Albanian was caught, it was assumed he was KLA. He'd be taken away and questioned, and afterwards he'd be shot. The questioning was a formality.¹²⁸

After three months of NATO bombing that gradually shifted from military targets to high-value civilian infrastructure, Milosevic agreed to a new peace proposal. It is not yet clear why Milosevic agreed to the new proposal after rejecting the original one.¹²⁹ One possibility is that Milosevic rejected the original agreement for domestic political reasons, even though he expected NATO to carry out its bombing threat sufficiently that he later would be forced to capitulate, because he thought that surrendering sovereignty to NATO without first fighting

¹²⁵ Alan J. Kuperman, "NATO Move May Widen War [in Kosovo]," *USA Today*, October 9-11, 1998. Alan J. Kuperman, "In Balkans, Time to Intervene?" *New York Times*, letters, October, 5, 1998.

¹²⁶ The best documentation of the ethnic cleansing campaign is contained in two studies. The first study is Patrick Ball, "Policy or Panic? The Flight of Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, March-May 1999," American Association for the Advancement of Science," available at <http://hrdata.aaas.org/kosovo/policvorpanic/toc.html>. The second study is Patrick Ball, "Political Killings in Kosova/Kosovo, March-June 1999," Central and East European Law Initiative, American Bar Association, Washington, DC, available at <http://hrdata.aaas.org/kosovo/pk/toc.html>. Interestingly, the two studies contain a remarkable anomaly. The second study says that there is a correlation between the timing of killings and the timing of refugee flows in Kosovo, and says this proves that the refugees resulted from a coordinated expulsion campaign. However, the previous study says on page one: "The findings of this report suggest that the refugee flows do not necessarily follow sequences of mass killing." Thus, the second study contradicts the first study on this crucial point, despite having the same author and relying on the same data. Nor does the second study mention that it contradicts the earlier study.

¹²⁷ Tim Judah, "Inside the KLA."

¹²⁸ Transcript, "War in Europe."

¹²⁹ A recent analysis is Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War For Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), especially "Chapter Four: Why Milosevic Gave Up When He Did."

would have been political suicide. Another possible explanation is that Milosevic originally hoped or expected, erroneously, that Yugoslavia could ride out the bombing longer than a fractious NATO could agree to continue it.¹³⁰ A third possible explanation is that Milosevic acquiesced during the bombing because he was presented with a new peace proposal that infringed less on Yugoslav sovereignty than had the agreement at Rambouillet. For example, the offending provision of the military annex was removed, and the new proposal appeared to ensure Kosovo's continuing status as a province of Yugoslavia unless subsequent action were taken by the UN security council, where Serbia's ally Russia has a veto. If this third explanation is correct, it is possible that Milosevic also would have signed such a deal had it been offered earlier at Rambouillet, thereby averting the NATO bombing and probably the ethnic cleansing as well.¹³¹ As Tim Judah writes, although Belgrade clearly carried out ethnic cleansing attacks once NATO decided to bomb, "This is not to say that carrying them out was inevitable. . . . If it had been clear to Milosevic that there would be no such force, he might not have pressed the button to start what is believed to be called Operation Horseshoe."¹³²

NATO bombing stopped on June 10, 1999. NATO troops then occupied Kosovo, a UN administrative mission was established, and most Albanian refugees and internally displaced persons returned to their homes before the end of the year. Extremist Albanians soon began launching attacks on Serbs in Kosovo, compelling the migration of most of the Serb population to Kosovo's northern reaches or across the border into the rest of Serbia. As of this writing, in August 2002, Kosovo remains partitioned *de facto* at the town of Mitrovica, north of which Serbs hold control, and south of which the Albanians do with NATO assistance. Milosevic was ousted from power in 2000 after attempting to manipulate the results of an election he lost. In Kosovo's 2001 elections, Rugova's LDK party won a plurality of seats in a new assembly, but he was blocked from becoming president by the opposition of parties that are descended from the KLA. On March 4, 2002, after substantial international pressure compelled a political deal,

¹³⁰ For a thorough analysis of this explanation, see Barry R. Posen, "The War for Kosovo: Serbia's Political-Military Strategy," *International Security* (Spring 2000). See also, Alan J. Kuperman, "Rambouillet Requiem: Why the Talks [on Kosovo] Failed," *Wall Street Journal*, op-ed, March 4, 1999, which predicted that Milosevic would reject the agreement in hopes that he could ride out the bombing.

¹³¹ See the following exchange: Alan J. Kuperman, "Botched Diplomacy Led to War," *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 1999. James P. Rubin, "Milosevic Sabotaged U.S. Diplomacy," *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 1999. Alan J. Kuperman, "Albright Painted Milosevic Into a Corner," *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 1999. See also, Michael Mandelbaum, "A Perfect Failure: NATO's War Against Yugoslavia," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1999).

¹³² Tim Judah, "Inside the KLA."

Rugova was named president of the province of Kosovo.¹³³ Actual control, however, still rests in the hands of the international community.

¹³³ The elections were held on November 17, 2001. Of 120 seats, the LDK won 46. The main party descended from the rebels, the PDK, won 26. A smaller party also led by a former rebel, the AAK, won 8 seats. The Serb coalition Povratak won 22. The remaining 18 seats were divided among small parties. See, Arben Qirezi, "Kosovo Power Vacuum," *IWPR'S Balkan Crisis Report*, No. 310, Part II, January 21, 2002. In a deal to win the PDK's support for Rugova as president, one of their officials was named prime minister. See, Adriatik Kelmendi, "Kosovo: A Government at Last," *IWPR's Balkan Crisis Report*, No. 322, March 8, 2002.

CHAPTER 8

TESTING THE THEORY IN KOSOVO

This chapter seeks to explain two key actions by Kosovo's Albanians. First, starting in 1989, why did they eschew a violent challenge in favor of passive resistance, despite grievances that exceeded those of the subordinate groups in Bosnia and Rwanda, who launched violent challenges? Second, why in 1998 did they switch to launching a violent challenge, despite significant improvements in their welfare and significant progress towards *de facto* autonomy since 1992?

To explore the initial lack of a violent challenge, the chapter tests whether rational deterrence theory can explain this restraint as an instance of successful deterrence. Specifically, it tests three predictions of the rational theory for successful deterrence in this case: (1) The Albanians expected the Serbs to respond to an armed rebellion with retaliatory violence; (2) The Albanians expected to avoid massive violence if they eschewed an armed rebellion; (3) The Albanians did not expect that an armed rebellion could attain their goal of an independent Kosovo at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. If any of these predictions were not confirmed during the initial period, it would tend to undercut the rational theory. However, the evidence confirms all three predictions and thus supports the rational theory.

To explain the subsequent switch to launching a violent challenge, the chapter tests the three hypotheses of deterrence failure: (1) The Albanians did not expect the Serbs to respond to an armed rebellion with retaliatory violence; (2) The Albanians expected to suffer massive violence regardless of whether or not they launched an armed rebellion; (3) The Albanians expected that by launching an armed rebellion they could attain their goal of an independent Kosovo at a cost in retaliatory violence against Albanian civilians that they deemed acceptable. If none of the hypotheses were confirmed during the latter period, the null hypothesis would say the violent challenge is explained by some non-rational theory. In fact, however, the evidence confirms the third hypothesis.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four parts. First, I conduct a detailed test of the three predictions of the rational theory with regard to the Albanians' initial policy of passive resistance. Second, I conduct an analogous test with regard to the subsequent violent challenge

launched in the later period. Third, I summarize these findings and reconcile the theory's assumption of unitary rational action with the factional politics evident in the case. In addition, I explore how international policies of humanitarian intervention inadvertently prompted the Albanians' violent challenge, and thereby the violent backlash from the Serbs – that is, the very consequences these policies were intended to prevent. Finally, I explore the counter-factual question of whether the tragedy could have been averted if Kosovo's Albanians or the international community had pursued different policies.

To summarize my conclusions, I find that the third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory explains the variance over time in the Albanians' actions – that is, why they initially embraced pacifism but subsequently switched to launching a violent challenge. The first two hypotheses do not explain this variance, because their underlying causal variables remained constant over time. In both periods, Albanian officials expected that launching an armed rebellion would provoke a violent backlash from Belgrade. Also in both periods, these officials expected they could avoid such large-scale violence by eschewing armed rebellion. The variance over time in the Albanians' actions is explained by a change in the causal variable of the third hypothesis: the Albanians' expectations about whether an armed rebellion could achieve independence at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence.

This change in the Albanians' expectations about the prospects of an armed rebellion is explained by a change in their underlying expectations of forthcoming support from the international community. Initially, the Albanians expected that the international community would support them only if they eschewed violence, which led to the expectation that an armed rebellion was doomed to fail at high cost. Subsequently, however, the Albanians came to expect that the international community would support them decisively only if they demonstrated the will to fight and die for their freedom. Accordingly, they came to expect that by launching an armed rebellion they would attract intervention sufficient to enable them to achieve independence at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. If the Albanians had not expected that by switching to militancy they could attract international intervention, it appears that they would not have launched their violent challenge, and the retaliatory ethnic cleansing of Albanians would have been avoided.

Testing the Theory, Part 1: Explaining the Initial Pacifism

Testing the First Prediction

The first prediction of rational deterrence theory, for successful deterrence, is that the Albanians expected the Serbs to respond to an armed rebellion with retaliatory violence. There is strong evidence for this prediction. First, the Albanians were well aware at the time of the overwhelming superiority of Serb power. Second, the Serbs issued explicit threats, and Albanian leaders indicated at the time that they found those threats credible. Third, in retrospective interviews, Albanian officials unanimously say that during this period they expected that an armed rebellion would provoke massive violent retaliation. Indeed, the Albanians not only expected such a reaction if they launched an armed rebellion, but many believed that the Serbs favored this outcome and so were trying cynically to encourage the Albanians to launch such a rebellion.

The Serbs' overwhelming military superiority in Kosovo was obvious throughout the period. As Clark reports, starting in 1989, "arms were distributed increasingly openly and Serbian 'village guards' formed." Moreover, in 1991, the province's Albanian police force of about 3,500 was replaced by 7,000 Serb and Montenegrin officers. Soon after, Belgrade increased the force to 13,000, supplemented by 21,000 armed reserves, for a total of 34,000 police. (In a 1994 book, Rugova said he believed the Serbs had 40,000 police in the province, which was close to the mark.) In addition, in late 1992, Kosovo became the base for Serb paramilitary forces, including Arkan's notorious "Tigers" who had committed some of Bosnia's worst atrocities during the ethnic cleansing of spring 1992.¹ By contrast, the Albanians had no organized armed forces. In 1993, Serbia uncovered and destroyed the shadow government's nascent efforts to organize a self-defense force, after which Rugova barred any future such attempts. The more radical KLA and LKCK did attempt to build rebel forces, but by the mid-1990s, they had a combined membership of only a few hundred Albanians, and until 1997 they possessed even fewer weapons, all light arms. Clearly, the Albanians militarily were no match for the Serbs.

The Serbs also issued clear deterrent threats, which the Albanians indicated at the time they heard and found credible. For example, in 1991, the press published a chilling threat from Vojislav Seselj, head of a Serbian nationalist party that was at times in Milosevic's governing

¹ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 77-78.

coalition. In the event of an armed uprising by the Albanians, he said, “We can settle the bill with the Albanians forever.”² At the time, the Albanians made clear that they understood and believed the threat. For example, in early 1992, Rugova explained, “we have nothing to set against the tanks and other modern weaponry in Serbian hands. We would have no chance of successfully resisting the army. In fact the Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out.”³ The Serbs reiterated their deterrent threat throughout the period under examination. For example, Rugova reports that in late 1997, Belgrade officials warned him that any armed attempt to assert sovereignty “meant war” and they had developed “a scorched-earth plan that could be implemented in 24 hours to destroy Albanian villages.”⁴

Senior Albanian officials from the period also confirm in retrospect that they perceived the Serb threats and found them credible. For example, the shadow government’s information minister, Xhafer Shatri, says, “You’d have to be a fool not to have taken them seriously.” Fazli Balaj, a founder of Kosovo’s Albanian human rights organization in 1989 and an influential player behind the scenes of the LDK, says: “We were aware of Yugoslav force and that the police and military would respond with violence. If Albanians were the first to ask for the end of Yugoslavia, then the response without mercy would be cruelest against the Albanians. . . . We knew Serbia would have a free hand if we provoked it.” LDK co-founder Ibrahim Berisha agrees that “most Albanians understood that the start of war in Kosovo would lead to the destruction of people and villages and cities.” Rugova recalls that, “The danger of [our society’s] extermination was very much there. . . . We could not launch an uprising because we were under a complete military occupation – a huge deployment of military force . . . Our philosophy was to mind our own business and interests. [An uprising] could be a very dangerous game.”⁵

² Nevenka Tromp-Vrkic, “Kosovo and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia” in Ger Duijzings, et al., eds., *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: University of Nijmegen Peace Research Center, 1996), p. 53. The threat was published in *Osmica* (Belgrade), October 29, 1991.

³ Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 264. The original quote is from *Impact International*, April 10 – May 7, 1992, p. 10.

⁴ Keith B. Richburg, “Milosevic Attacks Court, Delays Formal Remarks, U.N. War Crimes Prosecutors Finish Opening Statement,” *Washington Post*, February 14, 2002, Page A21. The quotes were reported to be in Rugova’s forthcoming prepared testimony.

⁵ Xhafer Shatri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 10, 2000. Fazli Balaj, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Ibrahim Berisha, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

The credibility of the Serbian threats was enhanced by the belief of many Albanians that Belgrade actually sought such an armed provocation to provide an excuse for a violent assault on them. For example, Maliqi says that he and fellow politicians-turned-journalists Veton Surroi and Blerim Shala, “feared that Milosevic wanted to provoke an uprising in order to launch a crackdown and impose central authority.” This, they believed, was the Serb leader’s pattern and strategy throughout the former Yugoslavia. Likewise, a former senior LDK official who requests anonymity says, “Non-violence was our special tool, because Serbia wanted an early war to be able to crush the Albanians. [Belgrade] wished for a provocation.” He says Serbian officials revealed this strategy to him as early as 1981-82 while he was imprisoned for participating in the 1981 demonstrations.⁶ (However, if Serbian officials did say this to him at the time, it likely was concocted to reinforce deterrence. It is extremely unlikely that Serbian officials would have revealed a secret strategy to an Albanian political prisoner.)

