

**FIGHTING FOR FRAMES OR PROSPECTS FOR PEACE?
BUILDING A PROSPECT THEORY MODEL OF ETHNIC CIVIL WAR TERMINATION**

by

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A.B., Government (2006)
Dartmouth College

Submitted to the Department of Political Science
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Political Science

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

September 2007

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic civil wars are the most abundant form of large-scale, deadly conflict in the world today, yet the dedicated study of ethnic civil war is relatively new within political science. One empirical observation repeated in the literature is that civil wars are less likely than interstate wars to end in negotiated settlements, and more likely to end in military victory for one side.

Recently, scholars have employed expected utility theory and the security dilemma to construct models of how ethnic combatants choose between settling their differences at the bargaining table or on the battlefield. Rooted in the rational choice paradigm, these models draw upon utility calculations and security concerns to describe ethnic combatants' decision processes and explain the low rate of ethnic war settlement. Two problems with these rational choice models, however, are that they cannot account for cases of ethnic war in which combatants elect to continue fighting losing battles when a normatively "rational" settlement is available, and that they do not seem to accurately describe the decision-making behavior of ethnic combatants.

In this thesis, I draw upon the principles of prospect theory, a descriptive theory of choice under conditions of risk and uncertainty, to construct a psychological model of ethnic war termination. I argue that ethnic combatants do not behave as rational choice theories suggest; rather, they choose to settle or fight by framing the possible outcomes as gains or losses relative to a subjective reference point. I analyze my theory by comparing it to three prominent rational choice models: Mason and Fett's expected utility theory, Walter's credible commitment theory, and Kaufmann's demographic separation theory. I then perform a first-brush test of my theory by applying all four models to two case studies, the Ethiopian-Eritrean War and the Bosnian Civil War, to determine which model best explains the behavior of the combatants. I find that prospect theory provides added value over the rational choice models. I then review the implications of my prospect theory model for humanitarian interventions into ethnic conflict. Finally, I conclude by suggesting potential directions for future research in this area.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Barry Posen and Roger Petersen, whose assistance and insightful feedback helped make this project a reality.

Thanks to my friends and family, who have always supported me in all that I do.

Finally, a special thanks to Carolyn Lathrop, who brought me up when I was down, kept me calm when I was anxious, put me on track when I was lost, and always reminded me what the important things are. This is for her.

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INTRODUCTION

The dedicated study of civil war is relatively new within political science, and the study of ethnic civil war as a distinct phenomenon is even newer (Kaufmann, 2005). Despite the burgeoning literature on civil war in general and ethnic war in particular, not all aspects of such conflicts have received the same amount of study. While scholars have devoted great attention to the causes and aftermath of civil wars, relatively less attention has been paid to the question of how and why civil wars end.

One empirical finding often repeated in the literature is that civil wars are less likely to end in negotiated settlements than interstate wars (Licklider, 1993). Instead, most civil wars end with a decisive military victory. The inherently “all or nothing” nature of civil conflict has often been suggested as an explanation for this phenomenon. As Ikle writes, in civil wars:

[O]utcomes intermediate between victory and defeat are difficult to construct. If partition is not a feasible outcome because the belligerents are not geographically separable, one side has to get all, or nearly so, since there cannot be two governments ruling over one country, and since the passions aroused and the political cleavages opened render a sharing of power unworkable. (Quoted in Licklider, 1993: 8)

Unlike states in international wars, who may elect to settle their differences and retreat back behind their borders, civil combatants may be driven to decisive outcomes by the intense nature of their disputes and the difficulty of living together afterward (Licklider, 1995).

Yet not all civil wars end in total victory. That some few civil wars are resolved at the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield presents scholars with a puzzle. Licklider puts the question bluntly:

How do groups of people who have been killing each other with considerable enthusiasm and success come together to form a common government? How can you work together, politically and economically, with the people who killed your parents, your children, your friends or lovers? (1993: 4)

This question may apply doubly to ethnic wars, where victims have been singled-out and subjected to great misery due to the basic fact of their identity. Thus, the challenge facing political scientists is to construct a theory of ethnic war termination that reflects the inherently difficult nature of resolving such conflicts while providing a persuasive explanation for how and why some ethnic combatants nevertheless elect to settle their differences rather than fight to the finish.

Over the past decade, several scholars have proposed such theories of civil war termination. Three of the most prominent are Mason and Fett's (1996) expected utility model, Walter's (1997, 1999, 2002) credible commitment model, and Kaufmann's (1996a, 1996b, 1998) demographic separation model. These three theories are different in their particulars. Mason and Fett use straightforward utilitarian calculations, whereas Walter and Kaufmann employ game theoretic concepts derived from the security dilemma. All three theories are united, however, by their common roots in the rational choice paradigm. These three models attempt to describe the decision-making processes employed by combatants when choosing whether to settle or continue fighting, and in so doing to identify the obstacles to and catalysts for settlement. At their most basic level, these models predict that combatants will settle when credible negotiated agreements are available that would provide both combatants with a net gain in utility over their expected payoffs from further war.

The rational choice paradigm, which has become increasingly widespread throughout political science in general and the study of civil war in particular, has several advantages to recommend it for tackling these questions about civil war termination. Rational choice is powerful, parsimonious, and perfectly suited for theory building. Indeed, these three rational choice models have provided some key insights into issues surrounding why and when ethnic combatants will choose to settle rather than fight.

However, rational choice models also suffer from two key shortcomings in this area. First, they cannot explain why combatants sometimes choose to continue fighting costly, losing, or even doomed battles rather than agree to a normatively "rational" settlement. Second, they struggle with the central empirical question of determining how combatants assess and compare utilities when making the choice between continued war and negotiated peace. These weaknesses of rational choice models stem from their reliance on a normative theory of decision making for their explanatory and predictive power.

Rather than assuming that the choices of combatants who do not conform to the predictions of such rational choice models are irrational or inexplicable, alternative models should be developed to address those cases specifically and ethnic war termination in general. My purpose in this thesis is to construct a model of ethnic war termination based upon prospect theory, a descriptive psychological

theory of decision making under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Based on how combatants frame the potential outcomes of settlements as gains or losses, prospect theory may explain not only when ethnic combatants choose to settle, but also why they may reject normatively “rational” settlements for the risky alternative of continuing or escalating a war. Thus, prospect theory provides an alternative explanation for the low rate of negotiated settlements in ethnic wars; prospect theory can also provide better explanatory power in cases where combatants fail to conform to the expectations of rational choice models.

In the following six chapters, I construct a new psychological theory of ethnic war termination and use two case studies to perform a first-brush test of my resulting model. While the chapters together form an integrated analysis of rational choice, psychological principles, and ethnic civil war, I have attempted to make the individual chapters relatively free-standing, and each chapter has been divided into sections and subsections both for ease of reading and to call attention to key concepts.

In chapter one, I first state my research questions and propose some related hypotheses. Next, I highlight and define key terms. Finally, I review the literature on civil wars to assess the state of current knowledge, calling attention to important outstanding questions and proposed answers to them.

In chapter two, I review the recent application of the rational choice paradigm to questions surrounding civil war termination. I study two different conceptual approaches that rational choice scholars have employed: expected utility theory and the security dilemma. In particular, I outline three prominent rational choice models of ethnic war termination: Mason and Fett’s expected utility theory, Walter’s credible commitment theory, and Kaufmann’s demographic separation theory. I identify each model’s unique features, but also call attention to their common explanatory and predictive implications.

In chapter three, I construct an alternative theory of ethnic war termination based on prospect theory. First, I provide a brief overview of the psychological research program into prospect theory, calling attention to findings and concepts of importance to ethnic war. Next, I propose a prospect theory model for ethnic war termination. Finally, I compare my psychological theory to the rational choice theories, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each and highlighting where and why my prospect theory model may provide added value over existing models.

In chapters four and five, I perform first-brush testing of my model by using it and the rational choice models to analyze two case studies of ethnic war termination. In chapter four, I examine the Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war. In chapter five, I study the Bosnian civil war. For each case, I first explain why it was selected. Next, I briefly review the course of the fighting and how the war terminated. Finally, I examine the war from the perspective of each of the four models, comparing each model's ability to explain the behavior of the combatants and to predict the manner in which the war terminated.

In chapter six, I describe the implications of my model for policy makers interested in reducing the worldwide consequences of ethnic war through humanitarian military intervention. I review the prescriptive conclusions offered by the rational choice models and the pitfalls they create for interveners if ethnic combatants do not behave as rational choice theory suggests, but instead behave in accordance with prospect theory. I then use my psychological model to draw prescriptive implications for policy makers, and conclude that the prospects for successful intervention are poorer than other models imply.

Finally, I conclude by discussing the promise that prospect theory and psychological models show for answering important questions about ethnic civil war, and by discussing what research remains to be done before that promise may be fully realized.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM OF CIVIL WAR TERMINATION

Much recent progress has been made in the study of civil war in general and ethnic civil war in particular. However, many important questions remain unanswered or answered only in part, particularly one relating to how and why ethnic civil wars end. In this chapter, I present those questions I mean to investigate and the hypotheses I propose in response to them. After identifying and defining key terms, I perform a review of the literature in this area both to provide background information on the topic and to establish the present state of empirical research and theoretical debate.

Research questions and hypotheses

This thesis seeks to investigate the explanatory and predictive power of three prominent rational choice models of civil war termination – one based on expected utility and two based on game theory and the security dilemma. As such, my primary research question is this:

Question 1: Are the decisions of combatants in ethnic civil wars, when choosing whether to negotiate a settlement or continue to fight, consistent with rational choice models of civil war termination?

Based on intriguing observations from the empirical record of ethnic wars, I will focus on two further aspects of this research question:

Question 2: Under what circumstances do combatants in ethnic civil wars choose to continue fighting even though rational choice models predict they would settle?

Question 3: When the decisions of combatants in ethnic civil wars are consistent with the predictions of rational choice models, how well do those rational choice models explain the combatants' decision processes?

To answer these questions, I will use prospect theory to construct an alternative model of ethnic war termination. I will use my model and the rational choice models to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The decisions of combatants in ethnic civil wars, when choosing whether to negotiate a settlement or continue to fight, are consistent with a prospect theory model of

civil war termination.

Hypothesis 2: Prospect theory explains why combatants in ethnic civil wars will choose to continue fighting even though rational choice models predict they would settle.

Hypothesis 3: When the decisions of combatants in ethnic civil wars are consistent with the predictions of rational choice models, prospect theory will provide an equally good or superior explanation of the combatants' decision processes.

In the following chapters I will describe these alternative models of ethnic war termination and use them to test my hypotheses about prospect theory, rational choice, and the decision-making processes of ethnic combatants.

Terms and definitions

Before proceeding, I will define the key terms in my research questions and hypotheses to clarify the scope and purpose of this thesis.

Ethnic civil war. I employ Licklider's definition of civil war as "large-scale violence among geographically contiguous people concerned about the possibility of having to live with one another in the same political unit after the conflict" (1993: 9).¹ For a conflict to qualify as a civil war, it must meet two further thresholds. First, multiple sovereignty must be present, meaning that multiple competing organizations are effectively exercising state powers (taxation, policing, et cetera) within the country where the war is taking place. Second, "large-scale violence" means at least 1,000 battle deaths during each year of the conflict, with effective resistance by the weaker side, defined as imposing casualties on the stronger side equal to at least 5 percent of its own losses (Licklider, 1995: 682).²

Ethnic civil wars represent a subset of this larger category. An ethnic war is one in which mobilization is based on appeals to shared ethnicity, and in which recruiting patterns correspond with ethnic divisions (Kaufmann, 1996a: 68). I employ Kaufmann's definition of ethnic group as "a body of

¹ Note that this definition would theoretically include wars of interstate conquest. Also, unlike the definition employed by Fearon and Laitin (2003: 76), my definition of civil war does not require that the state be one of the combatants.

² Thus, this definition of civil war excludes both low-level conflicts and one-sided massacres.

individuals who purportedly share cultural or racial characteristics, especially common ancestry or territorial origin, which distinguish them from members of other groups” (1996b: 138). Thus, ethnic wars are defined not by the aims of the combatants, but by the organization of combatants along ethnic lines.³

War termination. I use Licklider’s definition of war termination, which states that a civil war ends if the combatants’ concern about living together, the multiple sovereignty, or the large-scale violence ends (1993: 10; 1995: 682). For the violence criteria to be met, battle deaths must drop below 1,000 per year and remain below that threshold for 5 years (Licklider, 1993: 11).

Settlement. A settlement is an agreement, drafted at least in part by the combatants, which keeps all sides intact as functioning entities.⁴ For a settlement to be accepted, all the combatants that are parties to it must sign it, and it must result in termination of the war (Walter, 1997: 344-345). Settlements may reconstruct a single government or create multiple governments through regional autonomy or state partition, so long as all the combatants survive as functioning entities in some form.

Continuing to fight. Settling or fighting is treated as a binary choice. Until a war terminates, combatants who do not accept a settlement are therefore presumed to continue fighting. Combatants may continue to fight even while negotiating a potential settlement.

Combatants. Combatants are the parties to a civil war that field armed forces, inflict casualties, sustain casualties, and contribute to multiple sovereignty. Combatants are treated as homogeneous groups with unitary leadership and interests (Walter, 1999: 129).⁵

Rational choice. I use Levy’s definition of rational choice, which states that the rational choice

³ Kaufmann’s full definition is narrower, in that it assumes that ethnic armies are fighting for narrowly ethnic aims: “Opposing communities in ethnic civil conflicts hold irreconcilable visions of the identity, borders, and citizenship of the state. They do not seek to control a state whose identity all sides accept, but rather to redefine or divide the state itself” (1996b: 138). In another article, Kaufmann (1996a: 65) makes a similar distinction between what he calls intracommunity conflict, war within an undisputed community over how that community should be run, and intercommunity conflict, war between communities over the identity, purpose, and borders of their state(s).