Testing the Second Prediction

The second prediction of rational deterrence theory, for successful deterrence, is that the Albanians expected to avoid massive violence if they eschewed an armed rebellion. The overwhelming weight of evidence supports this prediction as well. Albanian officials reported this expectation at the time, and virtually all of those interviewed in retrospect continue to do so.

The only evidence against this prediction is from an official who was one of the first 23 members of the LDK, but quit in 1992 in frustration at its pacifist stance. Ajri Begu says that even at the time he wanted the Albanians to employ more confrontational tactics and eventually military force because, “If you are going to die every day, then let’s die now.” This is a metaphor, of course, suggesting that living under Serbian authority was tantamount to death. (It also is reminiscent of the statement in Chapter 6 by a Rwandan Tutsi rebel explaining that group’s tragic challenge: “We were not prepared to live unfree forever. That is ‘zombie-ism.’”)

In reality, although there was oppression in Kosovo, statistics indicate it was not nearly so severe as Begu’s rhetoric might suggest. Clark reports that Serbian police raided about 2,000 Albanian homes per year, which indicates that each Albanian faced about a 1-in-100 chance of having his home raided each year. In addition, from 1989-92, some 20,000 Albanians served 30

⁶ Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Former senior LDK official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Prishtina, August 8, 2000.

to 60 days in prison for suspected political activities, which means that each Albanian also faced about a 1-in-100 chance of being imprisoned during these years.⁷

The vast majority of Albanian officials did not view this low-level, albeit persistent risk of harassment as tantamount to death. Moreover, they expected that Belgrade would not attack them if they eschewed an armed challenge. As Rugova explained the Albanians' pacifism in 1992, "We believe it is better to do nothing and stay alive than be massacred." Many Albanian officials also had developed informal theories of Serbian behavior that underpinned their expectation that Albanian restraint would be reciprocated by the Serbs. For example, LDK co-founder Milazim Krasniqi says that over time there were two reasons why he believed Milosevic would not attack so long as he was not provoked by Albanian violence. Prior to 1995, he says, the Serbs were dedicating their resources and attention to the war in Bosnia, and so did not want to divert them to Kosovo unless they had to. After the Dayton accords of 1995, he says, Milosevic wanted to avoid a war in Kosovo if possible, "because he wanted the support of the international community." Similarly, a former senior LDK official who requests anonymity says that Serbia had a "two-pronged strategy" for Kosovo: "If there was a rise in militancy, Serbia wanted to fight a big preventive war." but if not, "Serbia was willing to accept total pacifism."⁸

Not only did the Albanians harbor the predicted expectation – that Serbian violence could be avoided if the Albanians hewed to pacifism – but this expectation proved correct. As analyst Michael Salla correctly observed in 1995, "the Albanians' disciplined campaign of non-violence has meant that there have been few cases of violent confrontation." Interestingly, this shows that Kosovo's Albanians understood Milosevic better than most popular western accounts that portrayed him as a bloodthirsty warmonger. As Clark observes, "Kosovo was a place where prior analysis would say 'nonviolence cannot work' – the opponent was a notorious 'ethnic cleanser.'" In reality, the Serbian leader preferred to rely on deterrence rather than war, if at all possible, because he had strong motivations to avoid violence. As Salla concluded, at a time when the Albanians still embraced pacifism: "The Serbian government therefore appears intent upon avoiding violent confrontation in Kosovo that could trigger further international sanctions.

⁷ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 79-80.

⁸ Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000. Former senior LDK official who requests anonymity, interview with author, Prishtina, August 8, 2000.

the destabilization of Macedonia, some form of intervention by Albania, and a wider Balkan war.”⁹

Testing the Third Prediction

The third prediction of rational deterrence theory, for an instance of successful deterrence, is that the Albanians did not expect that an armed rebellion could attain their goal of an independent Kosovo at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. There is strong evidence for this prediction as well. First, the Albanians did not think that they could defeat Serbia on their own. Second, they expected an armed rebellion to provoke a high price in retaliatory violence. Third, they did not expect that the international community would intervene to support them if they launched an armed rebellion. Rather, they thought the only way to attract decisive international intervention on their behalf was to remain non-violent. In light of subsequent events, the Albanian leaders from this period were correct in expecting that pacifism could avoid provoking Serbian violence. However, they were incorrect in expecting that such pacifism also would attract decisive international intervention on behalf of their goal of independence.

Albanian officials say explicitly that they did not expect that an armed uprising could achieve independence. For example, LDK co-founder Xhemajl Mustafa says the party embraced pacifism in part because the “LDK and Rugova were aware that the Albanians couldn’t confront Serb military capabilities.” As Rugova says succinctly: “To launch a military option was impossible in 1989-90.” He also underscores that relative power was the primary determinant of his strategy and actions, explaining that he chose pacifism over militarism because, “I envisioned a path to independence in conformance with our powers and capabilities.”¹⁰

Albanian officials also say they were unwilling to accept large-scale retaliation against their civilians that, as noted above, they expected if they launched an armed rebellion. Their fears and reluctance were reinforced when Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, and they witnessed how harshly the Serbs retaliated against the secessionist republics that had Serb populations.

⁹ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 6. Michael Salla, “Kosovo, Non-violence and the Break-up of Yugoslavia,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1995), p. 432. However, Salla did not foresee that the Albanians soon would switch to launching an armed rebellion. Thus, he predicted, “It is extremely unlikely that there will be an ethnic explosion in Kosovo” – a prediction that proved false less than three years later, when the Albanians launched their violent challenge.

¹⁰ Xhemajl Mustafa, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

Fazli Balaj says, "We always made sure not to challenge Serbia forcefully, because Serbs could easily use violence. . . . We were fully aware of what would happen if we started a military resistance. We saw what happened in Bosnia. We wanted to separate from Yugoslavia, but at low cost."¹¹ Likewise, in 1993, Rugova cited the Bosnian precedent when he warned about the potential for Serbian retaliation in Kosovo: "Within a few hours, they could wreak havoc on Kosova that would make Bosnia pale by comparison."¹²

It appears that Rugova's strong desire to avoid provoking Serbian retaliation was motivated both by humanitarian and strategic considerations. The strategic concern was that Serbian retaliation could kill or expel so many Albanians as to inhibit future efforts to achieve Kosovo's independence. For this reason, he rejected not only armed rebellion but even mildly confrontational forms of non-violent resistance, such as mass demonstrations. To preserve the future prospect of independence, he says, "Our main goal was to organize ourselves as a society and state to save the population. The danger of its extermination was very much there. . . . We wanted to preserve the population and the political elite in the country."¹³ However, it appears that Rugova was motivated not merely by his strategic desire to maximize the prospect of future independence, but also his humanitarian desire to minimize the human costs of achieving it. For example, he was quoted in 1998 as saying, "It would be better to wait a decade and achieve [independence] peacefully than try to rush and risk hundreds of thousands of lives."¹⁴ This humanitarian concern explains why he and his dominant faction of the LDK continued to oppose an armed uprising even after its prospects increased in 1998 with the inflow of weapons and money. As he explains in retrospect, "I continued to appeal against any violence because I knew what would come. I did so until March 1999, when half of the population already was out."¹⁵

¹¹ Fazli Balaj, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000.

¹² Ibrahim Rugova, "President Rugova's Ten-Point Action Plan on Kosova," February 16, 1993, in Ibrahim Berisha, et al., eds., *Albanian Democratic Movement in Former Yugoslavia: Documents: 1990-1993* (Prishtina: Kosova Information Center, 1993), p. 47

¹³ Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

¹⁴ Tihomir Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (May 1998), p. 27.

¹⁵ Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. In reality, although the mass exodus of Kosovo's Albanian population began in late March 1999, it was not until several weeks later that "half the population" had gone.

A key reason that the Albanians expected an armed rebellion to fail, during this initial period, is that they did not expect the international community to support such an effort. A former senior LDK official who requests anonymity says he eschewed militancy in the early- and mid-1990s because the international community supported Rugova's non-violent approach. "They never supported any violent means. . . . Without international support, what was the chance of Kosova?" LDK co-founder Ibrahim Berisha offers a similar explanation for the Albanians' initial decision to embrace pacifism. "There was no chance that the international community would support war in Kosova – neither diplomatic, let alone military, intervention. The international community's view against a military strategy was most decisive, because the Albanians would have no chance of victory" without international support. The first hint of a change he says, was the so-called "Christmas Warning" of December 1992, in which outgoing American President George H.W. Bush warned Milosevic that the United States would intervene if the Serbs started a war in Kosovo. At the time, however, LDK leaders say they did not perceive this statement as a guarantee of intervention if it were the Albanians that started the war. In any case, the Albanians still lacked the means – that is, the weapons – to do so.

Albanian officials originally expected that their only hope of attracting international support was to remain non-violent. LDK co-founder Mehmet Kraja says, "We were aware that war at that time would be suicide. We didn't have international support. . . . We had to develop a propaganda war to gain international support." Xhemajl Mustafa says the party believed it could attract intervention if it eschewed violence because, "in Europe, with the new world order, the policy would be to defend the small nation's human and political rights."¹⁶

In retrospect, the Albanians' initial non-violent strategy can be deemed only a partial success. On the one hand, their pacifism did forestall Serbian violence while they re-established a substantial degree of *de facto* autonomy. Indeed, Rugova defended the strategy on precisely these grounds in March 1998, stating: "The Serbian regime would like to see all Albanians leave Kosovo. The fact that we have our own government, our own system, that we are still here as a nation struggling for our freedom, can be considered a significant achievement."¹⁷ His foreign

¹⁶ Mehmet Kraja, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Xhemajl Mustafa, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, March 13, 1998, cited in International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Spring* (Sarajevo: International Crisis Group, March 1998), <http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=178>, [downloaded April 1998].

affairs adviser, Edita Tahiri, likewise argues: “We didn’t launch armed resistance [initially]. That’s why we didn’t see the war then.” On the other hand, the LDK’s passive resistance strategy never attracted sufficient international support to enable the Albanians to achieve their ultimate goal of an independent Kosovo. Theorists of non-violence, such as Johan Galtung, have noted that such outside support is essential for the success of pacifist movements. Michael Salla noted, in 1995, that this general rule also applied specifically to Kosovo, where “the success of a non-violent campaign is firmly linked to the degree that Albanians can utilize some linkage in the form of a third party between themselves and the Serbian government.”¹⁸ By failing to attract such decisive international intervention, the Albanians’ passive resistance strategy failed to achieve its ultimate objective.

Testing the Theory, Part 2: Explaining the Switch to Militancy

The common wisdom in the literature on Kosovo attributes the Albanians’ switch to militancy to two main factors. Most often cited is the failure of the 1995 Dayton accords (that ended the Bosnian civil war) to resolve the Albanians’ plight in Kosovo, thereby undermining the LDK’s claims that its pacifist strategy would attract international support sufficient to achieve independence. Troebst says that after the LDK’s exclusion from the Dayton negotiations, “almost instantly the united front of political forces of Kosovo split up. From early 1996 on, influential intellectuals like the leading literary historian and outspoken nationalist Rexhep Qosja challenged Rugova’s tactics of non-violent resistance by opting for an *Intifada*-type action.” Similarly, Hedges quotes a KLA fighter saying that Dayton “taught us a painful truth: those that want freedom must fight for it.” Likewise, Sullivan quotes an Albanian-American fundraiser for the KLA, Florin Krasniqi, who says: “It was Dayton. . . . That’s when I realized fighting was the only way. Peaceful resistance brought us nothing.”¹⁹

The second commonly cited cause of the switch to militancy in Kosovo is the 1997 civil war in neighboring Albania, during which that state’s arsenals were flung open, which made weapons suddenly available inexpensively in the region. The KLA “hit the jackpot,” says

¹⁸ Salla, “Kosovo, Non-violence and the Break-up of Yugoslavia,” pp. 432-33.

¹⁹ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 33. Chris Hedges, “Kosovo’s Next Masters?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (May/June 1999), pp. 29-31. Stacy Sullivan, “From Brooklyn to Kosovo, With Love and AK-47’s,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 22, 1998, pp. 52-54.

Sullivan. She also quotes KLA fundraiser Krasniqi as saying, “Kalashnikovs were going for \$10 each. The villagers were giving us ammunition for free.”²⁰

Although both of these factors certainly played important roles in the switch by Kosovo’s Albanians to militancy, the literature oversimplifies their impact and neglects other crucial factors. Most importantly, the literature ignores the causal role played by the Albanians’ expectations about international intervention. As revealed by testing the three hypotheses of rational deterrence theory below, it was the Albanians’ expectation that they could attract intervention by resorting to violence that proved to be the decisive cause of their switch to militancy.

Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that, during this later period, the Albanians no longer expected the better-armed Serbs to respond to an armed rebellion with retaliatory violence. There is no evidence for this hypothesis and plentiful evidence to the contrary. Serbian military superiority in the province remained obvious. The Kosovo Albanian newspaper, *Koha Ditore*, reported on March 1, 1998, that Belgrade had 6,500 Yugoslav army troops and 13,000 police already in Kosovo, with another 25,000 police able to arrive within 72 hours. By contrast the KLA at the time had less than 500 fighters, equipped only with small arms. Accordingly, Albanians across the political spectrum expected that a violent challenge would provoke massive Serbian retaliation. Indeed, many Albanians continued to oppose an armed rebellion because of the expected retaliation. For example, as noted above, Rugova says he opposed an armed rebellion until March 1999, “because I knew what would come.” Even the more militant LKCK, which was aiming toward an eventual mass armed uprising, nevertheless initially opposed the switch to militancy in 1998 as premature because of the expected retaliation. According to a senior LKCK official, Shukri Klinaku, his party warned the less patient militants in the KLA that they should “be careful. It won’t be a small war after which the Serbs concede, but rather a big war.”²¹

²⁰ Stacy Sullivan, “From Brooklyn to Kosovo,” pp. 52-54.

²¹ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 65. Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000.

Most importantly, the KLA militants who launched the armed challenge also fully expected it to provoke massive Serbian retaliation. Indeed, provoking such retaliation was a deliberate interim goal of their actions, in order to mobilize support for their effort both in Kosovo and internationally. Hashim Thaci, one of the founders of the KLA and the head of its political directorate during the war, subsequently admitted that, “We knew full well that any armed action we undertook would trigger a ruthless retaliation by Serbs against our people. . . . We knew we were endangering civilian lives, too, a great number of lives.”²² Similarly, a KLA fighter told the BBC that the January 1999 Serbian attack on Racak was not a surprise because the KLA had killed four Serbian policeman immediately prior. “It was guaranteed that every time we took action they would take revenge on civilians.” Likewise, Jakup Krasniqi, vice-commander of the KLA’s general staff, concedes: “It’s true that the danger that Serbs would retaliate against the civilian population was well known.”²³

Indeed, Emrush Xhemajli, a co-founder of the KLA, reveals that provoking such retaliation against Albanian civilians actually was the short-term goal of the KLA. The rebel attacks, he says, were intended to “make the enemy show its real face – become more vicious.” The KLA was confident its attacks would have this provocative effect, he says, because “every army that loses its security has to concentrate its strikes harder.” Offering further insight, Krasniqi defends the KLA attacks on grounds that the Serbian response was necessary for the medium-term goal of galvanizing the Albanian populace to action.²⁴ Finally, as detailed below, other rebels reveal that the long-term goal of provoking Serbian retaliation was to attract international humanitarian military intervention on behalf of the Albanians to achieve their goal of Kosovo’s independence.

²² Allan Little, “How NATO was sucked into Kosovo conflict,” *Sunday Telegraph*, February 27, 2000, p. 29. The quote in the article is ostensibly drawn from Transcript, Allan Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War,” BBC2, March 12, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/events/panorama/transcripts/transcript_12_03_00.txt [downloaded March 2000], the BBC2 documentary that Little produced, but the transcript of that documentary contains a slightly different version of Thaci’s quote: “Any armed action we undertook would bring retaliation against civilians. We knew we were endangering a great number of civilian lives.”

²³ Transcript, Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War”; quote is by KLA fighter Zymer Lubovci. Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

²⁴ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the Albanians switched to militancy because, at some time late in the pacifist period, they began to expect to suffer massive violence regardless of whether or not they launched an armed rebellion. However, there is no evidence of such an expectation prior to the launching of the violent challenge. To the contrary, as detailed above, from 1989-97 virtually all of Kosovo's Albanian officials across the political spectrum expected that Serbian violence could be avoided if the Albanians eschewed an armed rebellion. As in all such conflicts, once the violent challenge was launched, and provoked violent retaliation from the state, the Albanians' fears of impending violence began to increase. However, it must be underscored that this was a consequence, not a cause, of the violent challenge.

Testing the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis of rational deterrence theory predicts that the Albanians switched to armed rebellion because they came to expect that it could attain their goal of an independent Kosovo at an acceptable cost in retaliatory violence. The evidence strongly supports this hypothesis. Moreover, process tracing reveals that the KLA's optimism was based on its expectation that such a rebellion would attract international humanitarian military intervention on behalf of Albanians. Kosovo's Albanians continued to believe, as they had in the earlier period, that they could not attain their goal of independence without international intervention. However, the rebels believed that by launching an armed rebellion, which they knew they could not win on their own, they could attract sufficient intervention to prevail. Not only did the KLA expect retaliation against Albanian civilians in response to its armed rebellion, but KLA's strategy actually depended crucially on provoking such Serbian atrocities in order to attract international intervention.

The preponderance of evidence indicates that the Albanians continued to believe that an armed rebellion would fail to achieve the goal of independence, unless it was assisted by international intervention. Admittedly, Kosovo's rebels did acquire many light weapons on their own, starting in 1997, paid for by the diaspora and imported from neighboring Albania. For example, in January 1998, as the violent challenge heated up, a NATO official said the KLA was benefiting from a "wholesale transfer of weapons to Kosovo" from Albania. However, only one

Kosovo Albanian official, out of several dozen interviewed, even suggests that the province's Albanians expected to use such light arms to defeat the fully-equipped Yugoslav army by themselves. This official, Xhafer Shatri, who was information minister in the shadow government, claims the Albanians became more optimistic about their own military prospects as they watched Bosnia's lightly armed Muslims fend off defeat by Serb forces for more than three years. Shatri also says that members of the "Bosnian army convinced [the Albanians] that Serbs ran away like wild pigs once [the Bosnian army] formed units." This, destroyed the "myth of the invulnerable Serb soldiers," he says, and led the Albanians to believe that "Serbs were only brave to fight versus unarmed civilians." Accordingly, once the Albanians began to acquire arms, they expected that they too could defeat the Serbs, according to Shatri.²⁵

However, all of the other Albanian officials interviewed say they expected that victory would require international intervention. For example, KLA co-founder Emrush Xhemajli says, "We thought that with the International Community on our side, we could win the war. But otherwise we would plan for a 10- to 15-year war, with a strategy to get the international community on our side." Shukri Klinaku, a senior official of the LKCK, which merged with the KLA in May 1998, says that while both groups hoped their combined rebellion "would grow into a big popular movement and remove Serbia from many positions on its own," they were also aware that "the Albanians were weak, so they could do nothing without NATO. Without NATO, the Albanians would have been eliminated."²⁶

Despite recognizing their own organic weakness, the Albanians launched their armed rebellion because they expected that once it started the international community would intervene to support them. The Albanians harbored this expectation despite the international community's repeated public claims that it did not support their goal of independence and would not serve as their air force. Ibrahim Berisha, a co-founder of the LDK who left it in 1992, says, "No matter the public declaration that came out from the West, an atmosphere was created that in case of conflict – especially after '98 – they [the international community] would intervene in Kosovo, and there was no doubt about it." Western officials at the time were well aware that Kosovo's Albanians harbored this expectation. For example, in March 1998, Richard Huckaby, director of

²⁵ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 151. Xhafer Shatri, interview with author, Prishtina, August 10, 2000.

²⁶ Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000. Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

the U.S. Information Agency office in Kosovo, bemoaned: "One of our main struggles is to convince them that we really don't support independence. . . . They just don't get it." Likewise, in July 1998, a western diplomat noted that successful international efforts to compel Serb restraint had backfired: "Instead of calming things down and letting us figure out how to get everyone to the negotiation table, what we've done is give the Albanian fighters a feeling of euphoria. . . . This makes them bolder, and it also makes other Albanians want to join them." In January 1999, an American official was quoted as saying that the KLA rebels "think we support their goals. But that's only because they're not listening to us. They hear the music, but they don't pay attention to the words."²⁷

The Albanians also did not fear that their own terror tactics – killing Serb police and civilians, as well as Albanian civilians suspected of collaboration with Serb authorities – would disqualify them for international support. Regional analyst Tihomir Loza attributes this to the precedent of Bosnia, where the Dayton accords had legitimized groups that committed war crimes. He quotes Bardhyl Mahmuti, of the LPK party that created the KLA, saying: "The media reported many times that the Bosnian Serb terrorist paramilitary units committed crimes. Those forces, however, became a legal and legitimate army at Dayton."²⁸

More generally, the Albanians' expectation – that by launching an armed rebellion they would attract international support – was the result of a series of signals communicated by various international actors, intentionally or otherwise. Most of these signals apparently were sent inadvertently, because there is no evidence that any major western government preferred a war in Kosovo to perpetuation of the pre-1998 *status quo*. For the most part, international actors were trying only to deter Milosevic from aggression, but in so doing they inadvertently sent signals of support to Albanian militants. This problem often arises when a third party tries to deter both sides in a conflict, which Tim Crawford has labeled the challenge of "pivotal deterrence."²⁹

²⁷ Ibrahim Berisha, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Envoy Warns Serbs, Kosovo Rebels; U.S. Urges Restraint on Both Sides of Strife," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1998, p. 21. Mike O'Connor, "Rebels Claim First Capture of a City in Kosovo," *New York Times*, July 20, 1998, p. 3. Michael Ignatieff, "The Dream of Albanians," *New Yorker*, January 11, 1999, p. 37.

²⁸ Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," p. 29.

²⁹ Timothy Crawford, *Hard Bargains, Fragile Peace: Pivotal Deterrence in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

The first such signal was President George H.W. Bush's "Christmas warning" of December 1992, which threatened Milosevic that if he launched aggression in Kosovo, the United States would intervene militarily. Early the following year, President Bill Clinton reiterated the warning. Then, in July 1995, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill barring the lifting of sanctions on Yugoslavia until termination of "excessive Serbian control" of Kosovo.

According to Ibrahim Berisha, however, the more important signals came later. "We perceived the change in '96-'97. The rhetoric of world leaders versus Milosevic changed after that. They threatened Milosevic not to use force or commit crimes. If it had been said by small powers, it wouldn't have meant anything, but it was said by America and world powers. Our men who were armed in those days understood that signal." Lirak Celaj, a KLA fighter, says a decisive sign of support came after the first few months of war in Kosovo, when U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke was photographed meeting with a member of the KLA in June 1998. "I knew that since then, that USA, NATO, will put us in their hands."³⁰

However, perhaps the clearest international signal of encouragement to the rebels was that the international community invariably devoted more resources and attention to the Balkans whenever and wherever violence escalated. By comparison, western states had paid relatively little attention to Kosovo during the eight years when the LDK's pacifism had left the province essentially quiescent. As early as 1996, Veton Surroi warned that the international community was sending a dangerous signal by devoting resources to war-ravaged Bosnia while ignoring Kosovo. "If international attention can only be obtained through war, and if war is merely an intermediate stage on the road to recognition of the right of self-determination, this is a sufficient signal to forces distrustful of peaceful methods in Kosova." After the KLA's turn to militancy spurred increased western involvement in the province, he reiterated this warning: "There is a message that is being sent to the Kosovars – if you want to draw international attention you have to fight for it. That is exactly it. You need to use violence to achieve your goals."³¹

³⁰ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fns. 210, 214. Ibrahim Berisha, interview with author, Prishtina, August 2, 2000. Transcript, Little, "Moral Combat: NATO at War." Holbrooke met with the KLA on June 24, 1998 in the Kosovo village of Junik.

³¹ Veton Surroi, "The Albanian National Question: The Post Dayton Pay-Off," *War Report*, No. 41, May 1996. Transcript, Little, "Moral Combat: NATO at War."

In addition to inadvertent signals, some mid-level western officials appear to have explicitly encouraged the Albanians to launch an armed uprising. For example, according to Dugi Gorani, who subsequently became one of the Albanian negotiators at Rambouillet: “there was this foreign diplomat who once told me, ‘Look unless you pass the quota of five thousand deaths you’ll never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from the foreign diplomacy.’” Likewise, Shkelzen Maliqi, the politician turned journalist, says that during the pacifist phase, “Foreign diplomats – for example, Americans and Swedes – in private would say, ‘you need to fight.’ These were second and third secretaries expressing their personal views.” Perhaps most intriguing, Emrush Xhemajli, of the LPK and KLA, says western officials met with representatives of these two groups in Europe prior to the uprising of 1998 and sent them similarly mixed messages. “The U.S. and European views depended on who and at what level. At the diplomatic level, the diplomats always repeated the official position [against militancy]. But at other levels – for example, the intelligence services – they were more realistic about the way the Balkans were heading.”³² Thus, it appears that at least some mid-level western officials undermined the stated policies of their own governments by conveying to Kosovo’s Albanians that the international community would support a turn to militancy. It is not clear what accounts for mid-level western officials contradicting their governments’ official position in this manner, although three possibilities are obvious: individual insubordination; the bureaucratic politics of agencies that disagreed with their government’s policy; or attempts to gather intelligence from the rebel groups by feigning support for them. What is clear, however, is that these signals further encouraged the Albanians to expect international support if they launched an armed rebellion.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Albanian rebels did not rely simply on a passive hope or expectation of intervention, but rather pursued a deliberate strategy to attract such aid by provoking Serbian retaliation against Albanian civilians. Thus, the KLA viewed retaliatory killing of Albanian civilians not merely as an unavoidable cost to be endured, but rather as an interim goal to be pursued in order to assure subsequent victory. The KLA

³² Transcript, Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War.” Shkelzen Maliqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 4, 2000. Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000, says these talks sometimes were initiated by western officials and other times by the Albanians. LPK and KLA representatives in Europe had contact mostly with German officials, he says, while Swiss authorities kept more distance. These militant Albanian organizations had “good contacts” with European authorities by the mid-1990s, he says, while direct talks with U.S. officials started only in 1997.

embraced this strategy after observing preceding humanitarian interventions in the Balkans. For example, in May 1998, Tihomir Loza reported, based on interviews with the LPK's Bardhyl Mahmuti, that the KLA's aim was to control the countryside in order to "attract heavy Yugoslav barrages and thus win strong international sympathy, as the Croats did in Vukovar." Likewise, Allan Little, who conducted extensive interviews with the rebels for his BBC documentary, reported that, "The war in neighboring Bosnia taught them the value of a resort to the gun. . . . From the remote wooded hillsides of rural Kosovo, they embarked on a strategy to draw the world's most powerful military alliance into their struggle." Albanian negotiator Dugi Gorani concedes, "Every single Albanian realized that the more civilians die, intervention comes nearer. . . . The more civilians were killed, the chances of international intervention became bigger, and the KLA of course realized that."³³

One Albanian rebel official, Jakup Krasniqi, denies that the KLA's grand strategy included intentionally provoking retaliation against Albanian civilians. To the contrary, he claims, the rebels initially strove explicitly to avoid provoking such retaliation by not occupying inhabited areas. Only after the initial Serbian attacks on Drenica in March 1998, he says, did the KLA decide to occupy inhabited areas, in order to protect Albanians from Serb violence. He concedes that subsequent Serbian attacks on rebel positions did kill civilians, but insists these deaths were not intentionally provoked.³⁴ However, this account does not hold up against either the facts at the time or the subsequent admissions of other rebel officials. The reality is that Serbian forces initially targeted Drenica because that is where the rebels were based. If the rebels truly had sought to protect Kosovo's Albanian populace from attacks, they would have retreated to their rear bases in Albania or to less populated areas of Kosovo. Instead, by occupying more of Kosovo's territory, the rebels knowingly put additional Albanians at risk of retaliation. The real reason that the rebels had not occupied more territory previously was not their noble desire to avoid provoking retaliation against civilians, but rather their lack of personnel and weapons. When these resources suddenly became available in early 1998, after

³³ Transcript, Little, "Moral Combat: NATO at War." Loza, "Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks," p. 34. Gorani claims that, "It will remain I would say an eternal dilemma whether the KLA initiated these battles in the civilian inhabited areas because it knew that the Serbs will retaliate on them. Personally I don't think so, but of course, it was a war." However, this dilemma is clarified by the other quotes above from KLA and LPK officials, indicating this was a deliberate strategy.