⁴ The criterion that combatants must survive as functioning entities is meant to exclude those agreements which are really negotiated surrenders, or, as Kaufmann (1994: 556) calls them, “fig leaf” settlements.

⁵ This definition represents an abstraction of reality, since ethnic combatants are often loose coalitions with divided leaderships. Factions within real-world combatants may have differing or even contradictory aims (Walter, 1999; Mason et al., 2005; Fearon & Laitin, 2000; Licklider, 1993). However, rational choice models typically reduce combatants to unitary actors, and I will do the same in this thesis, even though Kuperman argues that the assumption of monolithic ethnic groups and combatants is a “primary theoretical shortcoming” of such models (2004: 348).

paradigm presumes and requires that decision makers have a consistent and transitive preference order, and that they select from available options to maximize their satisfaction of those preferences (1997: 89).⁶ Decision makers who act otherwise are thus normatively “irrational.”

Prospect theory. Prospect theory will be described at greater length in chapter three, but it generally refers to a psychological theory of decision making under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Prospect theory is descriptive, inductive, and derived from laboratory experiments. Rational choice, by contrast, is normative, deductive, and derived from mathematical axioms (Levy, 1997).

Decision process. I use the term decision processes to refer to the general manner in which combatants structure a choice problem, evaluate their options, and apply a decision rule to determine how to respond. Each of the four models will imply a different decision process for combatants to follow when deciding whether to settle or continue fighting.

Current knowledge and literature review

The accumulating body of literature on civil war has begun to address three questions of interest to this thesis. First, how likely are civil wars to terminate in negotiated settlements versus military victories? Second, are there theoretical or empirical reasons to treat ethnic wars as a distinct conceptual subset that may terminate differently than other civil wars? Third, how likely are ethnic wars specifically to be resolved through negotiated settlements, and how does that compare with civil wars in general?

How do civil wars end? Many sources report different rates of settlement for civil wars. This is complicated by the fact that many authors base their claims on data from different data sets, and by the fact that within those data sets different authors use different standards for coding outcomes as victories or settlements (Kuperman, 2004). However, some consensus observations do emerge from the literature.

Most civil wars terminating between 1945 and 1990 ended through military victory (Mason et al., 2005). Estimates of the percent of civil wars resolved through negotiated settlements range from 15

⁶ This definition of rational choice does not narrowly require that decision makers optimize their expected utility over each choice, only that they choose in accordance with a stable preference order. As Kaufmann (1994: 559) writes: “The rational choice paradigm encompasses a number of different formulations, but the core common to all of them is the idea that people maximize their interests subject to constraints.”

percent at the low end to 40-45 percent at the high end.⁷ Also, civil wars seem to be less likely to end in settlements than interstate wars (Walter, 1997: 335), which corresponds with the basic theoretical arguments presented in the introduction.⁸ However, some evidence suggests that the fraction of civil wars terminating in negotiated settlements may be increasing. Kuperman (2004: 338) states that 65 percent of civil wars ending between 1980 and 1996 featured negotiated settlements, and Mason et al. (2005: 2) report that the settlement rate for civil wars ending in the 1990s was as high as 75 percent.

Related to the issue of civil war termination is the issue of civil war duration. Civil wars have an average duration that is almost four times greater than the length of the average interstate war (Mason et al., 2005: 4). There is wide variance in duration across the sample of civil wars, with Licklider reporting that 27 percent are terminated in the first year, whereas 21 percent last longer than 10 years (1995: 684). Military victories tend to occur early in a civil war, whereas negotiated settlements are the most likely outcome for wars lasting longer than 5 years (Mason et al., 2005: 3).⁹

For long civil wars, it has become conventional wisdom that mutually-hurting stalemates promote negotiated settlements. Such a stalemate is “a condition whereby neither side is strong enough to defeat the other but each is strong enough to prevent its own defeat” (Mason et al., 2005: 4). Writing for the APSA Task Force on Political Violence and Terrorism, Mason et al. state that, once in such a stalemate:

Both sides continue to fight, not so much in search of the victory that now appears hopelessly elusive but simply to avoid losing and, in so doing, improve their bargaining position in any settlement negotiations that might take place in the future. (2005: 4)

Mason et al. further suggest that, once a war is stalemated, it is “reasonable” to assume that the civilian components of combatant groups would prefer settlement to continued war (2005: 9). Licklider makes a similar argument, stating that while both sides may initially prefer a stalemate to negotiation, combatants

⁷ Downes (2004: 230-231) notes that different authors have reported figures ranging from 15 percent to 20-25 percent to 40-45 percent. Downes himself suggests that the numbers are 23 percent settlements and 77 percent military victories (2004: 245). Walter reports a 20 percent settlement rate for civil wars ending between 1940 and 1990 (1997: 350). Licklider reports that, prior to 1990, as few as 15 percent of civil wars were resolved through settlements, but his own data set from 1945 through 1993 shows a 25 percent settlement rate (1995: 681-684).

⁸ Walter’s specific figure is a 55 percent settlement rate for interstate wars ending between 1940 and 1990, compared with a 20 percent settlement rate for civil wars during that same period.

⁹ Specifically, Mason et al. state that 15 of 28 government victories and 9 of 16 rebel victories came after less than one year of fighting, whereas 11 of the 13 wars where the fighting lasted for more than 5 years were ultimately ended with negotiated settlements (2005: 3).

are rarely willing to accept stalemate as a long-term solution (1995: 683).

Thus, considerable scholarly debate still exists about even the observed empirical outcomes among cases of civil war termination. However, Mason et al. seem to speak for the emerging consensus view when they write that civil wars are most likely to end with negotiated settlements after they have reached a mutually-hurting stalemate, when a neutral arbiter helps both sides to broker a peace deal, and when peacekeeping forces are made available to enforce the negotiated settlement:

The protagonists are more likely to agree to negotiate, more likely to reach an agreement and more likely to abide by the agreement when third parties serve as mediators and make a commitment to enforce the terms of the agreement. In the absence of such commitments, protagonists are confronted with a dilemma in which both sides will benefit if they cooperate, but each will benefit more by cheating on the agreement while their rival continues to abide by its terms. Third party enforcement guarantees, usually in the form of peacekeeping operations, can resolve this dilemma and thereby give both sides the assurances they need to make disarming and demobilizing their military forces an acceptable step toward peace. (2005: 8)

This emerging wisdom seems derived from the security dilemma models discussed in chapter two.

Are ethnic wars a distinct subset of civil wars? Several authors have suggested theoretical and empirical reasons why ethnic wars should be regarded as a distinct subset of civil wars, and should be examined separately from ideological wars. This distinction would be significant, given that most of the civil wars in the late twentieth century can be classified as identity wars (Licklider, 1995: 685).¹⁰

The key theoretical argument for why ethnic war termination should be considered separately is that while ideologies and political loyalties can be changed, ethnicity cannot be (Licklider, 1995; Kaufmann, 1996a, 1996b). Kaufmann makes the strongest form of this argument for treating ethnic and non-ethnic wars differently, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter two. Generally, though, his argument centers around the fact that, in ideological wars, combatants fight for the loyalty of the whole population, which constitutes their mobilization base and source of support. In ethnic wars, by contrast, little effort is made to solicit support from opposing ethnics (Kaufmann, 1996a, 1996b). Co-ethnics in friendly territory constitute the sole mobilization base and source of support. Furthermore, violence forces

¹⁰ Licklider's specific figure is 63 identity wars out of 91 total civil wars from 1945 to 1993. He also argues that identity wars (a slightly broader term than ethnic wars) represent an increasing percentage of total civil wars (1995: 685). However, writing more recently, Gurr notes a "sharp decline" in new ethnic wars (2000: 52).

populations to mobilize along ethnic lines, since combatants can impose sanctions on co-ethnics who do not aid them, and since opposing combatants are unlikely to protect people outside their own ethnic group. Thus, combatants decide whether to treat citizens as friends or foes based upon their ethnic membership, which is readily discernable. Given the presumed loyalty of co-ethnics and the presumed disloyalty of opposing ethnics, controlling territory rather than winning hearts and minds becomes the path to victory. As such, Kaufmann argues that while political competence determines the outcome of ideological civil wars, military power determines the outcome of ethnic civil wars (1996a, 1996b).

Others have argued that ethnic war is not a meaningful term because ethnic wars are not empirically distinct from other kinds of fighting, or because the realities of ethnic war do not correspond with their theorized nature. Mueller states that ethnic war does not exist as the term is commonly used, and that ethnic combatants are disorganized, self-interested thugs and hooligans rather than unified groups (2000: 42). Similarly, Fearon and Laitin argue that ethnic wars are best understood as just a nominal subset of insurgent wars, and ethnicity is not a significant causal factor in civil war onset (2003: 88).¹¹ But, contrary to Fearon and Laitin, Sambanis' data analysis indicates that ethnic wars do have different onset risks and different characteristics than ideological wars (2001: 280).

Thus, there seems to be empirical arguments both for and against treating ethnic wars separately from other non-ethnic civil wars. Given the theoretical reasons why ethnic wars might terminate differently than other civil wars, I restrict this thesis only to ethnic civil wars to avoid any confusion that may result from trying to extrapolate across all categories of civil war.¹²

How do ethnic wars end? Some studies of civil war termination have disaggregated the data to examine ethnic war termination rates separately from those of other civil wars. Again, thanks to the different data sets and definitions employed, many of these findings are unclear or contradictory

¹¹ Fearon and Laitin's findings are based on statistical analysis of their data set of 127 civil wars that began between 1945 and 1990. Of those 127, they identify 58 wars as ethnic and 20 cases as ambiguous (2003: 77-79).

¹² Another motivation is the fact that one of the rational choice models, Kaufmann's, is specifically meant to address ethnic civil war. Both Mason and Fett's and Walter's models are meant to cover all kinds of civil war. But, for reasons that will be discussed below, both those models contend that ethnic war termination is not empirically different from ideological war termination, so applying those models to ethnic wars does not represent an unintended use of their underlying theories.

(Kuperman, 2004).¹³

Dividing their dataset between ethnic and non-ethnic wars, Mason and Fett conclude that ethnic combatants are just as likely to agree to negotiated settlements as non-ethnic combatants, with 26-percent and 21-percent probabilities of settlement, respectively (1996: 562; Kuperman, 2004: 326). Licklider similarly counts a settlement rate of 26 percent for identity wars and 20 percent for non-ethnic wars; he also finds no difference in duration between identity wars and non-identity wars (1995: 686). Downes agrees that ethnic and ideological combatants are equally likely to settle (2004: 240). Finally, Walter (1997: 360) finds no difference in settlement rates between ethnic and non-ethnic wars, which she argues “lends further support to the rational actor model that tends to view all combatants as driven by the same cost calculations regardless of ethnic affiliation or identity” (quoted in Kaufmann, 2005: 185).¹⁴

Kaufmann, using Gurr’s Minorities at Risk dataset, states that of 27 ethnic wars concluded between 1944 and 1994, 12 ended in military victories, 5 through territorial partitions, 2 from third-party occupations, and 8 through settlements granting full or partial regional autonomy to an ethnic group (1996b: 159-160). Since Kaufmann argues that regional autonomy is largely equivalent to partition, he argues that there are no instances of negotiated settlements that preserved a unitary state following an ethnic war. Using my definition, however, either grants of regional autonomy or partitions could count as negotiated settlements, provided they were more than just negotiated terms of surrender.¹⁵

While there seems to be relatively little variation between the rate of settlement for ethnic civil wars and non-ethnic civil wars, both Downes (2004: 231, 248) and Licklider (1995: 686) report that ethnic war settlements are more likely than ideological war settlements to later collapse into renewed war between the same combatants, and that within all terminated ethnic wars, those concluded by negotiated

¹³ For example, Kuperman (2004: 315) notes that Mason and Fett’s data set of 28 ethnic wars only has 6 cases in common with Kaufmann’s set of 27 wars, despite the fact that both authors purport to have studied “all” ethnic wars during the same time period. Furthermore, both studies use different definitions of settlement – Mason and Fett include regional autonomy as a negotiated settlement, whereas Kaufmann does not.

¹⁴ Kaufmann (2005: 189-190), as might be expected, disputes Walter’s coding of several cases.

¹⁵ Applying Mason and Fett’s definition of settlement to Kaufmann’s data, Kuperman (2004: 326) argues that Kaufmann shows a 30 percent settlement rate for ethnic conflicts.

settlements are three times as likely to restart as those which ended in military victories.¹⁶

Thus, the existing literature seems to confirm the observation that civil wars are less likely than interstate conflicts to be concluded through negotiated settlements. While there are theoretical arguments and some empirical data suggesting that ethnic wars are a distinct subset of civil wars, existing studies of war termination suggest that ethnic wars are resolved through negotiated settlements at about the same rate as ideological wars. There is, however, evidence that negotiated settlements to ethnic wars are less enduring than military victories or negotiated settlements to non-ethnic civil wars.

¹⁶ Licklider's data includes 33 terminated identity wars and 13 terminated political-economic wars. Of the identity wars, 24 ended with military victories and 9 with settlements; 21 percent of the military victory wars restarted later, whereas 67 percent of negotiated settlements collapsed. Of the 13 non-identity wars, 10 ended in victories and 3 in settlements; none of the political-economic wars later restarted between the same combatants.

CHAPTER TWO: RATIONAL CHOICE AND ETHNIC WAR TERMINATION

In this chapter, I describe three rational choice theories of civil war termination that seek to account for the low settlement rate among ethnic wars and to explain the decision processes that would lead ethnic combatants to settle rather than to keep fighting. The first model, by Mason and Fett, is based upon expected utility theory. The second and third models, by Walter and Kaufmann, respectively, are built upon game theory and the security dilemma.

Mason and Fett's expected utility model

In their 1996 article, Mason and Fett constructed a “rational choice model of the decision process by which parties involved in a civil war opt for a negotiated settlement rather than continue fighting” (547). Their model is derived from the axioms of expected utility theory, and they test their model against the 57 civil wars ending between 1945 and 1992 contained in the Correlates of War dataset (Mason & Fett, 1996: 547, 565-567). In this section, I will describe Mason and Fett's expected utility model, including its underlying assumptions, implied decision process, variables and their measurement, explanatory and predictive implications, and main takeaways.