³⁴ Jakup Krasniqi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

Serbia's initial harsh retaliation mobilized Albanians in Kosovo and abroad, the rebels immediately used the resources to occupy more territory.

Other rebel officials are much more frank. For instance, Emrush Xhemajli says, "We knew our attacks would not have any military value. Our goal was not to destroy the Serb military force. But we would upset our enemy and with the passage of time would tire him, make him nervous, and [make him] show his real face – become more vicious. Because Milosevic at that time was pretending that he had solved the Kosovo issue better than anyone had solved his national issue. Our goal was to show the international community" the vicious face of the Serbs. This account is confirmed by Shukri Klinaku, whose LKCK debated strategy with the KLA before eventually merging with it in May 1998. Whereas the LKCK wanted to wait until the Albanians were prepared to fight on their own, he says, "The KLA wanted to go for it now. They said we need to start a fire in Kosovo. The KLA thought small actions would bring it to a head and that would force Milosevic to the table." He sums up the KLA strategy with his own analogy, saying they were "like a weak boxer who got in the ring with the stronger and prompts a reaction from the stronger. But then the others [i.e., the international community] got in the ring to help the KLA."³⁵

Thus, process tracing reveals that the common wisdom about Kosovo's violent challenge is only partially correct. The snubbing of the Albanians at the Dayton negotiations of 1995 and the loosing of Albania's arsenals in 1997 did play important roles, but not in the simple manner commonly understood. Rather, it was the interaction of these events with expectations about forthcoming international military intervention that proved decisive in Kosovo. The crucial lesson of Dayton for Kosovo's Albanians was not merely that the international community would ignore pacifists. Rather, it was also that the international community eventually would reward militants who provoked a losing fight, because the international norm of humanitarian intervention dictated aiding the perceived victim regardless of responsibility for the conflict.

Likewise, although the opening of Albania's arsenals was essential to enabling the violent challenge in neighboring Kosovo, it was not by itself sufficient. Equally important was the KLA's expectation that if it used these weapons to provoke Serbian retaliation, the international community would intervene decisively on the Albanians' behalf. Had the KLA not

³⁵ Emrush Xhemajli, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000. Shukri Klinaku, interview with author, Prishtina, August 7, 2000.

harbored this expectation, or had the group been unwilling to accept retaliation against innocent civilians as the cost of victory, the light arms from Albania would not have sparked a violent challenge in Kosovo, because no one expected these weapons to enable victory over Serbia unless heavy Albanian civilian casualties triggered foreign intervention. Perhaps the best proof is that Rugova's LDK, which did not expect militancy to garner international support and did not view massive Serbian retaliation as an acceptable cost, did not favor an armed rebellion even after the weapons became available. Thus, the violent challenge in Kosovo was not, as commonly understood, caused merely by the combination of frustration and weapons. Rather, the other crucial variables were the KLA's expectation that provoking Serbian retaliation against Albanian civilians would garner international intervention, and the KLA's willingness to accept such retaliation as the cost of victory.

Summary and Further Observations

Rational deterrence theory is confirmed during both periods in Kosovo. The Albanians' switch from pacifism to militarism is explained by changes to the causal variables of the third hypothesis. By contrast, the first and second hypotheses do not account for this switch, because their causal variables remained constant. In both periods, the Albanians expected that they could escape Serbian violence by embracing pacifism, and that launching an armed rebellion would provoke violent retaliation against Albanian civilians. In the initial period, the LDK embraced pacifism because it expected that an armed rebellion would fail at high cost, based on Serbia's obvious military superiority, the clear deterrent threats from Belgrade, and the LDK's expectation that the international community would not support Albanian militancy. In the later period, the KLA launched an armed rebellion because it expected that by provoking Serbian retaliation against Kosovo's Albanian civilians it would attract humanitarian military intervention sufficient to achieve the goal of independence. The timing of the switch was determined by three factors: (1) the Albanians' emerging expectation that pacifism would not attract decisive international intervention; (2) the Albanians' emerging expectation that the international community would intervene to help the Albanians if they provoked the Serbs into violent retaliation; and (3) the availability of weapons to provoke such retaliation. It appears that the first two factors were satisfied by the end of 1995. Thus, the actual timing of the shift from pacifism to militancy was determined by the third factor, the sudden availability of weapons

from neighboring Albania in 1997. If such weapons had not become available, it is unlikely that the violent challenge could have been launched. If such weapons had become available a few years earlier, in 1995, it is likely that the switch to militancy would have occurred at that earlier date. However, it is unclear what would have happened if such weapons had become available in Kosovo in 1991, prior to the Albanians losing faith in pacifism and learning from the experiences of Croatia and Bosnia that provoking Serbian retaliation was likely to garner them international intervention.

Selecting for Militancy

Perhaps the most interesting finding is that both the pacifist grand strategy of the LDK and the militant grand strategy of the KLA were based on attracting international intervention to achieve Kosovo's independence. As Johnstone observes, "The entire strategy of the ethnic Albanian side in the past decade has been based on mobilizing international support, first political and eventually military, on behalf of Kosovo's secession from Serbia." However, the two strategies were built on completely opposite expectations of the best way to attract such intervention. The LDK expected that only by eschewing violence could Kosovo's Albanians win international support, because this was what the international community declared in its efforts to avert violence in Kosovo. The KLA, by contrast, expected that only by initiating violence and provoking Serbian retaliation could the Albanians attract intervention, because this was the empirical pattern in the region starting in the early 1990s.³⁶

In the event, the international community proved the KLA right, by intervening decisively only after the Albanians resorted to violence. During the preceding period of Albanian pacifism, the West had lent rhetorical support to the Albanians and employed moderate economic leverage against Belgrade on behalf of some of the Albanian demands, but with little effect. In part, this lack of results stemmed from the Albanians' unwillingness to compromise and settle for anything less than independence, but it also reflected a lack of intensive western involvement. By contrast, once the KLA provoked Serbian retaliation, the international community devoted much greater resources to resolving the Kosovo issue. The West threatened Belgrade with military intervention, deployed high-level envoys, forced Milosevic to accede to

³⁶ Diana Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem and the International Community," *Dialogue*, No. 25 (Spring 1998), <http://www.bglinc.com/business/dialogue/diana.html> [downloaded 1999].

an international observation mission, and eventually carried out three months of air strikes that compelled Serbia to acquiesce to the *de facto* independence of most of Kosovo. Because the international community's humanitarian intervention policy rewarded those who resorted to violence, it effectively encouraged such violence.

Therefore, as in the other cases examined in this study, the international norm of humanitarian intervention contributed to producing the very outcome in Kosovo that it was intended to prevent – massive violence against civilians. By intervening in the violent conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia, but failing to support adequately the pacifist LDK, the West effectively was selecting for militancy in Kosovo, as some observers had warned even before the public emergence of the KLA in late 1997. For example, in 1995, Michael Salla noted that, “If non-violent action is agreed to be a desirable method of resolving conflict, the support of the international community for the [pacifist] campaign in Kosovo is critical.” When peacekeepers deployed to Bosnia in 1996, Veton Surroi warned that, “The US military presence in the region . . . may encourage radical Albanian groups.” Because the Dayton accords largely ignored the Albanian pacifists, Fabian Schmidt warned in 1996 that, “The lesson for many nationalist [Albanian] Kosovars may be that only by starting a military conflict can they achieve independence.” Schmidt also reported that Western officials already had begun to see evidence of this dynamic, so they were renewing efforts for a negotiated resolution in Kosovo. In reality, however, the international community never devoted substantial resources to Kosovo until the escalation of violence two years later. Had the international community intervened during the pacifist phase, it could well have discouraged violence, but intervening after the turn to militancy only encouraged further violence.³⁷

In January 1998, Jonathan Clarke warned prophetically: “If they [Kosovo's Albanians] conclude that they have Western backing for secession from Serbia, they may act rashly.” Throughout the remainder of that year, Western diplomatic intervention and threats of military intervention against Belgrade suggested to the Albanians that they enjoyed precisely such Western backing for secession, which prompted them, as predicted, to act rashly by escalating their rebellion. As Chris Hedges observed just prior to NATO's 1999 air campaign, “By launching the current rebellion . . . and drawing international attention to the conflict, the rebel

³⁷ Salla, “Kosovo, Non-violence and the Break-up of Yugoslavia,” p. 436. Fabian Schmidt, “Supporting the Status Quo,” *War Report*, No. 41, May 1996. Surroi, “The Albanian National Question.”

group has done more in a year to further the cause of independence for Kosovo than Rugova was able to do over the preceding decade.”³⁸

Diana Johnstone also predicted, in early 1998, virtually all of the forthcoming unintended consequences of the West’s well-intentioned but fundamentally misguided humanitarian policy towards the Balkans:

The policy of punishing Belgrade is leading to the further disintegration of the last truly multi-ethnic country in the Balkans – all in the name of ‘multi-ethnicism.’ . . . Encouraged by their image as victims of Serbian oppression, enjoying strong support from Western governments and human rights organizations, Kosovo’s ethnic Albanian nationalists have no incentive to settle for anything less than their ultimate goal: Greater Albania.³⁹

After the western bombing campaign had compelled Milosevic’s withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, Allan Little confirmed this ironic lesson: “NATO’s moral war rewarded those who took up arms.”⁴⁰ Moreover, following the withdrawal of Serbian forces, the triumphant Albanians proceeded to ethnically cleanse more than half of the province’s Serbian population. Soon after, related groups of Albanian rebels – indeed, sometimes including the very same fighters – launched armed secessionist rebellions in neighboring southern Serbia and Macedonia. As Johnstone had warned so presciently, the West’s humanitarian intervention policy, intended to promote peaceful multi-ethnicism, had produced exactly the opposite outcome of militant nationalism.

What If?

The preceding analysis explains why Kosovo’s Albanians initially embraced pacifism, why they later switched to militancy, and how international efforts to deter conflict in Kosovo inadvertently promoted it. However, in order to assess the relative merits of the Albanians’ competing pacifist and militant strategies, and to draw lessons for more purposive intervention in the future, it is useful to consider what might have happened had the Albanians or the international community acted differently. Specifically, at least four counter-factual scenarios

³⁸ Jonathan Clarke, “Kosovo Tempts the Meddlesome to Incite Another Ethnic War. Balkans: The Europeans Whose ‘Help’ Ignited Bosnia Are At It Again, and the U.S. May Be Drawn Further Into the Fight,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1998. Hedges, “Kosovo’s Next Masters?” p. 37.

³⁹ Johnstone, “Notes on the Kosovo Problem.”

⁴⁰ Transcript, Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War.”

are useful to consider: (1) During the initial phase, if the Albanians had been willing to negotiate with Milosevic and to settle for restoration of autonomy, rather than insisting on independence; (2) During the initial phase, if the Albanians had voted in Serbian and Yugoslav elections rather than boycotting them, to try to remove Milosevic from office; (3) During the initial phase, if the international community had pressured the Albanians and offered incentives to Belgrade to encourage both sides to agree to a restoration of autonomy; and (4) During the later phase, if the international community had declared publicly that it would not intervene if Albanian militants deliberately provoked a Serbian counter-insurgency campaign. Additionally, it is useful to examine what the Albanian pacifists say in retrospect they would have done differently.

In the first counterfactual scenario, the Albanians would have been willing to compromise their extreme goals and negotiate with Milosevic. Although the pacifist means utilized by the Albanians from 1989-97 were extremely moderate, their goals were uncompromisingly extreme. The Albanians stubbornly insisted that Kosovo's independence was the only acceptable outcome and refused to take up Milosevic's repeated offers of bilateral negotiations to establish terms for restoration of the province's autonomy. Failure to restore autonomy had two serious consequences: in the short run, the Albanian populace was forced to continue living as second-class citizens, subject to police harassment and other indignities; in the long run, the failure of pacifism to achieve either formal autonomy or independence opened political space for emergence of the militant KLA alternative. Serbian sociologist Dusan Janjic warned in 1996 that unless Rugova was willing to consider "a more flexible attitude towards participating in the political life of Serbia and Yugoslavia, the Albanian movement is bound to split into a political wing and violent military wing."⁴¹

However, it is not certain that compromise by Rugova either would have been reciprocated by Belgrade or would have averted the rise of the KLA. Perhaps the best evidence that compromise would have been reciprocated comes from Serbia's other formerly autonomous province, Vojvodina. Rather than contesting Serbia's revocation of its autonomy by resorting either to parallel institutions or armed rebellion, Vojvodina grudgingly accepted that it had lost some local control to Belgrade and made the best of the situation. As a result, Vojvodina did not suffer any of the retaliation endured by Kosovo for refusing to accept Belgrade's authority, such as police harassment, wholesale dismissals, and exclusion from schools. However, opposing

⁴¹ Dusan Janjic, "Towards Dialogue or Division," *War Report*, No. 41, May 1996.

evidence comes from the abortive education agreement of 1996, in which Rugova compromised by negotiating a separate deal on education without addressing his main goal of independence. Initially, Milosevic reciprocated, possibly in good faith but also to reduce international criticism, by agreeing to let the Albanians return to state secondary schools. However, this concession sparked such a hostile reaction from Serb nationalists, who were Milosevic's main political competitors, that he refused to implement the agreement for more than a year. This suggests that Milosevic, due to domestic political considerations, would have been unwilling to restore autonomy to the Albanians even if they had been willing to compromise their goal of independence. Moreover, most of Rugova's political opponents also reacted angrily to the education agreement because it deferred the goal of independence and implicitly recognized Serbian sovereignty. If Rugova had gone even further as proposed in this counterfactual scenario, explicitly abandoning the goal of independence to reach a compromise with Belgrade on restoring autonomy, he would have been pilloried as a traitor by many Albanians. As a result, it is possible that even if Belgrade sincerely had been willing to restore full autonomy to Kosovo, the Albanians might have rejected the offer and nevertheless resorted to militancy, in order to pursue the goal of independence.

In a second counterfactual scenario, the Albanians would have attempted to improve their status by abandoning their electoral boycott and voting in Serbian and Yugoslav elections to help elect a more moderate leadership in Belgrade.⁴² The boycott actually facilitated Milosevic's remaining in power by enabling him to fill Kosovo's 42 seats out of the 250 in the Serbian assembly largely with members of his own party.⁴³ Accordingly, Djilas avers that, "If the Albanians had voted, they could have decisively influenced the presidential elections in Serbia and Yugoslavia."⁴⁴ Judah likewise claimed in 1998 that, "If they [the Albanians] had been in parliament they could, in alliance with other opponents of Milosevic, have brought about his fall years ago."⁴⁵

⁴² Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, p. 85, notes that the Albanians boycotted Serbian parliamentary elections starting in December 1990, but kept their seats in the Yugoslav assembly through the end of 1991. By contrast, the populace of Vojvodina continued to vote in Serbian and Yugoslav elections despite the revocation of autonomy.

⁴³ Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem," reports the figures of 42 and 250. Isuf Berisha, "Pristina's One-Party Rule," *War Report*, February 1994, p. 12, reported in early 1994 that of 24 representatives "elected" in the preceding election to the Serbian parliament from Kosovo, 21 were from Milosevic's party, two from Vojislav Seselj's even more extreme Serbian nationalist party, and one from a more moderate party.

⁴⁴ Aleksa Djilas, "Imagining Kosovo," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5, (September/October 1998), p. 127.

⁴⁵ Tim Judah, "Will there be a war in Kosovo?" *New York Review of Books*, May 14, 1998, p. 38

However, it is not quite so clear that the Albanians could have ousted Milosevic by voting or that his ouster would have improved their prospects very much, if at all. For three reasons, abandoning the election boycott might not have succeeded at removing Milosevic from office: First, as some LDK officials feared, Albanian participation might have triggered a reactive boost in Serbian nationalist support for Milosevic.⁴⁶ Second, Milosevic could have manipulated election results. (Although such manipulation eventually led to his downfall, it was less likely to do so in the early 1990s when his popularity was higher.) Third, even if Milosevic and his allies had fallen short of an absolute majority, in order to topple him the Albanians would have had to form a coalition with Serbia's leading opposition parties, most of which were nationalistic and unlikely to ally with them.

Moreover, even if Serbia's opposition parties had entered into a temporary coalition of convenience with the Albanians in order to topple Milosevic, it is far from certain that their eventual policies would have been any more benign towards the Albanians. Indeed, there was active debate in the 1990s about whether the Serbian opposition, if it replaced Milosevic, would be more – or less – accommodating towards Kosovo's Albanians. In 1996, Dusan Janjic argued that almost all of the Serbian opposition parties favored some form of liberalization for Kosovo, at least rhetorically: Vuk Draskovic touted autonomy; Vojislav Kostunica advocated limited local decentralization; Zoran Djindjic promoted regionalism; and even Milosevic's own wife, whose party was allied with his, supported autonomy. Presenting a similar view in 1997, Heraclides wrote that, "The parties of the democratic opposition, as well as the ruling coalition, seem to be settling for some form of autonomous rule, provided that secession is out and the region does not have the trappings of a state authority."⁴⁷

However, several facts undermine these benign characterizations of the era's Serbian opposition. Most importantly, in 1996, these same purportedly moderate opposition parties criticized Milosevic so harshly for making minimal concessions to the Albanians on education that he was compelled to block implementation of the education agreement for a year and a half. Thus, it appears that the Serbian opposition was even more nationalistic, and less likely to compromise with the Albanians, than Milosevic. Supporting this view, Albanian analyst

⁴⁶ Muhamet Hamiti, interview with author, Prishtina, August 5, 2000.

⁴⁷ Janjic, "Towards Dialogue or Division." Alexis Heraclides, "The Kosovo Conflict and Its Resolution," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1997), p. 322.

Shkelzen Maliqi recalls that, “In the campaign, they [Milosevic’s party] were the only ones who maintained a certain leavening of realism, keeping the possibility of formal autonomy for Kosovo on the table.”⁴⁸ Likewise, German analyst Stefan Troebst writes that in 1996, “The whole spectrum of Serbian political opposition to Milosevic was even more nationalistic than ‘Slobo’ himself. . . . The ideas of Vojislav Seselj, Vuk Draskovic, and Zoran Djindjic on Kosovo were much more radical than Milosevic’s comparatively flexible approach – even Vesna Pesic was no longer an exception among the opposition.”⁴⁹

Finally, even if elements of the Serbian opposition had been amenable to some restoration of Kosovo’s autonomy, they certainly were not open to granting the province independence as the Albanians demanded. Thus, to make a deal with the Serbian opposition, the Albanians would have had to sacrifice their goal of independence. But if they were willing to do that, they also could have cut a deal directly with Milosevic, as he was offering, without taking a chance on elections and the policies of the Serbian opposition.

So long as the LDK remained committed to the goal of independence, however, it remained better off eschewing the vote for two reasons. First, by boycotting elections – perhaps the quintessential state institution – it preserved the purity of its campaign for independence in both domestic and international eyes. The international community, which in principle was opposed to violating sovereignty by supporting secession, was more likely to reconsider if it perceived that the Albanians were completely unwilling to participate in Serbian and Yugoslav institutions. Second, the Albanians were more likely to attract international support if their opponent was perceived as an unreasonable aggressor like Milosevic. By boycotting the vote, they helped preserve in office the perfect foil.

The third counterfactual scenario envisions that the international community had engaged in a more assertive strategy to forge a compromise solution for Kosovo prior to the Albanians switching from pacifism to militancy. Such a strategy would have required two components: (1) applying pressure on the Albanians to lower their goal from independence to autonomy (or negotiated partition of the province), by making such a concession the price of Western support; and (2) offering incentives to Belgrade, including the removal of remaining economic sanctions, in return for its accepting such a compromise. Although pressuring the perceived victim in the

⁴⁸ Shkelzen Maliqi, “Slender Threads for Albanian-Serb Dialogue,” *War Report*, February 1994, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fns. 39–42.

conflict (the Albanians) would have appeared unseemly, such pressure was essential to resolving the situation peacefully, because Belgrade never would have acquiesced voluntarily to the Albanian demand for independence of the entire province. Partly in recognition of this fact, the international community declared repeatedly that it favored autonomy rather than independence for Kosovo, but it never applied pressure on the Albanians to lower their goal. Indeed, pressure was applied only on Belgrade, which undercut the West's rhetoric by seeming to support the Albanians' goal of independence. As Clark observes, U.S. threats and warnings to Milosevic not to use force in Kosovo – including Bush's Christmas warning of December 1992, Clinton's reiteration of this threat in February 1993, and subsequent threats of unilateral air strikes – “suggested that Kosovo had a much higher level of priority than events were to bear out. Among the population of Kosovo, this reinforced their faith that some kind of international intervention would resolve their situation.”⁵⁰

However, it is unclear whether Western pressure on the Albanians and incentives to the Serbs actually could have forged a compromise solution. Johnstone raises the possibility. For example, she says, “without the prospect of decisive outside intervention on their behalf, the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo might have tried to make use of the existing legal framework” in Yugoslavia to restore autonomy, rather than going outside that framework to seek independence.⁵¹

Yet, there are two reasons for skepticism about whether such early, assertive, preventive diplomatic intervention would have worked. First, the international community's influence over Kosovo's Albanians was not infinite. Although the Albanians designed their grand strategy specifically to attract international support, they proved unwilling to meet certain demands. For example, international actors repeatedly pleaded with the Albanians to participate in Serbian and Yugoslav elections, in order to unseat Milosevic, but they refused. Thus, it is possible that no amount of international pressure could have persuaded the Albanians to curtail their goal of independence. Second, the international community did offer some economic incentives to Milosevic, but these failed to elicit major concessions from him on Kosovo. For example, the European Union lifted sanctions on Yugoslavia in April 1997 as an incentive for liberalization including real dialogue on Kosovo. However, the EU re-imposed the sanctions eight months

⁵⁰ Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, pp. 89, 117.

⁵¹ Johnstone, “Notes on the Kosovo Problem.”

later, in January 1998, because of Belgrade's refusal even to implement the earlier education agreement.⁵² Two months later, just as fighting was breaking out in Kosovo in March 1998, both the EU and Germany again offered Milosevic economic incentives if he would compromise to restore the province's autonomy. But these incentives also failed to induce his cooperation.⁵³

Still, it is possible that earlier, more substantial incentives to Milosevic might have induced concessions from him on Kosovo that the Albanians would have settled for. Clearly, by 1998 it was too late for such offers because the KLA had transformed Kosovo into a military conflict and was completely opposed to any compromise. However, if the incentives had come earlier, and if the pacifist LDK had agreed to lower its goal from independence to autonomy, Milosevic might well have seized the opportunity to strike a deal. Indeed, in the earlier Bosnia conflict, there is ample evidence that he was persuaded by international economic incentives to reduce his support to Serb nationalists and to embrace numerous compromises, from the Vance-Owen plan through the Dayton accords. European states attempted to replicate this dynamic by offering Milosevic similar incentives on Kosovo, but the United States blocked them by refusing to lift the "outer wall" of sanctions on Yugoslavia until *after* resolution of all outstanding issues including Kosovo. Had the United States joined the Europeans in offering incentives in 1997, or earlier, Belgrade would have had considerably greater incentive for compromise and cooperation.⁵⁴ As events actually transpired, the incentives offered to Milosevic were both too little and too late. Had they been bigger and earlier, they might have succeeded.

In the fourth counterfactual scenario, the international community would have attempted to stem the Albanians' armed rebellion soon after it was launched in 1998, to avert Serbian retaliation and the resulting escalatory spiral of violence. This initiative would have required western leaders, and especially U.S. officials, to take two steps: (1) warning the KLA that humanitarian intervention would not be forthcoming if they provoked retaliation against their own people; and (2) permitting Yugoslavia to carry out a counter-insurgency campaign against

⁵² Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 208.

⁵³ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fn. 208.

⁵⁴ Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo*, fns. 163, 182, 213. The United States insisted on many conditions, including resolution of the Kosovo crisis, before it would remove the outer wall of sanctions. By contrast, the EU recognized Yugoslavia in Spring 1996, in response to Belgrade's recognition of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. In Spring 1997, the EU supported Belgrade's position that the Kosovo problem should be resolved within the borders of Yugoslavia. In December 1996, EU Commissioner Hans van den Broek declared, "the [European] Union believes that the province should regain a certain amount of autonomy, comparable to the situation prior to 1989."

the rebels, so long as it remained relatively disciplined. Such a policy was recommended at the time by this author. In articles in June and September 1998 in the *Washington Post*, I argued that—

U.S. and allied efforts need to focus single-mindedly on how to strengthen Kosovar support for Rugova's non-violent tactics, while lowering his aim from independence to autonomy. Foremost, we should make clear that no Western military intervention is forthcoming. . . . The other constructive step the West could take now is to lift the recently re-imposed sanctions on Serbia, while holding out the prospect of significant diplomatic and economic carrots should Milosevic make concessions toward restoration of regional autonomy. . . . The United States immediately should call on the Kosovo rebels to surrender – on the condition that Milosevic will, in return, cease his military crackdown and continue negotiating autonomy. . . . [If the rebels accepted the offer, but] Milosevic rejected it or accepted it in bad faith by renewing his campaign of ethnic cleansing, he would reveal himself an unprovoked aggressor in Kosovo. At that point, NATO intervention would be justified.”⁵⁵

Interestingly, although this proposal was rejected at the time by the Clinton administration, its principle was adopted four years later by the administration of George H.W. Bush, in regard to the Middle East struggle between Palestinian terrorists and Israeli security forces. In spring 2002, the Bush administration criticized the Palestinian insurgents and urged them to halt their attacks, tolerated Israeli counter-insurgency tactics that killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians, and declared that Washington would not support deployment of international peacekeepers to stop the fighting regardless of pleas from the Palestinians and human rights groups. As of this writing, in August 2002, the policy appears to have proved at least partially effective in diminishing terrorist attacks and thereby the level of Israeli retaliation, for two main reasons. First, the Israeli counter-insurgency effort has reduced (though certainly not eliminated) the Palestinian ability to launch attacks. Second, Palestinian leaders have realized that terrorism is counter-productive when the United States reacts more in horror at the Palestinian suicide bombers than in sympathy for the Palestinian victims of Israel’s retaliation.

It is uncertain whether an analogous U.S. policy would have achieved even this moderate level of success in Kosovo, for at least three reasons. First, it would have been more difficult for the international community to declare credibly that it would not intervene in Kosovo, having

⁵⁵ Alan J. Kuperman, "False Hope Abroad: Promises to Intervene Often Bring Bloodshed," *Washington Post*, Outlook Section, June 14, 1998. Alan J. Kuperman, "Kosovo Option: Conditional Surrender," *Washington Post*, September 25, 1998.

intervened recently in similar conflicts in neighboring Croatia and Bosnia. The Albanians might have expected that if they persisted in provoking Serbian retaliation, they eventually would draw the international community into the conflict on their side. As Emrush Xhemajli reveals, the KLA had a contingency plan in case the international community did not intervene immediately, to wage “a 10- to 15-year war, with a strategy to get the international community on our side.” Second, it would have been more difficult for western democracies to refrain from intervening in Serbia than in Israel because of two differences – the tone of western media coverage and the nature of the target state. For example, U.S. media coverage focused on the victims of terror (Israelis) in one conflict, but the victims of retaliation (Albanians) in the other, generating public support for Israel’s counter-insurgency but demands for intervention in Serbia. Moreover, unlike Israel, Serbia was neither nuclear-armed nor a western ally, both of which helped deter western intervention. Third, if the west had eschewed intervention, there is no guarantee that Milosevic would have hewed to a disciplined counter-insurgency campaign, rather than switching to ethnic cleansing as he eventually did.