Assumptions of the model. Mason and Fett's expected utility model assumes that a rebel group (denoted R) is fighting with the government (G) either for control of the state (a revolutionary war) or to form its own state (a separatist war). Both R and G are assumed to be unitary, rational actors.¹⁷ Only these two combatants are included in the model, which features three possible outcomes: victory for R, victory for G, or agreement on a negotiated settlement (S). Unless the two parties both agree to S at time T_S , they are assumed to continue fighting until either R or G wins a victory at time T_V (Mason & Fett, 1996: 547).

At any time (T_0), both parties may choose between settling and continuing to fight. So long as the parties do not settle, they incur the cost of continued fighting, or C (Mason & Fett, 1996: 548). Mason and Fett state that: “If G (or R) chooses to continue to fight, it must be the case that G (or R) expects to win eventually” (1996: 548). The model does not assume that any transaction costs are associated with settling

¹⁷ This may be a problematic abstraction, given that real-life combatants are often loose and unwieldy coalitions, so that each combatant's strength of leadership could affect both its ability to settle and the utility it would derive from a settlement (Licklider, 1993: 15).

other than the costs of fighting between T_0 and T_S .¹⁸ The model also assumes that settling would be faster than fighting the war to a conclusion, so that $T_S < T_V$ (Mason & Fett, 1996: 549).¹⁹

By settling, both parties attain some amount of utility (U_S). The parties would also gain utility from either victory (U_V) or defeat (U_D). Mason and Fett assume that $U_V > U_S > U_D$, and that both U_V and U_D remain constant over the course of the conflict (1996: 548-549). Thus, neither sunk costs nor learning effects alter the utility of victory or defeat for the combatants. However, the expected utility of continuing to fight, $E(U_C)$, is discounted by the costs of fighting required to achieve victory, whereas the expected utility of settling, $E(U_S)$, is enhanced by the costs of fighting that are avoided if the war is terminated early (Mason & Fett, 1996: 550).

Thus, Mason and Fett assume that both R and G will opt for S at any time that the expected utility of settling outweighs the expected utility of continuing to fight. If, at any time, $E(U_S) > E(U_C)$ for both R and G, the combatants will settle for S. Otherwise, they continue to fight (Mason and Fett, 1996: 547).

Implied decision process. The implied decision process for both combatants in Mason and Fett's model is straightforward and parsimonious. First, both sides are assumed to collect information relevant to the decision problem. (I will refer to this as the *collection stage*.) Next, the parties evaluate that information by calculating and comparing $E(U_S)$ and $E(U_C)$.²⁰ (I call this the *evaluation stage*.) Next, the parties apply the decision rule of choosing between settling and continuing to fight by picking the option with the greater expected utility. (I call this the *decision rule stage*.) Finally, the parties act on whichever option they selected. (I call this the *implementation stage*.)

Variables and their measurement. Mason and Fett focus on four variables which they predict

¹⁸ Licklider argues that the process of negotiating a settlement may involve extra transaction costs for the government, if it sacrifices some of its legitimacy or enhances the legitimacy of the rebels by sitting down with them (1995: 683). Walter notes a similar concern that, by agreeing to negotiate, the government may encourage other potential rebels to take up arms in hopes of achieving a settlement on their terms (1997, 1999).

¹⁹ This assumption may be a suspect abstraction, given the finding in chapter one that many civil wars are resolved through military victory before a full year of fighting.

²⁰ Mason and Fett (1996: 548) provide these equations for calculating each expected utility:

$$E(U_S) = U_S + \sum_{t_i = t_s}^{t_v} C_{ii} - \sum_{t_i = 0}^{t_s} C_{ii}, \quad E(U_C) = P_V(U_V) + (1 - P_V)(U_D) - \sum_{t_i = 0}^{t_v} C_{ii}$$

will influence each party's decision to settle or continue fighting: (1) the probability of victory, (2) the costs of continued fighting, (3) the length of time to achieve victory, and (4) the value of the settlement (1996: 549). The values of these inputs are determined by the perceptions of each party, and may or may not reflect the actual state of the war – whether due to imperfect information gathered during the collection stage or misperception during the evaluation stage.

A combatant will be more likely to settle if it believes its probability of victory is low. In their model, Mason and Fett use the size of the government's army as a proxy for probability of victory, reasoning that the smaller the government's army, the lower the government's probability of victory and thus the more likely the government is to settle (1996: 550).²¹ Also, Mason and Fett suggest that international intervention could affect each side's probability of victory. Intervention on behalf of one party would raise its probability of victory, making a settlement less attractive (Mason & Fett, 1996: 553).²² Presumably, the intervention would also reduce the other party's probability of victory, making settlement more attractive for that party.²³ Alternatively, an intervention that balanced both sides and created a stalemate could make settlement more attractive to both parties. According to Mason and Fett's model, settlement is most likely when both parties perceive their probability of victory to be around 50 percent, a condition which Mason and Fett liken to a mutually-hurting stalemate (1996: 550).

²¹ This proxy is hugely problematic, given that the size of the government's army is useful information only in comparison to the size of the rebel army, which Mason and Fett do not consider. The government's and rebels' perceived probabilities of victory will not be related to the absolute size of their armies, but to the relative size. A government army of 1,000 facing a rebel army of 5,000 will cause the government to have a lower probability of victory than an army of 10,000 facing the same rebels, but a government army of 1,000 facing a rebel army of 500 will have a higher probability of victory than an army of 10,000 facing 50,000 rebels.

Furthermore, even if the government's small army decreases its estimate of its probability of victory, that does not necessarily make a settlement more likely, since both parties must agree on a settlement for one to occur. If the government army is too small to crush the rebels, then that would suggest that the rebels would perceive themselves as having a high probability of victory, and thus the rebels will be unlikely to agree to settle.

The more appropriate proxy here would be the ratio of government troops to rebels – the closer the ratio is to 1:1, the more likely a settlement would become. Conversely, the more lopsided the ratio became, the less likely it would be for both sides to agree on a settlement. I assume that Mason and Fett did not employ this proxy because they did not have the required data about the size of rebel forces. Still, I think their decision to use the government army size instead is indefensible, given how poorly it accords with the assumptions underlying their model.

²² Kuperman (2005) makes a related point, arguing that the expectation of international intervention may artificially inflate the weaker side's perceived probability of victory and thus cause it to escalate or keep fighting.

²³ Mason and Fett (1996) also note that intervention could reduce the likelihood of a settlement by underwriting the war costs of the favored side (thus reducing the costs of fighting), or by increasing the time required to reach a settlement (since the involvement of third parties creates extra veto points).

Next, a party will be more likely to settle if it believes the costs associated with continued fighting will be high. Mason and Fett note that the costs of conflict include both the destruction of human and natural resources, and the opportunity cost associated with not using war resources for constructive purposes (1996: 548).²⁴ Their model uses the war's casualty rate as a proxy for the costs of continued fighting.²⁵ Higher casualties should lead combatants to perceive higher costs of continuation, and thus make settling more attractive (Mason & Fett, 1996: 551).²⁶

Similarly, the longer a party perceives it will take to win a victory – and thus the longer it must absorb the costs of fighting to do so – the more likely that party will be to settle. Mason and Fett use conflict duration as a proxy for time until victory, stating that the longer a war lasts, the longer the parties will expect it to last as a result of learning effects (1996: 552). Presumably, a long duration would also cause both parties to lower their perceived probabilities of victory as they settled into a stalemate and discovered that they could not crush the enemy's forces.

Finally, the greater the perceived value of the settlement, the more likely combatants will be to settle. The more divisible the stakes in a war, the more likely it is that each party can get some of what it wants from a negotiated settlement, and thus the more likely it is that the value of settling will outweigh the value of fighting for both parties (Mason and Fett, 1996: 554). Mason and Fett assume that territorial stakes are more divisible than control of the government, so they proxy divisibility of stakes by assuming that settlements have greater utility in separatist wars than in revolutionary wars (1996: 554-556).²⁷ They also use the ethnic nature of a war as a proxy for the divisibility of the stakes, arguing that issues

²⁴ Mueller (2000) suggests that the costs of fighting may be underwritten by the opportunities for plunder and profiteering that accompany war. Mason and Fett make no explicit provision for war profits in their model, although they could presumably be deducted from the cost of fighting variable.

²⁵ Mason and Fett note the weakness of using aggregate casualties as a proxy here, since how those casualties are distributed across the two parties would impact the likelihood of a settlement (1996: 551). If one party is taking the brunt of the casualties while the other is suffering relatively light costs, then the former should have a low probability of victory and a high continuation cost, whereas the latter would have a high probability of victory and low continuation costs. As such, while the losing party would be more likely to settle, the winning party would be less likely to settle, and a settlement cannot occur unless both parties agree.

²⁶ Alternatively, Bloom and Licklider (2004) suggest that a high casualty rate might reduce the likelihood of settlement, since passions on both sides might become inflamed, making the combatants unwilling to settle.

²⁷ Licklider (1993: 14-15) speculates that the stakes in an ethnic war could be more divisible than those in a political war, since “flying two flags doesn't cost much more than flying one,” or that they could be less divisible if they arouse deeper levels of commitment than political issues.

surrounding ethnic identity are difficult to compromise on, and thus that parties in ethnic wars will see settlements as less valuable (Mason & Fett, 1996: 554-556).²⁸

Explanatory and predictive implications. In analyzing their model using their data set, Mason and Fett conclude that only the size of the government's army and the duration of the war have a significant influence on the likelihood of settlement; the variables related to divisibility of stakes and the costs of fighting are not significant (1996: 560-563).²⁹ Thus, Mason and Fett's model predicts that, when combatants perceive that they have a low probability of winning and that it would take a long time to achieve victory, they will settle their conflict. As such, they argue that a mutually-hurting stalemate is an excellent predictor of which civil wars will terminate in negotiated settlements, and that "war weariness" explains the decision to settle:

The data do indicate what amounts to a "war weariness" effect: the longer a civil war has lasted, the more likely the participants are to seek a negotiated settlement as the war drags on. The fact that the size of the army is negatively related to the probability of a settlement indicates that unless the government can subdue the rebels quickly, a settlement will become more appealing. Therefore, the choice for both parties becomes one between indefinite bloodletting without foreseeable conclusion or a settlement that establishes peace and gives the combatants some but not all the payoffs they sought from war. In short, Zartman's [idea of the] mutually hurting stalemate appears to be as relevant to the settlement of civil wars as it is for interstate wars. (1996: 563)

Regarding duration, Mason and Fett predict that settlements are unlikely before 48 months of fighting, but become likely once the war lasts longer than 4 years (1996: 561; Mason et al., 2005: 3).³⁰ Mason and Fett also argue that probability of victory is the "most important consideration" for combatants when judging the merits of settling versus fighting, and that settlements are unlikely so long as either party perceives it has a good chance of winning the war (1996: 549).³¹

²⁸ Alternatively, Downes suggests that the issues in ethnic war are often strongly tied to ancestral territories, writing that ethnic groups "typically have a deep attachment to a homeland, viewing it as an essential piece of their identity and a key to their cultural and physical security" (2004: 241). Thus, the stakes in an ethnic war may be highly indivisible if both groups lay claim to the same homeland, but the stakes could also be easily divisible if the groups are interested in controlling different territories (Toft, 2003).

²⁹ The rate of battle deaths just misses significance under some circumstances.

³⁰ Along these lines, Gurr argues that once the combatants in separatist wars "recognize that the costs of accommodation are probably less than the costs of a prolonged conflict, it is only a short step to mutual decisions to settle after an initial show of forceful resolve rather than after prolonged warfare" (2000: 57).

³¹ However, given the inescapable problems associated with the army size proxy (as noted above), I think that Licklider's proxy for probability of victory would be a superior predictor in Mason and Fett's model. Because

Mason & Fett's expected utility theory and model decision process	
<i>Decision stage</i>	<i>Variables and their measurement</i>
Collection	Collect information relevant to the choice problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P_V, U_V, U_S, U_D, C_C, T_V, and T_S
Evaluation	Calculate $E(U_S)$ and $E(U_C)$: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors affecting P_V (size of government army*, international intervention, mutually-hurting stalemate*) • Factors affecting C_C (casualty rate) • Factors affecting T_V (war duration*) • Factors affecting U_S (divisibility of stakes, separatist v. revolution, ethnic v. ideological)
Decision rule	Apply decision rule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settle if $E(U_S) > E(U_C)$ • Continue fighting if $E(U_C) > E(U_S)$
Implementation	Act on chosen decision
<i>(* denotes predictive significance)</i>	

Table 1. Mason and Fett's model

Main takeaways. Mason and Fett have constructed a very parsimonious model that uses the axioms of expected utility theory to differentiate between normatively rational and irrational civil war settlements. Their implied decision process is simple: combatants calculate the expected utilities of fighting and settling, and then choose the option that yields greater utility.

However, this decision process assumes knowledge by the parties of a great number of inputs – probabilities of victory, time required to negotiate a settlement, et cetera – that will be difficult for combatants to see with much accuracy through the fog of war. Thus, despite the mathematical precision of Mason and Fett's equations, and the simplicity of their proposed decision model, the inputs their model requires are inexorably linked to the perceptions of combatants, which may have only a tenuous relationship to the situation on the ground. As such, this expected utility model requires aggressive and sometimes questionable assumptions about how combatants judge the utilities of settling versus fighting.

Mason and Fett suggest that four key variables explain the decision to settle or fight: perceived probabilities of winning, costs of continuing combat, time required to achieve victory, and value of the

of the imperfect information available to combatants and their likely uncertainty about the real military balance between forces, Licklider suggests that “prominent military outcomes will have a disproportionate impact on the perceptions of elites” (1993: 15-16).

proposed settlement. These inputs will explain the decisions of civil war combatants. However, only the perceived probability of victory and the duration of the conflict are shown to have predictive power in their expected utility model.

In the following sections, I will describe two other rational choice models based on game theory and the security dilemma, which more or less subsume Mason and Fett's utility calculations but add questions about credibility and strategic interaction into the mix.

The security dilemma and ethnic war termination

Posen's 1993 article marks the first systematic application of the security dilemma to the problem of ethnic war. The security dilemma posits that, under conditions of anarchy and given uncertainty about the intentions of others, steps that one actor takes to provide for its own security can appear threatening to another actor. The second actor is left with the choice between doing nothing – and leaving itself vulnerable to attack – or responding with defensive measures of its own, which may in turn represent an offensive threat to the first actor. Thus, both actors are drawn into a spiral where each one's actions, even if undertaken for purely defensive purposes, threaten the other and provoke a response in kind (Posen, 1993).³² In game theoretic terms, each party best responds to the other by acting to defend itself. Posen (1993) argued that the security dilemma can lead to ethnic war if the disintegration of a government's control over its territory results in pseudo-anarchy within the borders of that state. Forced to provide for their own security, ethnic groups may find themselves trapped in a security dilemma.

In fact, the security dilemma is most intense when offensive and defensive forces are similar, which makes intentions harder to gauge from actions, and when offense is easier than defense, which creates incentives to attack preemptively rather than rely on defense for security (Posen, 1993: 28). These conditions are likely to exist during ethnic war. The small arms that ethnic groups are likely to possess could be used for either offense or defense. Also, while group solidarity is needed to mobilize co-ethnics for defense, this group mobilization also creates the potential for an offensive against other groups

³² The situation thus resembles the classic prisoner's dilemma, a game theoretic structure in which both actors would be better off if they could agree to cooperate, but are driven to defection by fear that the other will defect and leave them with the sucker's payoff. Defection dominates cooperation – it is always the best response.

(Posen, 1993: 30-31).³³ Demography can also create offense-dominance. For example, if ethnic minorities are grouped in isolated enclaves surrounded by majority ethnic areas, these enclaves will be difficult to defend, creating an incentive for preemptive strikes to rescue stranded co-ethnics (Posen, 1993: 32-33).

Since Posen applied the security dilemma to ethnic war onset, both Walter and Kaufmann have built upon security dilemma concepts to develop game theoretic models of ethnic war termination. While still rooted in rational choice assumptions, these models also focus on strategic interaction. In addition to judging the comparative utilities of settlement versus continued fighting, these security dilemma models argue that combatants adjust those utilities based on the perceived credibility of their adversary's offer to settle. As Downes writes:

[T]he experience of warfare provides combatants with ample evidence of their adversary's malign intentions. Although the enemy appears willing to settle now, the war just fought gives each side little reason to be sanguine about the other's future intentions. Negotiated settlements to civil wars, however, require that groups forsake their armed forces – and hence their ability to protect themselves and enforce the terms of any agreement negotiated – in order to unify the country. How, though, can they be sure that their former adversary will not cheat on the deal and attack when they are most vulnerable? [...]

Given the high stakes involved – group survival – and the recent history of hostility, combatants are understandably reluctant to take the risk of settling. (2004: 233)

Combatants, faced with the risk that their enemies might defect from a settlement and leave them with the sucker's payoff – which could amount to political or military extermination – may therefore prefer fighting to settling: “Thus, even if the payoff for continuing to fight is negative, it often appears the more attractive option” (Downes, 2004: 238).

In the next two sections, I will describe Walter's credible commitment theory and game theoretic model of civil war termination. I will then do the same for Kaufmann's demographic separation theory and resultant model. I will note how both models relate to Mason and Fett's expected utility model, where the Walter and Kaufmann security dilemma models are similar, and how they depart from each other.

Walter's credible commitment model

In her articles, Walter (1997, 1999) presents what she calls the “credible commitment theory” of

³³ Posen (1993) suggests that ethnic groups will use their stories about historical cross-group relations to determine just how “offensive” another ethnic group's identity-based mobilization is.

civil war termination. Her model is derived from game theoretic principles and revolves around what she calls the security dilemma “in reverse” (Walter, 1999: 134). She tests her model against 41 cases of civil war that ended between 1940 and 1990 from the Correlates of War dataset (Walter, 1997: 343).

Assumptions of the model. Walter’s model assumes a bargaining interaction between an unspecified number of unitary combatants that are “rational actors who wish to maximize their group’s position relative to their enemy” (2002: 34). She assumes that, if the combatants engage in good-faith negotiations, they are likely to find a potential settlement that all sides can agree to, presumably because it represents a net utility gain over fighting (Walter, 1997: 335-336). Thus, the problem to be overcome before the parties are willing to settle is not that the utility of settling is lower than the utility of fighting, but that the credibility of the opposing combatant’s promise to abide by the terms of the settlement is too weak (Walter, 1997: 336). Walter writes that:

Combatants who are able to resolve their underlying issues will still return to war if credible, enforceable guarantees on the terms of the agreement cannot be arranged. Once the underlying issues are resolved, negotiations become a search for guarantees that combatants will be protected as they demobilize and that they will not be permanently excluded from a new government once they have done so. (1999: 133)

In essence, Walter assumes that combatants face a game theoretic situation where their payoffs are determined both by their choice to settle or fight, and by their opponent’s choice to settle or fight.³⁴ Once a settlement is negotiated, both parties would receive positive payoffs if they could commit to cooperate under the settlement. If both parties elect to continue fighting instead, they receive lower payoffs as a result. Thus, both sides prefer settling to fighting; in particular, Walter assumes that, if combatants expend time and resources to negotiate, they must prefer peace to war (2002: 42-43).³⁵ However, each party could maximize its payoff by cheating on the agreement. Conversely, the worst outcome for either party is to be left with the sucker’s payoff – to attempt to cooperate while the opposing

³⁴ Contrast this with Mason and Fett’s model, in which a party’s decision is affected only by its own expected utility, not by whether it expects its opponent to choose settling or fighting. Mason and Fett’s model includes no penalty for a combatant that elects settlement when its opponent chooses fighting, it simply assumes that no settlement occurs and that both sides return to war.

³⁵ Negotiations are defined as talks where: (1) representatives of the combatants met face-to-face, (2) both political solutions and military ceasefires were discussed, and (3) combatants could have resumed fighting if the talks broke down (Walter, 2002: 51).

party cheats. Walter calls the resultant effect a security dilemma “in reverse”:

Since each side understands the profits to be gained by exploiting a peace treaty (and both sides know that their opponent also recognizes this opportunity), their promises to honor and respect the terms of the agreement cannot be trusted. Under these conditions, fighting suddenly appears far more appealing than settlement. (1997: 339)

Absent some guarantee that the enemy’s willingness to settle is credible, continuing to fight represents a dominant strategy for the parties in this game. Even if they wanted to, parties could not credibly commit to abide by the terms of a settlement.

Walter argues that the sucker’s payoff is so low because negotiated settlements to civil wars leave both sides vulnerable to military or political domination if the other side cheats on the deal (1999: 134). She states that this vulnerability is acute for two reasons. First, negotiated settlements require combatants to either disarm their troops or merge them into an integrated military.³⁶ Without the ability to maintain a separate, armed force for their own defense, parties would be vulnerable to surprise attack from an enemy that cheated by keeping its stock of arms (Walter, 1997: 337; Downes, 2004: 236). The second vulnerability comes during the creation of post-war governing institutions, when the first party to take control of the government could refuse to relinquish it, and instead use the apparatus of the state to consolidate its hold on power:

How does a group convince its rival that it will not usurp power once its leader becomes president, the instruments of government are under its control, and its opponent’s army is disbanded? (Walter, 1999: 139).

Given their recent history of fighting, each party will have many reasons to suspect that the other harbors malign intentions, making their fears of being left with the sucker’s payoff, should they relinquish their defenses by attempting to settle, all the more acute (Downes, 2004: 237).

Thus, for combatants to agree to settle, Walter assumes that they must judge that the payoffs for cheating are less than the payoffs for compliance with the terms of the settlement. This recalibration of

³⁶ Walter (1997: 339) writes that: “Although numerous implementation plans can be designed to reduce vulnerability, in the end even the most incremental and impartial one will require the full demobilization of partisan groups. In civil wars, disarmament can be postponed, and it can be done gradually and in a reciprocal manner, but it can never be avoided.” A partition settlement could actually avoid the problems of disarmament by allowing the new entities to maintain their armed forces, but Walter argues that partition is not an acceptable solution for states (1997: 360). Also, under her coding, a formal partition would be a military victory rather than a settlement.

the payoffs comes from third-party guarantees to enforce the peace settlement (Walter, 1999: 137). By ensuring compliance and protecting parties against cheaters, third-party guarantees can resolve the credibility problem that the combatants themselves cannot:

Third-party guarantors can change the level of fear and insecurity that accompanies treaty implementation and thus facilitate settlement. An important and frequent reason why opponents fail to reach successful settlements is because they cannot credibly commit to an agreement that will become far less attractive once implemented. Third parties, however [unlike combatants themselves], can guarantee that groups will be protected, terms will be fulfilled, and promises will be kept (or at least they can ensure that groups will survive until a new government and a new national military is formed). In short, they can ensure that the payoffs from cheating on a civil war agreement no longer exceed the payoffs from faithfully executing its terms. (Walter, 1997: 340)

Only under those circumstances will both parties elect to settle and actually follow through on implementing the terms of their agreement.

Implied decision process. Walter's implied decision process for combatants is somewhat more complex than the simple process contained within Mason and Fett's model. First, during the collection stage, combatants are assumed to collect information relevant to the decision problem, including information about the other side's credibility as well as the utilities for settling and fighting. Next, during the evaluation stage, combatants use that information to assemble the game theoretic decision tree, including the payoffs determined by the interaction between their choice and the other party's choice. Next, combatants anticipate the strategy they expect their opponent to play, based on the payoffs calculated in the evaluation phase and information about their opponent's intentions gathered during the collection phase. (I refer to this new step in the decision process as the *judgment stage*.)³⁷ After judging their opponent's likely play, combatants select the option – settling or fighting – that best responds to their opponent during the decision rule phase. Finally, during the implementation phase, parties act on their chosen strategies.

Variables and their measurement. Based on Walter's model, the three key variables that determine a combatant's choice between settling and fighting are: (1) the payoff matrix for settling,

³⁷ In my operationalization of Walter's model, "settling" is equivalent to cooperating and "fighting" is equivalent to defecting. Thus, I would code a party that agreed to a settlement with the intent of cheating as having selected to continue fighting, since they are pursuing a victory rather than attempting to settle in good faith.

continuing to fight, cheating, and the sucker's payoff; (2) the credibility of an opponent's commitment to settle; and (3) the presence of third-party guarantees.

A combatant's perceived payoff matrix will be determined both by their assessment of their ability to win the war through fighting and by the terms of the available settlement. Thus, Walter's model subsumes much of Mason and Fett's model in this variable; presumably, Walter's combatants perform some type of expected utility calculations in assessing the possible payoffs of their actions. Along these lines, Walter argues from her data analysis that the duration of the war, the presence of a stalemate, and the battle death total are all significant in affecting the likelihood that combatants will negotiate (2002: 73).³⁸ Thus, these variables would serve as proxies for the likelihood of victory and the cost of continued fighting; together they determine the payoff for continuing to fight.

The terms of the settlement would affect the payoff for settling. Walter states that a successful peace settlement must consolidate the combatants into a single state, create a new government capable of accommodating the combatants' interests, and build a national, non-partisan military (1999: 133).³⁹ Settlements that include these provisions will raise the payoff for cooperating. Walter also states that the divisibility of the stakes do not have any impact on the value of a settlement.⁴⁰

The benefits associated with cheating and the severity of the sucker's payoff are also determined by the terms of the settlement. Terms that limit the damage caused by defection will make settling more attractive, as will terms that reduce the payoff for cheating (Walter, 1997: 338). Peace agreements that allow combatants to retain more autonomy – and thus more capacity for self defense – will make cheating less attractive and settling more attractive. Walter suggests that guaranteed political representation, veto powers, and balanced inclusion in the military are important settlement variables in this regard (1997: 351). Conversely, settlement terms that would create postwar governmental institutions that could easily

³⁸ Notice the similarity to the variables that Mason and Fett conclude are significant.

³⁹ By definition, this excludes the possibility of a partition settlement. Walter argues that partition is an unacceptable outcome for governments because it makes the state look too weak and could invite attacks by other separatists or even other states (1997: 360). Thus, Walter's model seems to assume that the payoff for any partition settlement would be so low that the government would opt to keep fighting instead.

⁴⁰ Specifically, she states that whether wars are separatist or revolutionary, whether factions occupy distinct territories or are intermingled, and whether resources are divided evenly or unevenly between factional territories, have no significant influence on the likelihood of a settlement (Walter, 1997: 348; 2002: 73).

be co-opted by an opponent – such as a strong presidency – will increase the benefits of cheating, increase combatants’ fears of the sucker’s payoff, and decrease their willingness to settle (Walter, 1999: 141). In particular, Walter states that combatants’ wariness about disarming is the single most important factor in their not wanting to settle (Walter, 1997: 338). Thus, settlements that leave combatants with “escape hatches” – territorial autonomy, borders with friendly nations, and some openly retained arms – will reduce the penalty for the sucker’s payoff (Walter, 1999: 155; 1997: 362).

Walter’s model assumes that combatants would judge the credibility of an opponent’s commitment to settle based on their perception of the opponent’s payoff matrix, and the availability of third-party guarantees to enforce the terms of the settlement. Posen (1993), Kaufmann (1996a, 1996b), and Downes (2004) all suggest that a combatant’s perceptions of its opponent’s intentions – based on their previous interactions – should affect these assessments of credibility.⁴¹ Walter’s theory, however, includes no variables specifically related to a party’s assessment of its opponent’s intentions.⁴²

The final variable is the presence of a third-party guarantee to enforce the terms of the settlement. Walter defines a guarantee as “any implicit or explicit promise given by an outside power to protect adversaries during the treaty implementation period” (1997: 345). Walter further distinguishes between third-party guarantees based on their credibility and strength. For its guarantee to be credible, the third party must have its own interest in upholding the guarantee (such as colonial ties or security concerns), sufficient military force (and the willingness to use it) to police the agreement, and the ability to signal resolve by taking a costly action such as deploying troops ahead of time (Walter, 1997: 340-341).