Notwithstanding these uncertainties, there are several reasons to believe that the same diplomatic approach applied to the Middle East in 2002 might have worked in the Balkans four years earlier. First, although the Albanian rebels initially might have retained their faith in forthcoming intervention, that faith would have diminished the longer the West refrained from intervening. Moreover, by mid-1998, Serbia’s counter-insurgency campaign had virtually eliminated the rebels’ ability to launch attacks. At that juncture, it was only the intervention of U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, wielding the threat of NATO air strikes, that compelled Serbian forces to retreat, which enabled the rebels to regroup and reoccupy abandoned territory. Second, had they wanted to, western officials could have helped shape media coverage to support a policy of non-intervention in Kosovo. For example, U.S. diplomats could have continued to refer to the KLA as “terrorists,” as they did in early 1998, rather than freedom fighters as they subsequently did. Third, all available evidence indicates that Milosevic was pursuing only a counter-insurgency, rather than ethnic cleansing, in Kosovo – until NATO announced its decision to start bombing Yugoslavia in March 1999. Although Serbia’s counter-insurgency campaign did claim civilian victims, the rate of such collateral killing – on the order of 100 per month – was roughly the same as inflicted by Israel’s recent counter-terrorism campaign in the Palestinian territories. In addition, if the United States explicitly had told

Milosevic that it would countenance counter-insurgency but not ethnic cleansing, the Serbian leader would have had extra incentive for restraint. Thus, although counterfactual analysis is never foolproof, it does appear that a western declaratory policy against intervening in Kosovo might have stemmed the spiral of violence that eventually led to the ethnic cleansing of 850,000 Albanians.

Regrets?

In light of the failure of the LDK's pacifist strategy to achieve its goal of Kosovo's independence, and the success of the KLA's militant strategy at attracting western military intervention sufficient to create a quasi-independent Kosovo, it is worth exploring whether LDK officials harbor regrets about their choices. Interestingly, there is a sharp division of opinion, as party officials disagree about whether the violent events of 1998-99 demonstrate the failure of their earlier pacifist approach, or instead vindicate it. Each side makes important observations.

Some of those who regret their previous pacifism appear unfairly to blame the pacifist strategy for the eventual violence of the Serbs. For example, Ramiz Kelmendi, who was one of the first 23 members of the LDK but left it in 1990, complains that "Rugova said, 'Patience. Patience. Patience. Don't provoke Serbs,'" but the Serbs eventually cracked down anyway. Likewise, Milazim Krasniqi, who was one of five founders of the LDK and stuck by Rugova through 1999, now says that pacifism was a mistake. "We could have used these years to . . . create self-defense institutions – for example, find weapons markets, recruits, etc. . . . [we had people] in Albania at the time, so we could have got military aid. We would have been prepared when Serbia did its offensive." However, both of these officials appear to ignore the fact that Rugova's patience did elicit reciprocal restraint from Belgrade. Serbia launched its military offensives only after the Albanians abandoned pacifism and launched provocative attacks on Serb targets. Indeed, had the LDK originally pursued the militant course that Krasniqi prescribes in retrospect, Belgrade likely would have launched its offensives much earlier. Considering that the international community was hesitant to intervene forcefully in the Balkans in the early 1990s, such an earlier uprising by the Albanians probably would have provoked even greater retaliation by the Serbs.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ramiz Kelmendi, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000. Milazim Krasniqi, interviews with author, Prishtina, August 7 and 9, 2000.

A more compelling regret is voiced by Muhamet Hamiti, who worked originally as Rugova's translator and then from 1990-99 at the Kosovo Information Center, the propaganda wing of the Albanians' shadow government. He says that in 1997-98, "Rugova should have been smarter to realize that elements within the U.S. government were shifting support. The west wanted a radicalization of the process to get a solution. Milosevic would only yield to force and the LDK wouldn't do it," so the West switched their support to the rebels and abandoned the LDK. Hamiti does not regret the LDK's original pacifism but wishes Rugova had sensed the shifting international political winds and adopted a more confrontational approach by 1998. By so doing, he says, the LDK could have retained the leadership of the Albanian people and used just the threat of violence to compel a negotiated outcome from Belgrade, while avoiding the massive retaliation provoked by the KLA's actual violence.⁵⁷ Interestingly, just as the LDK and KLA did at the time, this Albanian official bases his policy prescription, even in retrospect, on his expectations of how best to garner international support.

Other LDK officials, including Rugova, voice no regrets about their pacifist approach, and even argue that it was a necessary precondition for the subsequent success of the KLA. In an interview three months before he was assassinated in November 2000 (allegedly by former KLA rebels), LDK co-founder Xhemajl Mustafa defended both the party's goals and means. "The LDK's resistance to a military strategy was correct, because the Albanians were not sufficiently armed. Only NATO intervention was sufficient to protect them." In addition, he argued that the LDK's stubborn refusal to compromise the goal of independence ultimately was vindicated by the events of 1999. "Those who were autonomists in 1990 [and criticized the LDK at the time for seeking the unattainable goal of independence] now see independence as inevitable. Now there are [international] talks on independence." As another example, he says, "Rugova called for an international protectorate in 1993. Others said 'impossible.' But it happened [in 1999]. Independence also will happen – maybe in 10 years." Moreover, he insists, the initial pacifism provided time for the LDK's international lobbying campaign to raise awareness of Kosovo, which he says made possible the international humanitarian intervention of 1999. "In 1989, when we had our first contacts with foreigners, we had trouble explaining to them where Kosova was. Now they are all there and they know very well what Kosova wants.

⁵⁷ Muhamet Hamiti, interview with author, Prishtina, August 5, 2000.

We had long-term goals,” he explained, but the short-term pacifist strategy is what made them attainable.⁵⁸

Likewise, Rugova claims that the LDK’s initial pacifist strategy deserves credit for the subsequent success of the KLA. He says flatly that the armed rebellion strategy could not have succeeded in the early 1990s. It succeeded in 1998, he asserts, only because by then “we already had a well-organized society and many friends in the international community,” thanks to the LDK’s strategy of passive resistance and parallel institutions. When asked whether he overestimated the patience of his Albanian constituents and their willingness to remain non-violent in the absence of visible progress towards self-determination, Rugova concedes that the populace got restless and frustrated by the pacifist approach. Nevertheless, he defends the strategy, saying it was “an active passive resistance. We educated a few generations. It was not a standstill.” When asked explicitly if he has any regrets, Rugova responds only conditionally: “I do not have any regrets. But I haven’t had much time for analysis. I’m still in it.”⁵⁹

Of all the cases examined in this study, Kosovo illustrates best how subordinate communal groups sometimes intentionally provoke violence against themselves in order to attract outside intervention. Indeed, in the ultimate irony, this strategy was used by both sides in Kosovo. In 1987, during Slobodan Milosevic’s visit to Kosovo, Serb militants threw rocks at Albanian police in order to provoke violent retaliation against themselves and thereby attract intervention by Belgrade to restore Serb hegemony in Kosovo.⁶⁰ In 1998, Albanian militants turned the tables, shooting Serbian police in order to provoke violent retaliation against themselves and thereby attract international intervention to restore Albanian hegemony in Kosovo. Viewed through this prism, it is hard to see much moral difference between Milosevic’s 1987 pledge to Kosovo’s Serbs that, “no one should dare to beat you,” and Madeleine Albright’s 1998 pledge to Kosovo’s Albanians that, “We are not going to stand by

⁵⁸ Xhemajl Mustafa, interview with author, Prishtina, August 3, 2000.

⁵⁹ Ibrahim Rugova, interview with author, Prishtina, August 9, 2000.

⁶⁰ Loza, “Kosovo Albanians Closing the Ranks,” p. 24, reports that in April 1987, the Kosovo Serb militant Miroslav Solevic “took no chances, deciding to engineer a fight between the mainly Albanian Kosovo police and his own followers. ‘We asked all those guys who knew how to fight, 200 or 300 of them, to bring with them everything it takes,’ recalls Solevic, now out of active politics. This included steel rods and even pistols. A pile of stones was assembled by the building where Milosevic was to hold a meeting with Solevic’s delegates. The plan, known only by the Kosovo Serb leadership, was to use the stones to provoke a response by the Albanian police. This would amount to a ‘beating of the innocents,’ which would force Milosevic to take sides.”

and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia." Sadly, although the international community roundly condemned Belgrade's earlier intervention as the product of cynical manipulation, it volunteered for virtually identical manipulation a decade later.

Chapter 9

THE MORAL HAZARD OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

Prescriptions Arising from the Theory

The logic of the third hypothesis suggests that four prescriptions theoretically could reduce the incidence of tragic challenges and thereby the incidence of genocidal violence. However, each of these potential prescriptions would be difficult to implement in practice. The first prescription would be to block the flow of weapons to subordinate groups in order to deny them the means of launching violent challenges. In practice, however, it is difficult to completely prevent determined groups from acquiring weapons, which would be required for the prescription to be implemented successfully.

The second possibility would be to warn subordinate communal groups that if they use violence, the international community either will not intervene on their behalf or will instead intervene on behalf of the state. In practice, however, this threat would be hard to implement because public pressures arise within the international community in favor of intervention when the media focuses the spotlight on a victim group. This has proved to be the case even when the group's victimization is provoked by its own actions.

A third prescription would be that in cases where the subordinate group has sufficient military strength to defeat the state, the international community should permit or even encourage the rebels to pursue a quick military victory before the state can prepare for and perpetrate massive retaliation against vulnerable civilians. In practice, this is unrealistic because of international norms that favor the pursuit of negotiated rather than military outcomes in civil conflicts. Moreover, a policy of favoring quick rebel military victories would make sense only in cases where the state otherwise were likely to perpetrate mass killing. In other cases it could be counter-productive and undermine the long-standing tradition of supporting state sovereignty.

A final prescription would be that in cases where a subordinate group is led by a pacifist leader, the international community should bolster this leader – and hinder the emergence of militant rivals – by providing economic and other incentives to state authorities to make concessions to the group. In practice, however, the West rarely has sufficient will to devote large resources to a case until it becomes violent. Perversely, this has the effect of rewarding

violent leaders of communal groups at the expense of pacifist ones, and thereby inadvertently encouraging the outburst of genocidal violence – directly contrary to the intent of the international community.

What About Intervention?

If tragic challenges cannot effectively be discouraged, due to the practical difficulties of implementing the four above prescriptions, the question arises as to whether the deadly consequences of such challenges can be mitigated by outside intervention to prevent state retaliation. In other words, if such challenges cannot be stopped, can they be made less tragic by intervening to protect the challengers from violent retaliation by the state? A burgeoning literature suggests that a policy of humanitarian intervention can prevent mass killing and other humanitarian offenses in two ways. First, it can deploy troops to physically stop such killing before or during its perpetration. Second, after a few such deployments, the norm or expectation of such intervention can deter potential perpetrators from even attempting such offenses. For example, Barbara Harff writes that “Some unilateral or regional interventions have taken place . . . and may caution potential violators of human rights as to the consequence of their actions.”¹ Similarly, Helen Fein states: “If the perpetrators of genocidal massacres within the state could anticipate costs in the international system, such murders might be deterred.”² Although there is no rigorous empirical scholarship on the existence of such a deterrent effect, it is deductively plausible. Moreover, the evidence from the two Balkans cases is that the Serbs exercised more restraint when retaliating to the violent challenge in Kosovo in 1998 and early 1999 than they had in the earlier Bosnia conflict. This may have been because the threat of NATO intervention was deemed more credible in Kosovo due to the preceding NATO intervention in Bosnia. If so, this would be consistent with the idea that the deterrent effect of humanitarian intervention policy increases with each intervention. (On the other hand, the fact that the Serbs proved unwilling to surrender sovereignty over Kosovo without a fight and did eventually perpetrate mass expulsions in response to the NATO bombings, may also demonstrate the limits of such deterrence.)

¹ Barbara Harff, “A Theoretical Model of Genocides and Politicides,” *Journal of Ethno-Development*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (July 1994), p. 26.

² Helen Fein, “Genocide: A Sociological Perspective,” *Current Sociology*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 91.

However, the literature contains little theoretical exploration of the systemic, and possibly unintended, consequences of humanitarian intervention policy.³ These consequences stem from the fact that intervention policy affects the decision-making not only of potential state perpetrators, but also the subordinate groups who may violently challenge their authority. As observed in our cases above, the expectation of humanitarian intervention is a major cause of violent challenges by subordinate groups. Thus, establishing a policy of humanitarian intervention should tend to increase the incidence of violent challenges against state authorities, which could potentially increase the incidence of genocidal retaliation.

Just as such a policy of humanitarian intervention may reduce mass killing in two ways – through actual intervention or the threat of intervention – so it may increase the incidence of tragic challenges through these two pathways. The second pathway is perhaps the more obvious. When the international community threatens to intervene against a state if it retaliates violently against a subordinate group, the subordinate group is encouraged to launch a violent challenge for two reasons explained in our theory: (1) the increased expectation of achieving its goal through violence; and (2) the decreased expected cost of doing so. If such altered expectations tip the balance and cause the subordinate group to launch a violent challenge, the state may retaliate with mass killing despite the threat of international intervention. Even if humanitarian intervention then were launched to reduce the death toll, the actual effect of the threat of intervention would have been to create an instance of mass killing where none otherwise would have occurred.

Good examples are Bosnia and Kosovo. In both cases the international community warned Serbs not to use violence to keep their state intact, but this raised the prospect of intervention and thereby inadvertently encouraged Bosnia's Muslims and Kosovo's Albanians to pursue armed unilateral secessions, which provoked massive Serb retaliation. Without the prospect of intervention, both subordinate groups knew they had no hope of victory and would

³ Exceptions are four unpublished Ph.D. dissertations: Clifford Allan Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion in Global Civil Society: Political Insurgencies, International Media, and the Growth of Transnational Support* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1997); Mia Mellissa Bloom, *Failures of Intervention: The Unintended Consequences of Mixed Messages and the Exacerbation of Ethnic Conflict* (Columbia University, 1999); Alynna June Lyon, *International Contributions to the Mobilization of Ethnic Conflict: Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Rwanda* (University of South Carolina, 1999); and Timothy Wallace Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence and Peacemaking: Bargaining, Leverage, and Third Party Statecraft* (Columbia University, 2001). The last will be published as Timothy W. Crawford, *Hard Bargains, Fragile Peace: Pivotal Deterrence in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming in 2003). In addition, this dynamic was observed early in the case of Kosovo by Diana Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem and the International Community," *Dialogue*, No. 25 (Spring 1998).

have been much less likely to launch violent challenges, so there probably would not have been any provocation to trigger Serb violence. Even the leaders of the subordinate groups concede in retrospect that they did not expect mass violence unless they launched armed challenges. Thus, in at least these two cases, the threat of intervention inadvertently produced the mass violence it was intended to avert. Of course, it is possible that in other cases such threats deter mass killing that otherwise would occur. However, given that such threats can either cause or deter mass killing, it is not obvious that the net impact of such threats is to decrease the incidence of mass killing, as is assumed throughout most of the literature.