⁴¹ The presence of spoilers among the opposing party’s ranks could also affect judgments about credibility. Stedman notes that: “Even the best-designed settlements must be prepared for violence from organizations who decide that the kind of peace in question is not in their interest” (1997: 8). Thus, the fear of spoilers might influence the utilities that parties would derive from a settlement, or the credibility of their promises to comply with the agreement. In Rwanda, for example, fear of radical Hutu spoilers made it hard for either the Hutu government or the Tutsi rebels to agree to a peace deal (Stedman, 1997: 20-26).

Walter’s model is prepared to deal with what Stedman (1997: 8) calls internal spoilers – actual parties to a peace deal who apparently comply with an agreement but work behind the scenes to undermine the peace or change the balance of forces. However, to account for spoilers that are external to the combatants who are negotiating the peace deal would require an adjustment of the payoffs and credibility assessments that goes beyond the variables that Walter considers in her model. Presumably, for negotiations to succeed in the presence of external spoilers would require a stronger third-party commitment to enforce the settlement.

⁴² In this sense, Walter’s model is a pure form of the security dilemma, which assumes that parties may be driven to conflict by structural forces alone, even if they have no fear that the opposite party harbors a malign intent.

Walter also grades third-party guarantees as weak, moderate, or strong (1997: 345-347). A weak guarantee requires only a promise by the third party to intervene if the treaty fails. A moderate guarantee means that at least 500 third-party soldiers are deployed prior to the settlement's implementation. For a strong guarantee, the third party must send at least 10,000 troops to oversee the treaty's implementation.⁴³ The stronger and more credible the third-party guarantee, the lower the payoff is for cheating, the less threatening the sucker's payoff becomes, and the more likely combatants will be to settle.

Explanatory and predictive implications. Based on her analysis of 41 terminated civil wars, Walter finds 8 cases of successful settlements for a 20-percent settlement rate (1997: 350). In 6 cases, third-party guarantees were present (one weak, three moderate, and two strong). Walter codes all 6 of those wars as successfully settled, producing a 100-percent settlement rate for wars where third-party guarantees of any strength were present. In contrast, she codes only 2 settlements for the 35 wars with no third-party guarantee – only a 6-percent settlement rate. Walter codes 4 other cases as having attempted negotiations but failing to arrive at a settlement, and 5 cases where a settlement was agreed to but never implemented (1999: 128).⁴⁴ All cases that did not end in settlements resulted in military victories.⁴⁵

Thus, in Walter's model, the presence of a third-party guarantee is the variable that predicts when combatants will elect to settle. While Walter breaks the settlement process down into three stages – deciding to negotiate, reaching an agreement, and implementing the agreement – she argues that the only significant barriers to settlement occur during the third stage, and that third-party guarantees are the critical variable (2002: 4-7, 73). Using absolute language, she writes:

If a third party agreed to enforce the terms of a peace treaty, negotiations always succeeded regardless of the initial goals, ideology, or ethnicity of the participants. If a third party did not intervene, these talks usually failed. [...]

I argue that civil war negotiations rarely end in successful peace settlements because credible guarantees on the terms of the settlement are almost impossible to arrange by the combatants themselves. Negotiations do not fail because indivisible stakes, irreconcilable differences, or high cost tolerances make compromise impossible, as many people argue. They do not fail because

⁴³ Walter offers little guidance for how long these troops must remain, beyond stating that they should stay until the treaty has been implemented. This point is discussed at greater length in chapter six.

⁴⁴ Thus, Walter's model suggests that settlements will be rarer than Mason and Fett's model predicts, since in over half the cases where both parties attempted to settle the war resulted in a military victory anyway.

⁴⁵ By Walter's definition, a partition that created two states would be coded as a military victory.

bargains cannot be struck. Adversaries often compromise on the basic issues underlying their conflict, and they frequently find mutually acceptable solutions to their problems. Negotiations fail because civil war opponents are asked to do what they consider unthinkable. At a time when no legitimate government and no legal institutions exist to enforce a contract, they are asked to demobilize, disarm, and disengage their military forces and prepare for peace. But once they lay down their weapons and begin to integrate their separate assets into a new united state, it becomes almost impossible to either enforce future cooperation or survive attack. In the end, negotiations fail because civil war adversaries cannot credibly promise to abide by such dangerous terms. Only when an outside enforcer steps in to guarantee the terms do commitments to disarm and share political power become believable. Only then does cooperation become possible. (Walter, 1997: 335-336)

To support her claim that parties can devise settlements that would produce utility gains if they could credibly commit to them, Walter notes that peace negotiations were attempted in 40 percent of the cases, and that ceasefires were signed in 92 percent of the cases where negotiations took place. Walter's expected utility variables – war duration, casualty totals, and the presence of a stalemate – presumably explain the decision of combatants to engage in peace negotiations, while her third-party guarantee variables explain under what conditions both sides will actually implement a settlement and terminate the conflict. Stakes, by contrast, are wholly unimportant. Based on her statistical analysis, Walter writes that:

[T]heories based on ethnic differences, total goals, and divisibility continued to have no predictive power in determining how civil wars end. [...]

The costs of war, the goals of the combatants, the military conditions on the battlefield, and mediation did encourage groups to pursue settlements. In the end, however, it was the structure of the post-settlement transition period that determined whether negotiations would end in war or peace. (Walter, 2002: 89-91)

Walter also claims that more settlement terms which increase the payoff for cooperation, such as regional autonomy or guaranteed power-sharing, are needed for successful implementation as the strength of the third-party guarantee declines (1997: 351; 2002: 97). Stronger terms explain why combatants settle when only weak security guarantees are available. But if no third-party guarantee exists, Walter's model predicts that combatants will keep fighting, no matter how attractive the settlement may be.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Walter dismisses the two cases of settlements without third-party guarantees (Columbia in 1958 and Yemen in 1970) by suggesting that the combatants in those wars had no real effective armies, and thus could not threaten a demobilized opponent with a serious surprise attack (1997: 349-350).

Walter's credible commitment theory and model decision process	
<i>Decision stage</i>	<i>Variables and their measurement</i>
Collection	Collect information relevant to choice problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilities for fighting and settling • Credibility of other combatants • Intentions of other combatants
Evaluation	Construct the payoff matrix for settling and fighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors affecting payoff for fighting (war duration*, battle death toll*, mutually-hurting stalemate*) • Factors affecting payoff for settling (guaranteed representation*, veto powers, balanced military participation, retained regional control*, retained defensive capabilities) • Factors that reduce payoff for defection and fear of sucker's payoff (presence of third-party guarantees*, strength of third-party guarantee, credibility of third-party guarantee)
Judgment	Determine the adversary's likely choice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate the adversary's payoff matrix • Compare incentives to defect with rewards for cooperation • Determine credibility of adversary commitments (presence of third-party guarantees*)
Decision rule	Apply decision rule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best-respond to the adversary • Cooperate if adversary will cooperate, defect if adversary will defect
Implementation	Act on chosen decision
	<i>(* denotes predictive significance)</i>

Table 2. Walter's model

Main takeaways. Walter's security dilemma model represents a more sophisticated take on the interactive nature of civil combat than Mason and Fett's expected utility model. By adopting game theoretic structures, Walter gains traction on the question of how combatants shape their choices in response to their opponent's actions, as well as the ability to explain why some "rational" settlements will be rejected even if they offer utility gains compared to fighting.

What Walter loses, though, by bringing questions of credibility and intent into the model, is the parsimony that comes with straightforward expected utility calculations. Walter's combatants must still weigh utilities, but they must also collect information about the intentions of their opponent and interested third parties, and they must modify their payoff matrix accordingly. Furthermore, like Mason and Fett, Walter's model still assumes that combatants disregard sunk costs, weighing only future utilities.

Walter also presents her predictive and explanatory principles as near absolutes. Regardless of the stakes or reasons for conflict, deals can be struck. Settlements without third-party enforcement are not credible. If a third party guarantees the peace deal, it will succeed. Some of this certainty doubtless stems from Walter's data analysis, which, using her coding, produces strong results. But some of this absolutism probably also stems from an attempt to reintroduce parsimony, and to obviate the need to get inside a combatant's head. Under Walter's formulation, there is no real need to determine how appealing the prospect of settlement is to a party, or how that party views the intentions of its adversaries. Instead, if settlement would be profitable, it is assumed that combatants will negotiate one. If outside powers agree to enforce the settlement's terms, it is assumed that combatants will learn to abide by them.

The price that Walter's model pays for these strong, simple, and clear predictions is that it loses the ability to explain anomalies. If two combatants negotiated a peace deal, and if a third-party made a strong, credible commitment to enforce that peace deal, Walter's credible commitment theory would have no way of explaining why the combatants might nevertheless elect to keep fighting rather than settle.⁴⁷ For example, Walter (2002: 95-96) cannot explain UNITA's unwillingness to comply with a negotiated settlement to the war in Angola, despite the existence of a power-sharing agreement and credible third-party guarantees, except by arguing that UNITA was totally uninterested in peace, even though this contradicts her earlier assumption that combatants do not negotiate unless they prefer peace to war.

Kaufmann's demographic separation model

Like Walter, Kaufmann uses the security dilemma to build his demographic separation theory of ethnic war termination.⁴⁸ However, his game theoretic model is very different than Walter's. Kaufmann builds his theory specifically for ethnic war, and he argues that Walter's approach fails to account for

⁴⁷ Several civil wars that are not included in Walter's original data set because they did not end before 1990 seem to fit this pattern, at least roughly. Rwanda in 1993-1994 would be one example; Bosnia and the 1994 Contact Group Peace Plan could be another. In fact, Walter's cut-off date of 1990 may be a large problem for her analysis, since the norm (and practice) of third-party intervention into civil wars gained much more steam in the 1990s than it had in previous decades.

⁴⁸ In his review of rational choice approaches to ethnic conflict, Kaufmann calls the security dilemma a "structuralist" argument and disassociates it from rational choice (2005: 179). While it is true that the security dilemma is not wholly derived from rational choice axioms in the way that expected utility theory is, the security dilemma is inexorably tied to the game theoretic concept of best-responding to a payoff structure and an opponent's strategy. This places it within the rational choice paradigm.

differences between the nature of ethnic and ideological civil wars. As discussed in chapter one, Kaufmann argues that ethnic wars differ from ideological wars over the importance of traditional military operations and the ability to take and hold territory. He also argues that the security dilemma in ethnic wars is directly related to the intermixing of ethnic populations. Therefore, Kaufmann writes that:

[E]thnic civil wars, unlike ideological ones, often admit of solutions – regional autonomy or partition – that need not require the sides to disarm or to be concerned about control of the central government. In such cases, the logic of credibility of commitment applies much more weakly. (2005: 189)

Kaufmann (2005: 190) concludes that “ignoring the different logics of ethnic and non-ethnic conflicts leads Walter to a judgment that [third-party guarantees] are more decisive than the evidence warrants.”

Instead, Kaufmann (1996a, 1996b) develops his own security dilemma model of ethnic conflict. He tests his demographic separation theory against the 27 ethnic wars in the Minorities at Risk dataset which concluded between 1944 and 1994 (Kaufmann, 1996b: 159-160).⁴⁹

Assumptions of the model. Kaufmann assumes that ethnic war combatants are homogeneous ethnic groups with unitary interests. Ethnic war heightens the salience of ethnicity as an organizing principle compared to other affiliations, such as home towns or political parties, so that individuals and populations come to identify themselves and others primarily by ethnicity (Downes, 2004: 234).⁵⁰ The political and military salience of ethnicity increases as wars become longer and more violent:

Ethnic identities are hardened further by intense conflict, so that leaders cannot broaden their appeals to include members of opposing groups. As ethnic conflicts escalate, populations come increasingly to hold enemy images of the other group, either because of deliberate efforts by elites to create such images or because of increasing real threats. [...]

Once the conflict reaches the level of large-scale violence, tales of atrocities – true or invented – perpetuated or planned against members of the group by the ethnic enemy provide hard-liners with an unanswerable argument. (Kaufmann, 1996b: 141-142)

Thus, Kaufmann’s model assumes that an unmitigatable security dilemma arises between ethnic combatants so long as their populations remain intermingled. The security dilemma arises because ethnic mobilization – which is required for the defense of co-ethnics – becomes inherently threatening to other

⁴⁹ For concerns about Kaufmann’s dataset, see Kuperman (2004).

⁵⁰ As mentioned in chapter one, this is because symbols and myths, wartime behaviors, and cognitive attribution heuristics lead individuals to view co-ethnics as allies and other ethnics as potential threats. The ability of ethnic leaders to sanction individuals suspected of dealing with other ethnic groups reinforces this effect.

ethnic groups, and because intermixed settlements create points of vulnerability that are difficult to defend but easy to attack (Kaufmann, 1996a: 67; 1996b: 147-148). So long as this security dilemma exists, groups cannot credibly commit to disarm, nor can they trust promises by others to do so. Even if enemy groups disarmed, the mere presence of enemy ethnics within friendly territory would still represent a threat, since “sword arms will find swords” (Kaufmann, 1996a: 78).

Given the nature of identities in ethnic conflict, each combatant’s mobilization base is limited to co-ethnics in friendly territory (Kaufmann, 1996a: 66). As such, Kaufmann assumes that both attrition and territorial control are central to military strength (1996a: 79). Because of the security dilemma and the nature of ethnic war, incentives to seize enemy territory where co-ethnics reside and to cleanse enemy ethnics from friendly territory are both strong (Kaufmann, 1996b: 147). Kaufmann therefore assumes that ethnic combatants must build the strongest conventional military forces possible, and that they must try to take and hold important territory wherever possible (1996a: 79).⁵¹ In particular, Kaufmann argues that combatants must resist enemy seizures of friendly territory at any possible cost:

For combatants in an ethnic civil war, even temporary retreat from a friendly settlement is not merely painful – because of economic resources abandoned and the risk of occupation abuses – but potentially catastrophic, because of the fear that the enemy will permanently change the demographics of any surrendered area by massacre, expulsion, destruction of homes, and possibly colonization. (1996a: 80)

So long as the ethnic groups remain intermixed, these territorial pressures will exist.

Thus, Kaufmann’s theory assumes that negotiated settlements which try to reconstruct a unified state and maintain mixed ethnic populations will not be acceptable to combatants, because the temptations to cheat will be too great and the sucker’s payoff too severe (1996a: 89). Instead of third-party security guarantees, Kaufmann argues that demographic separation into defensible enclaves is needed to obviate the security dilemma, lower the benefits of cheating, and reduce the fear of the sucker’s payoff (1996a: 67). If the ethnic combatants are separated into distinct territories, the incentives for preemptive attack are reduced, and they can both maintain their arms for defensive purposes.

⁵¹ Important territory presumably includes areas of enemy territory where co-ethnics live, pockets of enemy ethnics in friendly territory, and lines of communication between areas with co-ethnics, as well as any sites of strategic or cultural importance.

Thus, Kaufmann's demographic separation theory suggests that combatants will not settle if the terms of the settlement do not create separate, defensible ethnic enclaves. If such an agreement is available and if it would result in a utility gain for both parties, then settlement becomes possible.⁵² If not, then the combatants will elect to continue fighting.

Implied decision process. The decision process implied by Kaufmann's model is essentially the same as that of Walter's model, but the variable inputs and their relative importance are different. First, during the collection stage, combatants are assumed to collect information relevant to the decision problem, including information about the other side's credibility as well as the utilities for settling and fighting. Next, during the evaluation stage, combatants use that information to assemble the game theoretic decision tree, including the payoffs determined by the interaction between their choice and the other party's choice. In the judgment stage, combatants anticipate the strategy they expect their opponent to play, based on the payoffs calculated in the evaluation phase and information about their opponent's intentions gathered during the collection phase. After judging their opponent's likely play, combatants select the option – settling or fighting – that best responds to their opponent during the decision rule phase. Finally, during the implementation phase, parties act on their chosen strategies.

Variables and their measurement. According to Kaufmann's model, the three key variables that determine a combatant's choice between settling and fighting are: (1) the payoffs associated with settling, continuing to fight, cheating, and the sucker's payoff; (2) the level of ethnic identity hardening; and (3) the degree of demographic separation between ethnic groups.

For combatants, the payoffs associated with settling versus continuing to fight should be determined by their perceived likelihood of victory, and by the costs of further fighting. Since mobilization potential is determined by population size and territorial control, the greater the pool of co-ethnics within friendly territory, the higher a combatant's perceived chances of victory should be, and

⁵² Nothing in Kaufmann's reasoning suggests that combatants would agree to a settlement if they thought they could achieve a superior outcome by fighting. Thus, some kind of Mason-and-Fett-like utility calculation is implied by the security dilemma models before combatants will consider settling. Kaufmann's stipulations about the credibility of a proposed settlement, like Walter's, serve to narrow the range of possible settlements which could result in net utility gains that would actually be adopted.

thus the lower the payoff for settling would be (Kaufmann, 1996a: 74-79). Similarly, the more physical territory a combatant controls, the less willing it should be to settle. Conversely, high attrition rates should reduce both the combatant's likelihood of victory and increase the costs of continuing to fight:

Attrition matters because the side's mobilization pools are separate and can be depleted. Most important, since each side's mobilization base is limited to members of its own community in friendly-controlled territory, conquering the enemy's population centers reduces its mobilization base, while loss of friendly settlements reduces one's own. (Kaufmann, 1996b: 147)

Thus, higher attrition could reduce the payoff for continued fighting and improve the payoff for settling.⁵³

Outside intervention could also influence the payoffs for ethnic combatants. If an outside power aided a combatant by providing arms, training, or combat forces, that combatant's payoff for continued fighting would rise, while the opposing combatant's payoff for fighting would shrink (Kaufmann, 1996a: 86). On the other hand, an intervention that leveled the military balance by evening the opposing forces or generating a stalemate would presumably reduce the payoff for fighting for all combatants.

Finally, the terms of the proposed settlement would also influence each combatant's payoff matrix. Kaufmann suggests that the agreements most likely to result in a settlement would contain terms for a fair territorial division, would create separate and mutually-defensible ethnic enclaves, and would facilitate population transfers to move ethnic minorities to their majority-controlled territories (1996a: 93). Unfortunately, Kaufmann does little to describe what a "fair" territorial division is. Presumably, the more territory a combatant was awarded, the higher its payoff for settling would be. Conversely, a combatant that lost territory it considered important would have a lower payoff for settling. Unlike Walter or Mason and Fett, Kaufmann (1996b: 143) argues that provisions for democracy or economic development will not increase the payoff for a settlement that does not include demographic partition.

For defensibility, Kaufmann argues that a good settlement would create ethnic enclaves with short boundaries, preferably ones which run along good defensive terrain, that would leave both sides with secure access to trade routes and borders with friendly neighbors (1996b: 163). Ideally, important

⁵³ However, there is internal tension in Kaufmann's model over the attrition variable, since he also suggests that higher casualty totals contribute to identity hardening (discussed below), which exacerbates the security dilemma, increases the incentives to cheat, and worsens the sucker's payoff.

economic areas, like ports and industrial centers, would also be divided evenly between the combatants to improve the economic prospects of the post-partition entities (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 72). Within a combatant's territory, minority ethnics should probably not exceed 5 to 10 percent of the population, to minimize incentives for the other side to mount a rescue mission and to reduce the fear of fifth-columns.⁵⁴ Also, minority populations should be kept away from disputed borders and key lines of communication (Kaufmann, 1996b: 163). To the extent that the proposed settlement meets these criteria, the payoffs for cheating will decrease and the sucker's payoff will become less frightening. Kaufman also assumes that it does not matter whether the terms of the settlement provide for a formal partition and separate sovereignty or a more limited form of political autonomy, so long as the ethnic combatants are placed in defensible, separate territories and allowed to maintain their own defensive forces (1996b: 139).

As ethnic identities harden, Kaufmann argues that a settlement will become more difficult because combatants will come to view their opponents as implacably hostile. Thus, the possibility of receiving the sucker's payoff will loom large. Kaufmann does not define a specific variable to measure ethnic hardening, but he does suggest that conflicts with fewer battle deaths will be easier to settle because ethnic hardening may not set in (1996b: 160). The threshold past which Kaufmann argues ethnic hardening becomes irreversible is the point at which combatants come to fear for their very survival:

Once a majority of either group comes to believe that the killing of noncombatants of their own group is not considered a crime by the other, they cannot accept any governing arrangement that could be captured by the enemy group and used against them.

The most persuasive source of such beliefs is the massacre of civilians, but it is not clear that there is a specific number of incidents or total deaths beyond which ethnic reconciliation becomes impossible. More important is the extent to which wide sections of the attacking group seem to condone the killings, and can be observed doing so by members of the target group. In this situation the attacks are likely to be seen as reflecting not just the bloodthirstiness of a particular regime or terrorist faction, but the preference of the opposing group as a whole, which means that no promise of non-repetition can be believed. (Kaufmann, 1996b, 159)

Once this line has been crossed, the security dilemma can be alleviated only by the demographic separation of the warring ethnic groups, and any settlement which does not provide for this will fail.

⁵⁴ The 5 percent number comes from Kaufmann's (1996b: 163) account of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman's fear that Croatia's 12-percent Serbian minority was threatening, but that about half that number would be acceptable. The 10 percent number comes from Kaufmann's (1998: 127) argument that the 10-percent Protestant minority in Ireland is too small to be a threat to the Catholic majority.

Finally, the degree of ethnic demographic separation will affect the ability of the parties to settle. The security dilemma will be the worst – and negotiating a settlement the hardest – when populations are totally mixed. A moderate amount of mixing, including some minority enclaves in enemy territory, will be easier to sort out. The situation most amenable to settlement is when the military balance on the ground creates a well-defined demographic front between homogeneous ethnic regions (Kaufmann, 1996b: 148-149). In that case, the existing front could simply be formalized as a partition line, with perhaps some addition and subtraction around the margins to make the border more defensible. Messier demographic mixes will be harder to partition in ways that create high payoffs for settling and low incentives to cheat.

Explanatory and predictive implications. Testing his theory of demographic separation against a data set of 27 terminated ethnic civil wars, Kaufmann codes 12 cases as military victories, 5 as de facto or de jure partitions, 2 as suppressed by outside intervention, and 8 as negotiated settlements involving autonomy for ethnically-homogeneous regions (1996b: 159-160). This analysis leads Kaufmann to argue that: “There is not a single case where non-ethnic civil politics were created or restored by reconstruction of ethnic identities, power-sharing coalitions, or state-building” (Kaufmann, 1996b, 161).

Instead, demographic separation is the key explanatory variable behind the ability of some ethnic wars to end through negotiated settlements. Kaufmann’s theory predicts that, once war has mobilized populations along ethnic lines and hardened ethnic identities:

Stable resolutions of ethnic civil wars are possible, but only when the opposing groups are demographically separated into defensible enclaves. Separation reduces both incentives and opportunity for further combat, and largely eliminates both reasons and chances for ethnic cleansing of civilians. [...]

[W]ar cannot end until the security dilemma is reduced by physical separation of the rival groups. (Kaufmann, 1996b: 136, 139)

Kuperman, noting some inconsistencies between Kaufmann’s data and conclusions, points out that in the ethnic wars that Kaufmann codes as resolved through negotiated autonomy, the combatant populations were already largely separated before the conflict began. Thus, Kuperman (2004: 319-320) suggests this refinement to the predictive implications of Kaufmann’s model: “A negotiated settlement of

an ethnic civil war cannot succeed unless ethnic groups are physically separated into ethnically homogeneous, politically autonomous, militarily defensible zones.”⁵⁵ With this added nuance, Kaufmann’s model predicts that combatants will choose to continue fighting rather than settle if any of the following three conditions holds: “(1) opposing ethnic groups remain physically intermingled; (2) common political authority is retained over physically separated ethnic groups; or (3) at least one physically separated group cannot defend its zone” (Kuperman, 2004: 320).

Kaufmann’s demographic separation theory and model decision process	
<i>Decision stage</i>	<i>Variables and their measurement</i>
Collection	Collect information relevant to choice problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilities for fighting and settling • Credibility of other combatants • Intentions of other combatants
Evaluation	Construct the payoff matrix for settling and fighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that affect payoff for fighting (size of mobilization base, attrition rates, international intervention, territorial control) • Factors that affect payoff for settling (fair territorial division, political autonomy*) • Factors that reduce payoff for defection and fear of sucker’s payoff (defensibility of enclaves*, size and location of minority concentrations*, level of demographic separation*)
Judgment	Determine the adversary’s likely choice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate the adversary’s payoff matrix • Compare incentives to defect with rewards for cooperation • Determine whether adversary has hostile intentions (identity hardening*, fear of survival*, casualty totals, atrocities, history of group interactions)
Decision rule	Apply decision rule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best-respond to the adversary • Cooperate if adversary will cooperate, defect if adversary will defect
Implementation	Act on chosen decision
	<i>(* denotes predictive significance)</i>

Table 3. Kaufmann’s model

Main takeaways. While Kaufmann’s model differs from Walter’s model in the particulars, the general strengths and weaknesses of both security dilemma models are the same. Instead of third-party guarantees, Kaufmann’s critical barrier to ethnic war settlement is the availability of a fair partition line

⁵⁵ This overrides Kaufmann’s assumption that a settlement’s provisions for political sovereignty are largely irrelevant in combatants’ decision processes once demographic separation has been achieved.

that carves the disputed state into defensible, self-supporting, and ethnically-homogeneous pieces.

However, measuring what constitutes a “fair” partition line, and just how much killing is required before combatants come to fear for their survival, may be difficult variables to pin down. Like Walter’s model, Kaufmann’s theory would require a fairly deep knowledge of the inner thoughts and perceptions of the key combatants which, again, is obviated by drawing an absolute line in the sand over the issue of demographic separation. All other variables aside, negotiated settlement of ethnic wars – to quote the title of one of Kaufmann’s articles (1996b) – is only “possible” given demographic separation, without which all other variables are moot and settlement is “impossible.” Thus, Kaufmann writes that ethnic wars “can end in only three ways: with complete victory of one side; by temporary suppression of the conflict by third party military occupation; or by self-governance of separate communities” (Kaufmann, 1996b: 137).

Like Walter, Kaufmann offers strong, simple explanatory and predictive guidelines, but at the cost of being unable to account for aberrations. An ethnic war that resulted in negotiated settlement without demographic separation is, according to Kaufmann’s theory, impossible.⁵⁶ Faced with such an occurrence, Kaufmann’s model provides little analytical recourse other than to dismiss the behavior of the combatants as irrational, or even suicidal. On the other extreme, if ethnic combatants locked in a costly war were presented with a settlement plan that provided each with a fair, defensible enclave, Kaufmann’s model would have to call upon its ill-specified variables regarding the military balance and costs of fighting to explain why the combatants might choose to continue their risky war rather than extricate themselves from the security dilemma by accepting the enhanced security of the settlement.

Common implications of the models

While the three rational choice models described above draw upon different assumptions, posit different decision processes, and employ different explanatory variables, they nevertheless have several underlying similarities which generate common rational choice implications for ethnic war termination.