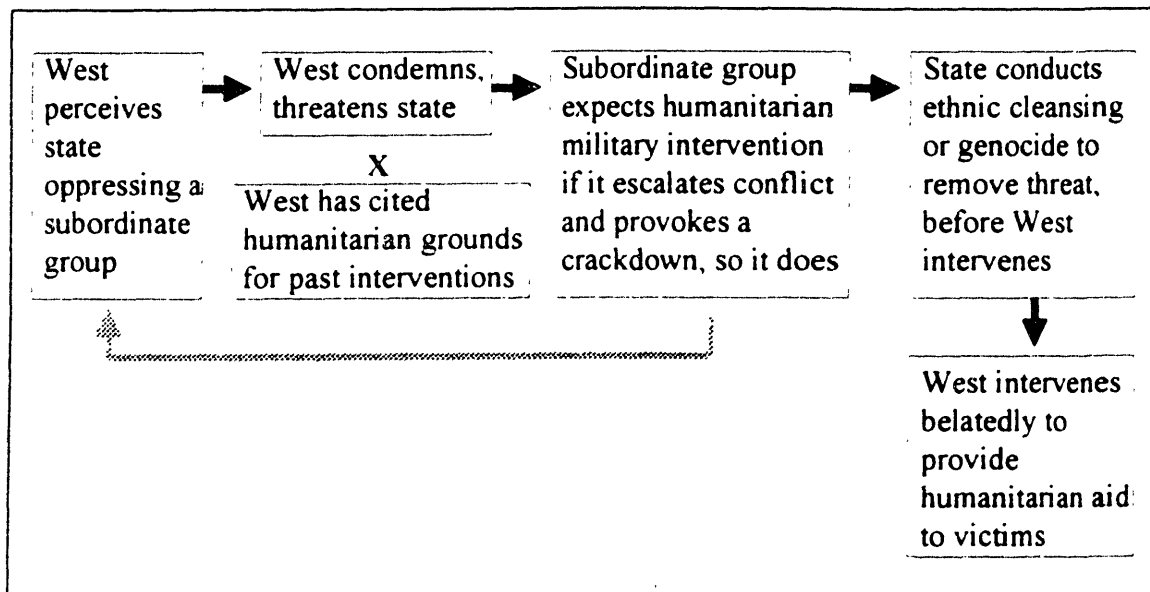
The other pathway for unintended consequences – arising from actual intervention rather than merely its threat – is less obvious but perhaps no less insidious. At first glance, it would appear that actual intervention is an unalloyed good in terms of reducing mass killing. Even if skeptics are correct that intervention cannot stop violence as quickly or completely as some advocates claim, it certainly can reduce the death toll in cases where it is employed.⁴ However, this ignores the fact that actual intervention in one case may have unintended consequences in other cases. If the above-cited genocide scholars are correct, each instance of humanitarian intervention increases the expectation of future interventions. While such increased expectation could have the beneficial effect of deterring potential perpetrators of humanitarian offenses in other cases, as these scholars assert, it might also have malign effects. For example, the discussion above regarding the unintended consequences of threats to intervene raises the possibility that increasing the expectation of intervention may also increase the incidence of violent challenges, and thereby possibly the incidence of mass killing. In other words, while actual intervention unquestionably can decrease killing in cases where troops are deployed, it may increase the amount of killing in other cases and thereby potentially cause a net increase in the overall amount of genocidal violence.

For example, UN intervention in Croatia in early 1992 helped stem violence there for more than three years, possibly saving thousands of lives. However, it also raised expectations among Bosnia's Muslims that the international community would intervene in that republic as well if fighting broke out, encouraging them to secede unilaterally in 1992, which provoked three years of mass killing and civil war that killed tens of thousands and displaced at least two million

⁴ These capabilities and constraints are explored in Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

Bosnians. Likewise, NATO's eventual intervention in Bosnia in late summer 1995 helped bring that conflict to an end, probably saving thousands of lives. However, it also raised expectations among Kosovo's Albanians of similar intervention on their behalf if they could provoke the Serbs into a fight, which they did three years later, leading to the deaths of thousands of Albanians civilians and the forced expulsion from their homes of nearly a million more before effective intervention arrived. (A causal diagram incorporating the effects of both of these pathways for unintended consequences is portrayed in Figure 9-1.)

Figure 9-1
Moral Hazard:
How a Policy of Humanitarian Intervention Can Lead to More Genocidal Violence



Adapted from Alan J. Kuperman, "Transnational Causes of Genocide, or How the West Inadvertently Exacerbates Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Cold War Era," presented at annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA, September 2-5, 1999.

Moral Hazard – Lessons from Economics

As should be apparent from this discussion, humanitarian intervention presents classic problems of "moral hazard" – that is, efforts to insure against risk have the inadvertent consequence of encouraging risk-taking behavior. The concept of moral hazard is examined most thoroughly in the literature of economics. A typical example is when governments provide deposit insurance to ensure the public of the safety of their savings accounts in the event of a

bank failure. The goal is to promote the stability of the banking system and the larger economy by promoting savings and thereby investment. However, one consequence of insuring depositors against bank losses is that they are less careful about which bank they choose, so long as it is insured. As depositors become less careful about scrutinizing banks, the banks themselves will become less careful about the loans they make, especially given that the government will bail them out in the event of losses. This leads to more bad loans, and more bank failures, both of which are bad for the economy. Thus, a policy intended to improve the economy by insuring against risk can have the inadvertent consequence of hurting the economy.

This domestic example of economic moral hazard has been replicated on an international scale in recent years by the advent of bailouts from the International Monetary Fund. Such bailouts provide an infusion of hard currency to states in emerging markets that otherwise would have to default on their foreign debt because of severe balance of payments deficits. The goal is to preserve the economic stability of such states and the international system, by reassuring lenders and investors that they can continue to do business in emerging markets without fear of huge losses. However, by reducing the penalty to investors for their bad loans and to states for their bad economic policies, such bailouts have the unintended consequence of encouraging more bad loans and more bad economic policies and thereby undermining economic stability – directly opposite to the intention of the policy.

To reduce moral hazard, the common prescription is to restrict insurance only to those who abide by regulations. In the domestic context, the government provides deposit insurance only to those banks that pay a small premium and follow strict rules about the type and amount of loans they make relative to their deposits, intended to reduce their risk of failing. In the international context, the IMF provides bailouts only to those states that agree to undergo structural adjustment – modifying their domestic economic policies in ways that reduce the likelihood of future balance of payments deficits.

Although such regulatory schemes can mitigate moral hazard, it is important to recognize that there is generally an inverse relationship between moral hazard and risk. As a result, regulators cannot eliminate both moral hazard and risk. If regulators reduce moral hazard by setting stringent qualification requirements for insurance or bailouts, then most banks or states will fail to qualify, and the system will have almost as much risk for depositors and lenders as if there were no insurance or bailouts at all. If regulators reduce this risk by setting lower

qualification requirements for insurance or bailouts, then moral hazard will return as banks and states will feel free to engage in irresponsible lending practices. Put another way, regulators cannot simultaneously reduce both the risk to investors and the amount of risky behavior in the system. By decreasing one, they necessarily increase the other.

In addition, regulation of moral hazard encounters two other dangers. If regulatory requirements are set too low, there may be so much risky behavior and so many bailouts that the insurance system will be overwhelmed and bankrupted. On the other hand, if regulatory requirements are set too high, banks will not be permitted to make sufficient loans, and overall economic growth may be strangled.

The optimum solution is to find the regulatory sweet spot, one that balances reasonable levels of moral hazard against risk, and that promotes liquidity while avoiding insolvency of the insurance system. Even if this challenge can be surmounted, however, there is a final obstacle to limiting moral hazard, which stems from the fact that the regulator and regulated are involved in a game of chicken. The regulator threatens to deny insurance unless the regulated abides by strict regulations. But the regulated knows that the regulator wants to provide insurance for its own reasons, so the threat lacks credibility and the regulated may feel free to ignore the regulations.

For example, in the domestic context, the government does not want any depositor to lose money when a bank fails, because that could hurt the confidence of many other depositors and thereby the entire economy. Accordingly, the government may provide protection to depositors even at uninsured banks and/or provide protection above the statutory limit at insured banks. In the United States, even though deposit insurance is limited to \$100,000 per depositor at each bank, when a bank fails the government routinely bails out all accounts without limit. The government does so because it seeks to reduce risk to depositors, but in so doing it inadvertently also increases moral hazard. Banks and depositors, expecting they will be bailed out under any circumstance, feel free to engage in irresponsible and risky behavior. The analogous problem also arises in the international context. States know the IMF does not want any state to default on its loans, so the threats of the IMF to withhold bailouts lack credibility. Because states expect they will be bailed out under any circumstance, they feel more free to violate their pledges of structural adjustment, especially when they deem it necessary to address domestic political exigencies.

All of these problems of moral hazard, drawn from economic examples, apply to humanitarian intervention as well. The international community has sought to insure subordinate groups against the risk of mass killing by adopting policies of humanitarian military intervention. In so doing, however, it inadvertently has encouraged such groups to engage in the risky behavior of launching violent challenges that may provoke genocidal retaliation. This is because the groups expect the international community to intervene to prevent them from the full extent of threatened retaliation, and thereby enable them to achieve their goals at an acceptable cost.

In theory, the international community could attempt to reduce moral hazard by setting strict regulatory requirements – for example, pledging not to intervene on behalf of subordinate groups that provoke killing against themselves by launching violent challenges against the state (The reader will recognize this as one of the potential prescriptions already inferred from our theory at the start of the chapter) However, this would increase the risk to these groups by denying them humanitarian military intervention in the event that, despite such a regulatory policy, they nevertheless launched violent challenges that provoked retaliatory mass killing⁵ As documented in the first chapter, most cases of mass killing since World War II have been retaliation for such provocative challenges. Thus, establishing this strict regulatory requirement potentially could block intervention in most cases of mass killing. On the other hand, it is possible that this high regulatory standard – by threatening to withhold intervention – eventually could deter subordinate groups from launching violent challenges, and thereby prevent most cases of mass killing. However, unless the international community also started to provide greater support to peaceful resistance movements, the effect of this strict policy could be to prolong the subordinate status of such groups, leaving the entire international system less democratic and egalitarian. (This would be analogous to a banking regulator establishing overly strict loan requirements and thereby inadvertently choking off economic growth)

The international community could attempt to reduce the risk to these groups by lowering regulatory requirements – for example, pledging to intervene on behalf of any group that faced genocide or ethnic cleansing regardless of the cause. However, this would increase moral hazard by raising expectations of intervention and thereby increasing the incidence of the violent

⁵ It even could increase the risk to those groups that did not launch violent challenges. For example, a malign state could manipulate the regulatory framework by falsely claiming that such a subordinate group had attacked it, in order to enable the state to attack the group without triggering international intervention. However, as noted in Chapter 1, it does not appear common for states to launch genocidal violence against quiescent subordinate groups.

challenges that provoke genocidal retaliation. Unless such a policy deterred retaliation more than it promoted violent challenges, it could increase the incidence of genocidal violence and so give rise to a demand for intervention that could exhaust the resources of the international community. (This would be analogous to the bank insurance system going bankrupt, but with even starker human consequences.)

As in the economic realm, regulators in a system of humanitarian intervention also have problems convincing the regulated that their threats are credible. For example, in the case of Kosovo, the United States and its NATO allies attempted to deter the KLA from escalating its violent challenge against much stronger Serb forces by threatening to withhold humanitarian military intervention. Specifically, the United States and NATO declared that they would not be the "air force of the KLA."⁶ However, the KLA calculated that if its attacks could provoke Serb retaliation against innocent Albanians, the west would be compelled to intervene with air power despite this rhetoric. The American and NATO threats to withhold intervention were not credible and thus could not deter the KLA from engaging in risky behavior.⁷

However, moral hazard in humanitarian intervention is different than in economics in at least two respects. First, in the realm of humanitarian intervention, the value of a bailout may be greater than the value of responsible behavior. As a result, only in the context of humanitarian intervention do we observe the bizarre dynamic in which the vulnerable group intentionally engages in risky behavior, so as to provoke its own suffering, so as to provoke a bailout. One cannot imagine a depositor searching for the worst bank possible, so as to lose his money, so that the government will bail him out, because the bailout has a value no greater than that of investing

⁶ In July 1998, a NATO diplomat was quoted saying, "We don't want to become the royal air force of the KLA." That same month the U.S. ambassador to NATO was quoted saying the alliance should not be seen as "the air force of the KLA." In October 1998, U.S. State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin was quoted saying that the KLA should not "consider NATO its air force. That will not be tolerated by the U.S." In January 1999, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana was quoted saying that NATO "cannot be the KLA's air force." That same month, British Prime Minister Tony Blair's office was quoted saying "we are not going to act as KLA's air force." In February 1999, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen was quoted saying NATO would not be "the KLA air force." The following month, NATO became the KLA's air force. See Mark Matthews, "NATO struggles to contain fighting peacefully in Balkans," *Baltimore Sun*, July 5, 1998; Els Samyn, "NATO seeks Russian cooperation for end to conflict," *Daily Yomiuri*, July 10, 1998; Justin Brown, "Rebel Rebound Clouds a Deal," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 22, 1998; Rupert Cornwell, "'This repellent war crime:' A nation helpless: Serbs goad impotent West," *Independent*, January 19, 1999; Patrick Wintour, "Serb Godfather at bay: Call for talks delays threat of force," *Observer*, January 24, 1999; Mark Matthews and Tom Bowman, "In Kosovo talks, time running out," *Baltimore Sun*, February 20, 1999.