First, all the models assume that combatants calculate expected utility payoffs. Such calculations

⁵⁶ This is a rather acute problem, given that Kuperman (2004: 330-339) identifies at least 6 cases which would appear to fall into this category.

form the bulk of Mason and Fett's model, and are a critical subgame in the security dilemma models. The payoff for continued fighting decreases, and the payoff for settling increases, as a combatant's probability of victory shrinks and the costs of fighting rise. These conditions become present as war durations grow longer and when combat settles into a mutually-hurting stalemate. Expected utility calculations along these lines explain why settling becomes more attractive than fighting and predict when combatants will attempt to negotiate a settlement.

By contrast, the divisibility of the stakes in an ethnic war does not affect either the availability of satisfactory settlements or the willingness of combatants to settle. Utility calculations for territorial and political stakes are functionally equivalent. Neither why combatants are fighting, nor what they are fighting for, affects their preference order. Also, combatants are concerned only with future payoffs – sunk costs do not factor into their decision making. If a proposed settlement represents a net utility gain over continued fighting and the status quo, combatants are expected to accept the deal.

However, combatants may fail to implement settlements which promise greater payoffs for settling than fighting if security dilemma concerns render those settlements non-credible. For combatants to accept such negotiated settlements, the payoff for defection must be reduced, and their fears of the sucker's payoff must be ameliorated.

Thus, generally speaking, expected utility – determined by perceived probabilities of victory and costs of fighting – explains and predicts combatants' interest in settling, whereas security and credibility issues – determined by incentives for defection versus cooperation – explain and predict combatants' final willingness to settle. When the payoffs for settling are favorable, which is triggered by long, costly, and stalemated fighting, and when the security dilemma obstacles to settlement are removed, which is triggered by third-party guarantees and demographic separation, these rational choice models predict that combatants can and will settle their differences at the bargaining table rather than continuing to expend blood and treasure searching for victory on the battlefield.

CHAPTER THREE: PROSPECT THEORY AND ETHNIC WAR TERMINATION

In this chapter, I turn to the construction of a new theory of ethnic war termination based on prospect theory. Prospect theory is a psychological model of decision making developed by Kahneman and Tversky to account for the systematic ways in which decision makers deviate from the normative axioms of rational choice theory.⁵⁷ Prospect theory is now “a leading alternative to expected utility as a theory of choice under conditions of risk” (Levy, 1996: 179).

Prospect theory differs from rational choice theories in three key ways. First, prospect theory was developed inductively rather than deductively:

Prospect theory is a descriptive, empirically valid model of choice. [...] Prospect theory was originally developed in response to overwhelmingly robust findings that demonstrated the profound and pervasive way in which many people systematically violate the most basic axioms of rational decision-making models in their actual choice behavior. (McDermott, 1998: 8)

Second, prospect theory is probabilistic – it shows that decision makers usually act in certain ways, but with occasional, non-systematic deviations. Third, prospect theory is descriptive rather than normative.

As McDermott describes it:

Prospect theory makes no normative claims. Unlike rational choice theories, it does not claim that people *should* behave according to the tenets of the theory, merely that they *do* behave that way. This is in contrast to rational theories that argue that people *should* behave in line with their prescriptions, but that have been unable to marshal any systemically clear evidence that people actually *do* act in such ways. (1998: 117)

However, while prospect theory implies that decision makers violate rational choice axioms, it does not suggest they are “irrational” in the common use of the word. Prospect theory is not about cognitive biases, nor willful or unwitting misperception. Rather, it shows that decision makers conceive of value in a manner that is internally sensible, but which is different from the utility-maximizing axioms of rational choice. Utility, in rational choice theory, is defined in terms of net worth; value, in prospect theory, is defined in terms of gains and losses, and thus is relative rather than absolute (Plous, 1993: 95).

⁵⁷ For a more complete history and summary of prospect theory, see: Kahneman and Tversky (2000), Levy (1996, 1997), Plous (1993: 64-105), and Hastie and Dawes (2001: 249-312).

Principles of prospect theory

There are seven basic principles of prospect theory that may help explain the behavior of ethnic war combatants who must choose whether to accept a settlement or keep fighting: (1) the value function, (2) reference dependence, (3) diminishing sensitivity, (4) loss aversion, (5) risk orientation, (6) endowment effects, and (7) decision weights.

The value function. Decision makers determine the value of different outcomes by using a *value function* like the one represented below.⁵⁸ Value functions exhibit an S-shaped curve with the reference point at its inflexion:

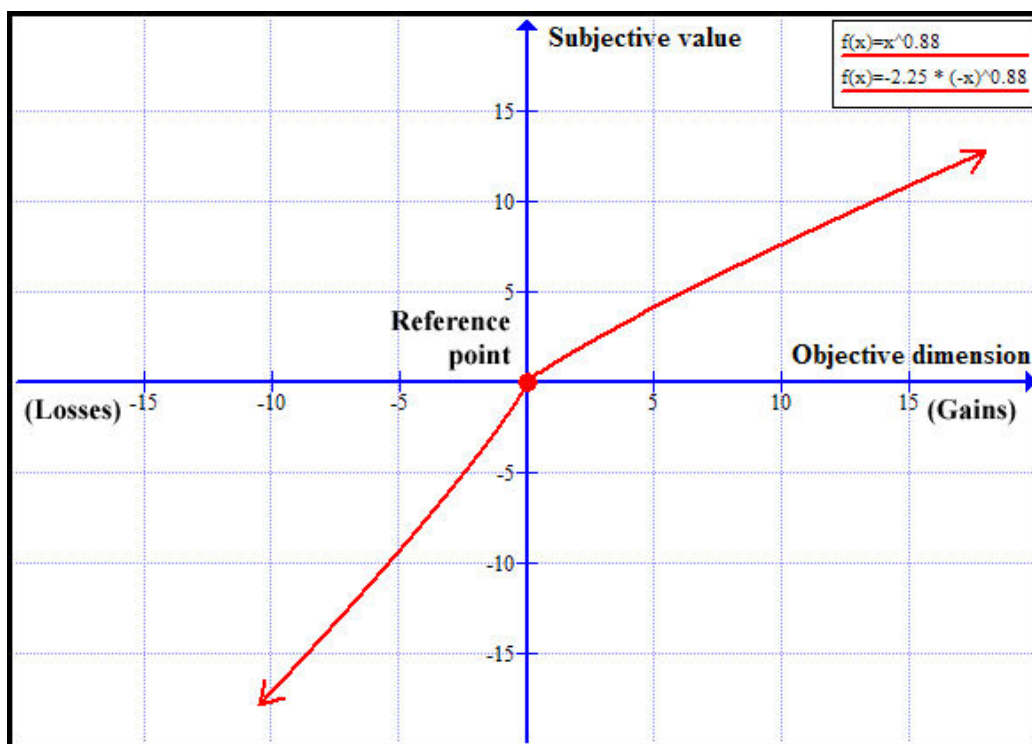


Figure 1. The value function⁵⁹

Reference points. Rather than maximizing absolute levels of utility, decision makers evaluate outcomes by framing them as gains or losses relative to a subjective *reference point* (Levy, 1996: 180;

⁵⁸ Prospect theory does not assume that all individuals have identical value functions, merely that their individual value functions follow this same general shape.

⁵⁹ Kahneman and Tversky (quoted in Hastie & Dawes, 2001: 294-295) present this equation for the value function: for gains, $F(x) = x^a$, and for losses, $F(x) = -b * (-x)^a$, where $a = 0.88$ and $b = 2.25$ for the mean individual.

Berejikian, 2002: 761).⁶⁰ Kahneman and Tversky (quoted in Plous, 1993: 69) define framing as “the decision maker’s conception of the acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice.” Reference points shape how outcomes are framed.

The choice of a reference point may be affected by a decision maker’s “norms, habits, and expectancies,” or by relevant heuristics such as analogies (McDermott, 1998: 7-22). Decision makers may employ the status quo as their reference point. Levy notes that: “In a static situation that involves a well-defined status quo [...] actors usually frame choice problems around the status quo” (1997: 91). However: “Expectations, aspirations, social norms, and social comparisons can also influence the framing of the reference point” (Levy, 1997: 91). When the status quo is uncertain and fluid, decision makers are likely to employ reference points based on expectation levels or historical comparisons (Taliaferro, 2004: 193).

Diminishing marginal sensitivity. Decision makers exhibit *diminishing marginal sensitivity* to both gains and losses farther away from the reference point, as reflected by the S-shape of the value function (Berejikian, 2002: 761; Taliaferro, 2004: 188; Levy, 1996: 180).⁶¹ For example, the loss experienced as a result of 50 combat deaths is greater when those are the first deaths in a war than when they raise the body count from 1,000 to 1,050.

Loss aversion. Because the loss curve has a steeper slope than the gains curve, this leads to the principle of *loss aversion* – losses hurt more than equivalent gains satisfy (Levy, 1997: 89).⁶² Tennis star Jimmy Connors succinctly described loss aversion when he said that “I hate to lose more than I like to win” (quoted in Levy, 1996: 181). Thus, when decision makers evaluate the possible outcomes of their

⁶⁰ Consider a person who is offered a coin flip gamble with the chance to win \$100 or lose \$100. From an expected utility perspective, the expected value of this gamble is \$0. From a prospect theory perspective, this gamble presents two possible outcomes – a gain of \$100 and a loss of \$100.

⁶¹ So, gaining \$100 does not feel twice as good as gaining \$50. The marginal sensitivity to the second \$50 is lower. Notice, however, that if the decision maker moved its reference point to normalize a \$50 gain, and then gained a second \$50, the second \$50 would have as much value as the first \$50. This is in direct contradiction to expected utility theory, which would see no difference in utility between the two different ways of gaining \$100.

⁶² Loss aversion is the most robust empirical finding in the prospect theory experimental record (McDermott, 2004a: 151; Levy, 1996: 181; Levy, 2003: 216).

choices, losses loom larger than gains.⁶³

During risky bargaining situations this can cause *concession aversion*, since parties frame the concessions they make as losses, and weight them more heavily than the concessions they are offered in turn, which are framed as gains (Levy, 1997: 105; Berejikian, 2002: 764-780). Levy (1996: 187) writes that “concession aversion is even more pronounced if an actor has additional reasons for perceiving a negotiated agreement as a loss, such as the perception that the current status quo is unacceptable.” In a crisis situation, concession aversion will make negotiated settlements especially difficult to strike:

One important theme is that the bargaining behavior of political leaders is different when the issue is the distribution of losses from that when the issue is the distribution of gains. Another is that crisis bargaining behavior is more destabilizing than rational choice theories predict because political leaders are less likely to make concessions and more likely to gamble and risk large losses in the hope of eliminating smaller losses altogether. (Levy, 1996: 180)

Loss aversion also produces the *reference point bias* (Levy, 1997: 91). Because losses loom larger than gains, decision makers are often unwilling to pursue actions that would have positive net outcomes according to expected utility theory. They are unwilling to risk potential (or especially certain) losses in pursuit of potential (or even certain) gains, and are more willing to fight to preserve what they believe to be theirs than to gain what they covet. If the status quo represents a loss compared to the reference point, the reference point bias can be destabilizing.

Risk orientation. Loss aversion and diminishing sensitivity lead decision makers to assume different *risk orientations* when confronted with gains or losses (Levy, 1997: 90). In the *domain of gains*, decision makers are *risk-averse*, because smaller, certain gains will tend to have higher value than larger, uncertain gains.⁶⁴ In the *domain of losses*, decision makers are *risk-seeking*, because small, certain losses hurt more than larger, uncertain losses. Once in the domain of losses, decision makers may *gamble for resurrection* by adopting increasingly risky and costly courses of action as they attempt to avoid sure

⁶³ Therefore, average individuals would decline a coin-flip gamble that offered them the chance to either win or lose \$100, because the possible loss would outweigh the potential gain. Expected utility theory predicts that individuals should be indifferent to this gamble.

⁶⁴ For example, the value function shows how a sure gain of \$50 would have a greater value than a 50-percent chance to gain \$100. Even a sure gain of \$40 might have greater value, even though the expected utility of the gamble would be higher.

losses or recoup past losses.⁶⁵ Simply put: “people are more willing to run risks to avoid or recoup losses than to make gains” (Jervis, 2004: 165).

Endowment effects. After suffering a gain or loss, individuals may *renormalize* their reference points to absorb the change, but they do not always do so. Gains are renormalized almost instantaneously (Levy, 1997: 91; McDermott, 1998: 42; Jervis, 2004: 173).⁶⁶ The result is the *endowment effect* – once a decision maker takes possession of something, giving it up would be framed as a loss rather than a foregone gain.⁶⁷ Thus, the endowment effect “enhances not the desirability of what one owns, but the pain of forsaking it” (Berejikian, 2002: 763). Decision makers will therefore go to greater lengths to keep something than they would to obtain it in the first place.

Losses are renormalized much more slowly, if at all. Thus, decision makers adopt risk-seeking behaviors to try and recoup previous losses (Levy, 1997: 93). This *sunk costs effect*, wherein old losses are not discounted but rather are framed as sure losses, can lead decision makers to seek increasingly risky gambles in an attempt to return to the *ex ante* status quo (Levy, 2003: 219). Gambling for resurrection may result as decision makers try to recover sunk costs (Levy, 1996: 187).⁶⁸

The weighting function. When framing possible outcomes, decision makers modify the values by applying *decision weights* based on the perceived likelihood that the outcome will occur. The relationship between probabilities and decision weights is non-linear, as exhibited by the *weighting function*.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ This risk orientation can break down for very small probabilities (Levy, 1997: 90). Thus, people buy insurance, accepting a small, certain loss to protect themselves against the minute risk of a catastrophic loss.

⁶⁶ Since actors in the domain of gains are risk-averse, whereas actors in the domain of losses are risk-seeking, Levy (1996: 184) notes that the fact that actors renormalize gains faster – thus removing themselves from the domain of gains – means that “under conditions of change there is a tendency for actors to shift toward a more risk-acceptant orientation more quickly than toward a more risk-averse orientation.”