⁷ The difficulty of simultaneously deterring both sides in this conflict has been examined by Timothy W. Crawford, "Pivotal Deterrence and the Kosovo War: Why the Holbrooke Agreement Failed," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 4 (Winter 2001-2002), pp. 499-523.

responsibly in the first place. By contrast, in communal conflict, subordinate groups expect that if they provoke a violent crackdown, forthcoming humanitarian intervention not only will protect them from retaliation but also may enable them to emerge from their prolonged subordinate status – actually leaving them better off than they started. (This effect may be magnified in cases where there is a principal-agent divide between the subordinate group’s masses, which are likely to bear the brunt of retaliation, and its leaders who are likely to benefit the most from intervention) Thus, while both economic insurance and humanitarian intervention policies reduce the costs to actors of risky behavior, only the humanitarian intervention policy also rewards actors for such behavior, thus encouraging even greater risk-taking. In this way, a policy of humanitarian intervention creates more moral hazard than an economic insurance system.

On the other hand, the realm of humanitarian intervention is also different in that the punishment for risky behavior (that is, state retaliation) is clearly the result of human agency rather than of the “invisible hand” of economic forces. Thus, it is theoretically possible for a humanitarian intervention policy to deter states from engaging in genocidal retaliation when they are confronted by violent challenges from subordinate groups. This deterrent effect presumably would be enhanced if threats of intervention were clear and credible, sufficiently large, and accompanied by credible pledges not to intervene against states that refrained from genocidal violence. In practice, however, the application of humanitarian intervention has been inconsistent, and often belated and inadequate as well, thereby reducing its deterrent impact. Nonetheless, even a less than optimal intervention policy may deter some retaliatory state violence. This would mitigate to some extent the increased violence stemming from the moral hazard effects of the policy. However, only empirical study can determine whether the net effect of a policy of humanitarian intervention is to increase or decrease total violence. (Figure 9-2 shows how the dynamic of moral hazard in the domestic and international economic spheres has analogies in the realm of violent civil conflict.)

**Figure 9-2
Comparing the Moral Hazard of Intervention in Economics and Violent Conflict**

	Banking	IMF	Ethnic Conflict
Goal	Prevent Lost Deposits & Bolster Economy	Prevent Suffering & Promote Global Growth	Stop Genocidal Violence & Deter Perpetrators
Safety Net	Deposit Insurance	Bailouts	Humanitarian Intervention
Risky Behavior Promoted	Deposits in Bad Banks	BOP & Fiscal Deficits	Violent Challenges
Secondary Risky Behavior	Bankers Become Lax	Lenders Become Lax	IC Promotes Revolutionary Reform
Negative Consequence	More Bank Failures	More Defaults	More Genocidal Violence
Regulation to Mitigate Moral Hazard	Reserve Requirements	Structural Adjustment Conditionality	Withhold Intervention for Provocateurs
Two Risks from Too Strict Regulation . . .			
– If Standard Unmet	Most Deposits are at Risk	Few Bailouts, So States Default	Most Genocidal Violence Not Prevented
– If Standard Met	Few Loans, So Economy Contracts	Increased Suffering & Lower Global Growth	Discrimination Continues
Risk from Too Lax Regulation	FDIC Bankrupted	IMF Bankrupted	UN Runs Out of Peacekeepers and \$
'Chicken' Undermines Regulators' Credibility	Too Big To Fail	Avoiding Contagion	CNN Effect

A “Moral Responsibility” to Intervene?

As the above discussion should make clear, there is no humanitarian intervention policy that the international community can adopt that is likely to eliminate genocidal violence completely. However, two key lessons from this study can help to inform a more enlightened intervention policy. First, although perhaps disconcerting, we must acknowledge that such tragedies are most often the direct result of conscious decisions taken by leaders of the subordinate groups that become the primary victims of genocidal violence. These subordinate-group leaders launch violent challenges against the state in full knowledge that the state will retaliate violently against members of their own group. When thousands of subordinate group

civilians are slaughtered, the international community is shocked, but leaders of the group are not because they intentionally pursued this disastrous outcome.

International voices of opinion – politicians, media, NGOs, the UN and other international organizations – react to such violence by proclaiming that the international community has a “right” and a “responsibility” to intervene in the internal affairs of the state in order to protect the innocent civilians of the subordinate group.⁸ However, regardless of whether one believes in a general cosmopolitan responsibility to those outside one’s own political community, most observers would agree that the primary responsibility for protecting a group rests with the group itself, and by delegation upon its leaders. Thus, if a group chooses to sacrifice its own civilians, it is not obvious that the international community automatically has a responsibility to deny the group that choice.

Due to the potentially controversial and counter-intuitive nature of this concept – the absence of a naturally occurring moral responsibility to intervene in cases of genocidal violence – it is useful to illustrate the point with a thought experiment. As is well known, most states around the world exhibit some form of domestic discrimination – whether against women, ethnic groups, castes, or some other subordinate group – in most cases without any significant level of overt violence. Few observers would argue that there is a generalized responsibility – or, indeed, any right – of the international community to intervene with military force in the internal affairs of states to rectify such domestic inequality. Thus, the *status quo* situation in much of the world is structural inequality, accompanied by a widespread consensus that the international community has no right or responsibility to use military force to improve the lot of subordinate groups. The question is what happens when members of a subordinate group start shooting government authorities and civilian members of the dominant group, thereby provoking

⁸ An emerging norm is beginning to be codified on the international community’s “right of humanitarian intervention” in cases where states are perceived to be abusing their own people. Recent work even argues there is a responsibility for such intervention. See for example, International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, “The Responsibility to Protect,” December 2001, <http://www.iciss.gc.ca/Report-English.asp> [downloaded April 22, 2002]. Advocates of this norm do not appear to draw a meaningful distinction between provoked and unprovoked state violence. Thus, according to this perverse illogic, subordinate groups can earn international intervention on their behalf by murdering representatives of the state and/or members of the dominant group to provoke state retaliation. Interestingly, the report is based on the experience in four cases: the three in this dissertation plus Somalia. See also, Jarat Chopra and Thomas G. Weiss, “Sovereignty Is No Longer Sacrosanct: Codifying Humanitarian Intervention,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 6 (1992), pp. 95-117; Francis Deng, “Reconciling Sovereignty with Responsibility: A basis for international humanitarian action” in John Harbeson, ed., *Africa in World Politics – Post Cold War Challenges* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995); and Francis

retaliation? Does such violence by a subordinate group suddenly create a new right or responsibility of the international community to intervene with military force on behalf of that subordinate group? In other words, if the subordinate group was not entitled to such intervention previously, can it possibly “earn” such an entitlement through the act of killing other people? Obviously, it cannot earn this right by committing violence, so the international community continues to have no natural responsibility to intervene in such cases. Usually, the group can end the retaliation itself, without intervention, simply by halting its violent challenge against the state.

However, four circumstances can be envisioned under which the international community might incur a responsibility to intervene to protect subordinate groups. One possibility is if the state attacks a subordinate group in the absence of any violent provocation. In such a case, it could be argued that the group is incapable of protecting itself, and that the international community has a responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. In practice, however, as noted above, mass killing is usually launched in retaliation to violent challenges by subordinate groups, so this circumstance is not typical.

A second possibility is if the leaders of a subordinate group are dictatorial and therefore do not have, or do not depend on, the support of most group members. In such a case, it could be argued again that the members of the group are powerless to protect themselves, because they cannot affect the decisions of their leadership, so the international community has a responsibility to protect them (from the consequences of their own leaders’ decisions). This argument might apply to cases such as the RPF in Rwanda and the KLA in Kosovo, where the decision to launch violent challenges was made by rebel leaders without the support of most of the subordinate group (in the case of Rwanda, “subordinate group” here referring to all Tutsi, not just the refugees). However, it would not apply in Bosnia, where an overwhelming majority of the Muslim populace voted both to elect their secessionist leaders and to approve the referendum on independence in the face of Serb opposition and retaliatory threats.

A third possibility is if the leadership of a subordinate group withholds information from its members in order to obtain their support for its policies. In such a case, subordinate group members might lack sufficient information to know the consequences of various policies and

Deng, et al., *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1996).

therefore might be unable effectively to protect themselves, so again it could be argued that the international community has a responsibility to protect them. This conceivably was the case in Bosnia, where the Muslim populace may have been less aware than its leadership that a unilateral declaration of independence was likely lead to genocidal retaliation against them. However, the lack of perfect information is a pervasive situation in life and is not usually held to erase responsibility for one's actions. Thus, it is not clear that a subordinate group's lack of perfect information relieves it of its responsibility to protect itself.

A final possibility is if a subordinate group launches a violent challenge based on promises made or expectations raised by the international community. Only in such a case would the international community have a clear and unambiguous responsibility to protect the subordinate group. For example, if the international community established a policy of intervening to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide. and consequently a subordinate group launched a violent challenge because it expected to be protected from the state's genocidal retaliation, then the international community would have a responsibility to protect the subordinate group. It should be clear, however, that such a responsibility does not inhere naturally to the international community but rather stems from its policy choices. In other words, the international community has a clear responsibility to intervene only if it adopts a policy of intervening, not otherwise.

Thus, intervention policy cannot and should not be dictated by any purported, naturally occurring responsibility to intervene in all cases of genocidal violence. Intervention policy is precisely that – a question of policy, not of morality. Although it is not obvious what the basis of that policy should be, one obvious candidate would be to try to reduce the overall incidence of genocidal violence. If such a basis were chosen, the optimum policy would be determined not by good intentions but by the real-world consequences – intended and otherwise – of that policy. As a result, the question of moral hazard must be addressed.

The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Intervention

The second lesson of this study is that a policy of humanitarian intervention creates moral hazard and thereby has the unintended consequence in some cases of causing the very tragedies it seeks to prevent. In both Bosnia and Kosovo, for example, the decision by the subordinate group to secede violently from Yugoslavia – which triggered retaliatory mass killing and ethnic

cleansing by Serbs – stemmed in part from the expectation by the group that the international community would intervene on its behalf once killing started. Admittedly, it is impossible to know with certainty that these violent challenges, and the retaliation they provoked, could have been avoided in the absence of such expectations, because no counterfactual claim ever can be proved beyond doubt. However, the evidence is very suggestive. The entire grand strategy of the Bosnian Muslims in 1991 and early 1992 was predicated on garnering a promise of international recognition prior to seceding in order to assure intervention on their behalf, because they knew their own forces were no match for the Serbs. Likewise, the KLA's strategy in Kosovo, starting five years prior to its prominent uprising of 1998-99, was based on the assumption that the group's violent challenge against the Serbs could succeed only if it provoked Serb retaliation sufficient to prompt humanitarian intervention on behalf of the province's Albanians.

In Rwanda, the problem of moral hazard was not as obvious. The initial decision of the Tutsi refugee rebels to invade Rwanda from Uganda was not based on their expectation of benefiting from forthcoming humanitarian military intervention. Moreover, the rebels never assumed they would need such intervention to defeat the Hutu government on the battlefield or to coerce it at the negotiating table. However, moral hazard did play a role in exacerbating the extent of the ultimate killing. The diplomacy of the international community was aimed at insuring both of Rwanda's main ethnic groups against the risk of massive civil violence – by compelling the opposing sides to reach a compromise solution rather than permitting either one to pursue military victory. However, this policy had precisely the opposite effect because it encouraged risky behavior by the Tutsi in three ways. First, by applying coercive sanctions against the Hutu government, the international community emboldened the Tutsi rebels to be uncompromising in their demands for power at the negotiating table – which raised the insecurity of the Hutu regime to the point where it resorted to genocide in perceived self-defense. Second, by deploying UN peacekeepers, the international community encouraged a false sense of security among domestic Rwandan Tutsi so that they did not take precautions to defend themselves (such as cooperating with the rebels) prior to the outbreak of genocide. Third, by conditioning diplomatic support for the Tutsi rebels on their eschewing military victory, the international community forestalled an earlier Tutsi victory in the war and thereby provided the Hutu regime time to develop and implement the genocide plan. Under each of these three dynamics, the Tutsi

failed to act responsibly to protect their interests because of perceived guarantees from the international community – which is consistent with the problem of moral hazard, if not a typical example. The combined effect was to produce the worst possible outcome for Rwanda – and the very outcome that the policy was intended to prevent.

Indeed, almost any diplomatic policy other than the one chosen by the international community probably would have resulted in less ethnic violence in Rwanda. If the international community had sided with the Hutu government by providing economic and military support, the Tutsi rebels would have been forced to moderate their demands at the negotiating table, and the Hutu never would have reached the level of insecurity that drove them to genocide. Alternately, had the international community aided the Tutsi rebels, or merely let the conflict run its natural course (without humanitarian insurance) by permitting the Tutsi to continue their military offensive of February 1993, the Hutu probably would have been defeated well before they could have planned and perpetrated a full-blown genocide. Thus, just as in the Balkans, the international community's humanitarian-inspired diplomacy in Rwanda – intended to mitigate ethnic violence – had precisely the opposite effect of exacerbating it.

The common lesson from all of these cases is how perilous it is for the international community to attempt to coerce compromise between adversaries in domestic power struggles, especially when it lacks the will to deploy sufficient military forces to mitigate the insecurity of the adversaries and to ensure successful coercion. Where the political will for such large-scale deployment is lacking, the international community may best be able to reduce genocidal violence by taking sides in the conflict – that is, providing decisive military assistance to one side to enable its quick victory in return for a pledge from that side to avoid humanitarian abuses. Indeed, based on the cases above, it is possible that a policy of not intervening at all would lead to better outcomes (that is, less genocidal violence) than the current approach of half-hearted intervention. Attempting to coerce compromise between domestic adversaries, without the political will to deploy intervention forces to protect all sides if things go awry, may produce the worst of all outcomes.

Prescriptions can be formulated that theoretically could mitigate the unintended consequences of humanitarian intervention policy, but they face real-world obstacles to implementation. Moreover, it remains unclear whether the net effect of the international community's current practice of humanitarian intervention is to increase or reduce mass killing –

in other words, whether it serves more to deter perpetrators or to embolden violent challengers. The only way to answer this question, and to formulate better prescriptions, is to conduct further empirical study on the behavior both of subordinate groups and the states they sometimes confront. In the meantime, however, statesmen may be able to avoid the most egregious policy errors by keeping in mind the lessons of this study – how and why communal groups provoke genocidal retaliation.

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