⁶⁷ The endowment effect has been elegantly demonstrated using coffee mugs. One random sample of college students is shown a coffee mug and asked how much they would be willing to pay for it. A second sample receives identical mugs as gifts, and then is asked how much they would demand to sell the mug. Selling prices are consistently higher than buying prices by a factor of two or more (Levy, 2003: 216).

⁶⁸ For example, Butts (2006: 20-25) describes the 1994 Rwandan genocide as a case of Hutu leaders gambling for resurrection to avoid power-sharing with Tutsi rebels, which represented a certain loss for the Hutus.

⁶⁹ As with the value function, not all individuals use identical decision weights, but the general shape of the weighting function remains the same across decision makers.

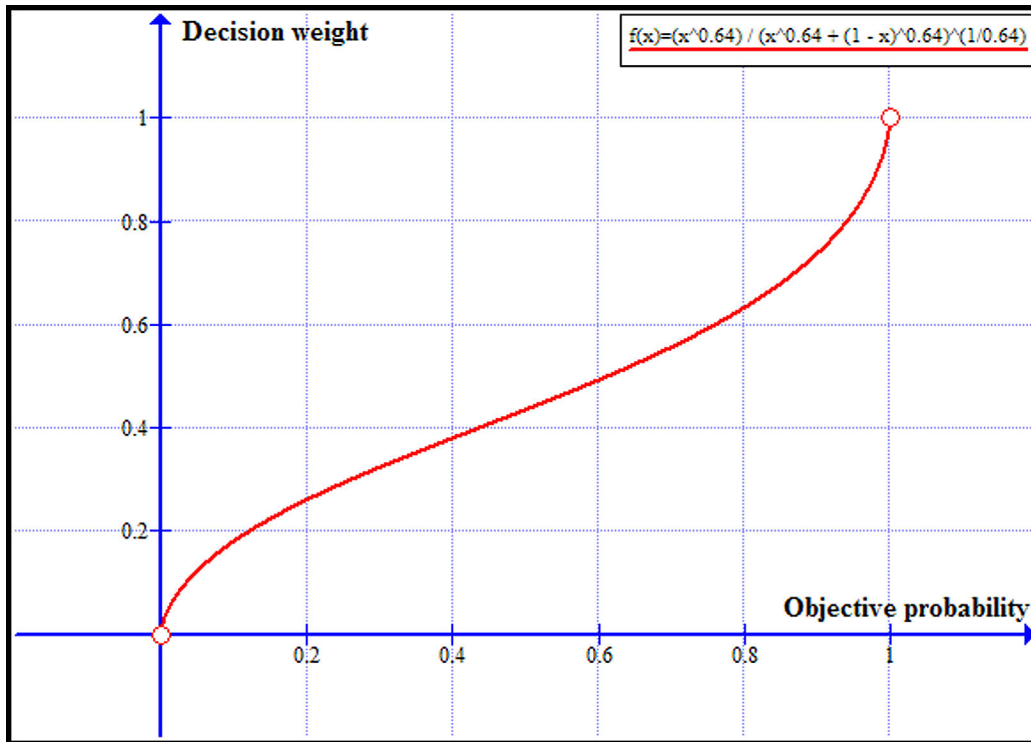


Figure 2. The weighting function⁷⁰

Decision makers overweight small probabilities and underweight moderate to high probabilities.

Kahneman and Tversky thus noted that decision weights tend to reinforce the domain-specific risk orientations generated by the value function:

Underweighting of moderate and high probabilities relative to sure things contributes to risk aversion in gains by reducing the attractiveness of positive gambles. The same effect also contributes to risk seeking in losses by attenuating the aversiveness of negative gambles. (Quoted in McDermott, 1998: 32)

The weighting function breaks down for very small probabilities (Levy, 1996: 183).⁷¹ The function's endpoints are "not well behaved," as McDermott (2004a: 152) puts it, because events that are either certain or impossible are ascribed great psychological importance.⁷² This *certainty effect* explains why "the prospect of even small losses may be sufficient to induce risk-seeking behavior, particularly if the

⁷⁰ Kahneman and Tversky (quoted in Hastie & Dawes, 2001: 296-298) present this equation for the weighting function: $F(x) = \frac{x^a}{[x^a + (1-x)^a]^{1/a}}$, where $a = 0.64$ for the mean individual.

⁷¹ Very small probabilities may actually reverse risk orientations. For example, people buy lottery tickets, trading a small sure loss against a microscopic chance of a large gain. However, these risk propensity reversals only occur when fleetingly small probabilities are involved (McDermott, 2004a: 152).

⁷² Thus, individuals forced to play a game of Russian roulette and allowed to pay money to remove bullets from the gun would pay more money to remove the first and the last bullets than any of those in between, even though the probability of dying falls by the same amount for each bullet removed (Plous, 1993: 99).

losses are perceived to be certain” (Levy, 1996: 190).

Decision process. To tie these principles together, prospect theory assumes a two-step decision process for individuals making choices under conditions of risk and uncertainty (for a graphical representation, see Hastie & Dawes, 2001: 299). First, in the *editing phase*, decision makers identify: (1) the reference point, (2) their available options, (3) possible outcomes, and (4) the value and likelihood of each outcome. Next, during the *evaluation phase*, decision makers modify the outcome values (determined by the value function) with the appropriate decision weights (determined by the weighting function) and then maximize across the products.⁷³

Implications for ethnic war

Together, these principles of prospect theory produce several important implications for ethnic war termination which will form the foundation of my psychological model. Since situations during ethnic war are likely to be complex, fluid, and unstable, prospect theory suggests that combatants will be likely to employ aspiration levels and salient historical comparisons, rather than the status quo, as their reference points. Since proposals for compromise solutions may represent gains relative to the status quo, but will likely confront combatants with losses when framed against aspiration levels, prospect theory suggests that ethnic combatants’ reference points will tend to place them in a losses mindset. The fact that gains are renormalized quickly but losses are renormalized slowly means that the ebb and flow of the battlefield will tend to maintain this losses mindset, since victories create endowments that must be protected while defeats create sunk costs which must be recouped.

Rational choice models suggest that long, costly wars will make settling more attractive to ethnic combatants. In contrast, diminishing sensitivity suggests that, as wars grow longer and costlier, and as combatants accumulate more and more losses without renormalizing their reference points, the costs associated with continued fighting will actually become less significant. Thus, combatants who have fought long wars and endured heavy losses may not be driven to the bargaining table by war-weariness.

⁷³ Note that, under prospect theory, individuals still behave rationally by maximizing their choices. But the values they maximize across are different from those that would be generated by rational choice axioms.

Instead, they may actually find the prospect of continued combat less painful. And, thanks to the sunk costs effect and risk-seeking in the domain of losses, they may fight even harder and run even greater risks to avoid the sure losses associated with settling.

The bargaining process itself will be particularly difficult because combatants will frame the concessions they must make as losses, and even the concessions they receive in return – which may represent gains relative to the status quo – may still fall short of reference points based on historical analogies and aspiration levels, and thus will be framed as losses as well. Thus, it will be difficult to construct settlements which do not confront combatants with the specter of certain losses.

Combined, these interactions between prospect theory principles and the circumstances faced by ethnic war combatants will tend to trigger risk-seeking behavior, which suggests that combatants will usually prefer fighting over settling, since fighting will usually offer both greater risks and rewards compared to the more certain outcomes of negotiated settlements. Generally, then, risk-seeking combatants in the domain of losses will be likely to reject settlement offers in favor of further fighting.

Psychological model of ethnic war termination

Based on the principles of prospect theory, I will now construct a psychological model of ethnic war termination. I will outline the assumptions underlying the model. Next, I will posit a decision process. After that, I will outline my key variables and how they might be measured. Finally, I will summarize the predictive and explanatory implications for when ethnic wars will end in negotiated settlements and when combatants will choose to keep fighting instead.

Assumptions of the model. My model assumes some number of ethnic combatants that are fighting against each other.⁷⁴ The combatants are assumed to be unitary decision makers.

At critical points during the war, I assume that combatants must make a binary choice between continuing to fight and attempting to settle.⁷⁵ Such critical points could include dramatic battlefield

⁷⁴ Binary interactions will be the most straightforward, but there is no structural reason that the model cannot accommodate *n*-party interactions.

⁷⁵ I derive this idea from Licklider (1993: 18), who writes that the variables related to civil war settlement “have different sorts of impacts under different circumstances. Thus, rather than a single pattern whereby civil

outcomes, peace summits, ceasefires, changes in combatant leadership, the emergence of a stalemate, or the introduction of third-party intervention. Any combatants that elect to settle with each other will terminate their conflict. Combatants that do not agree to a mutual settlement will continue to fight.

I assume that combatants frame the possible outcomes of settling and fighting relative to their reference points. Combatants who frame outcomes as gains will be risk-averse. Conversely, combatants who frame outcomes as losses will be risk-seeking. Risk-averse combatants will elect the less risky option. Risk-seeking combatants will elect the riskier option.

Therefore, my model's underlying assumption is that: *Combatants will elect to settle if they are risk-averse and settling is the lesser risk, or if they are risk-seeking and settling is riskier than fighting. Combatants who elect to continue fighting will do so if they are risk-averse and fighting is less risky than settling, or if they are risk-seeking and fighting is the greater risk.*

Implied decision process. My model posits a decision process similar to prospect theory's two-step model, but I have disaggregated the steps because I believe it leads to greater analytical clarity and facilitates easier comparisons with the rational choice models. Therefore, I assume that combatants choose between settling and continuing to fight in five stages.

First, during the collection stage, combatants are assumed to collect information relevant to the decision problem, including assessments of their situation on the ground and the likely consequences of accepting a negotiated settlement or continuing to fight.

Next, combatants compare these possible outcomes to their reference point and frame them as gains or losses. (I refer to this as the *framing stage*.) Combatants assume either a risk-averse or risk-seeking orientation depending on whether their framing of the possible outcomes places them in the domain of gains or losses, respectively.

In the evaluation stage, combatants assess the relative riskiness of their options based on the perceived level of outcome variance for each choice. In the decision rule stage, combatants elect to settle

violence is ended, it seems more useful to conceive of the termination of civil violence as a set of processes in which there are certain critical choice points.”

or fight by choosing the option that corresponds with their risk-orientation – the riskier option for risk-seeking combatants, and the less risky option for risk-averse combatants. Finally, during the implementation stage, combatants act on their chosen course of action.

Variables and their measurement. Given my posited decision process, four key variables should affect a combatant’s decision to settle or fight: (1) the reference point, (2) the perceived range of outcomes for fighting, (3) the perceived range of outcomes for settling, and (4) the likelihood of renormalizing the reference point to accommodate the facts on the ground.

Before addressing each variable in turn, a general proposition about the measurement of these variables is useful. Combatants must consider both their means and their goals when making decisions about fighting or settling. A combatant’s goal-related assessments, which turn upon the stakes the war is being fought over and the combatant’s objectives, will influence the combatant’s reference point (variables one and four). The combatant’s means-related assessments, which are based upon the military balance and the terms of available settlements, will determine combatant’s perceptions of outcome variance (variables two and three).

Accurately measuring the first variable – each combatant’s reference point – is critical because the other variables that follow are framed relative to the reference point. Levy argues that “dynamic situations,” like ethnic war, “are particularly likely to induce variations in the way people select reference points because of the absence of a stable status quo that might serve as an obvious focal point” (1997: 91).⁷⁶ Similarly, Taliaferro notes that decision makers are likely to employ aspiration levels, rather than the status quo, as reference points when faced with situations which are ill-structured and complex, and when they feel their situation is worsening (Taliaferro, 2004: 193-198). As such, combatants are likely to use salient aspiration levels or historical comparisons when selecting their reference points. Analogies and emotions may also suggest reference points and frames (Mercer, 2005: 4; McDermott, 2004a: 156).

Reference points may have both political and territorial components. Territorial reference points

⁷⁶ If the converse is also true, it might suggest that a long stalemate would encourage combatants to renormalize their reference points to accommodate the new status quo.

may be the clearest to observe and frame, since control over territory is one of the more objectively observable dimensions of a civil war, and since combatants' territorial objectives are generally denoted on maps and in speeches. Territorial reference points may be more nebulous, though, if they refer to population enclaves rather than geographical areas. Territorial reference points are likely to be rooted in history, such as a combatant's aspiration to control its historical homeland. Political reference points tend to be less sharply defined, and may run the gamut from hegemonic control of the state to political participation to regional autonomy, et cetera. Political reference points may also stem from historical analogies (ethnic combatants who previously ruled the state may aspire to reclaim control of the government) or from salient comparisons (an ethnic minority may demand the same level of political rights as the majority).

In most cases, combatants' reference points will be linked to the stakes they are fighting over and their war objectives. Reference points can be measured by examining speeches, maps, and memoirs produced by the combatants to elucidate what their relevant historical analogies and aspiration levels are.⁷⁷ Even if such research cannot pinpoint the exact location of a combatant's reference point, my model will still function – albeit less effectively – if the analyst can at least determine the relationship between the reference point and the status quo, and thus whether a combatant is in the domain of gains or losses.

In high-stakes situations, group leaders tend to define reference points for the rest of the group (Berejikian, 2002: 783). Thus, the perceptions and objectives of a combatant's leaders will be the key to establishing that combatant's reference point. Once the reference point has been selected, combatants may have some influence over how they frame options as gains or losses, but this influence is limited. Some situations strongly suggest their own frames. McDermott makes an analogy to a thermometer: "If it is a

⁷⁷ Using combatants' public statements and memoirs to estimate reference points risks the pitfall of mistaking strategically-motivated behavior for genuine sentiments. Combatants' public positions may be designed to serve the aims of bargaining politics, internal politics, or public relations rather than representing the combatants' actual beliefs and objectives (Kaufmann, 1994: 569-570; Toft, 2003: 13). For example, in the Ethiopian-Eritrean War studied in chapter four, the rebel EPLF was fighting for full Eritrean independence, but publicly demanded only "self-determination" for Eritrea, knowing full well that self-determination was functionally equivalent to independence given Eritrean public opinion. For this reason, internal documents and contemporary reporting may be preferable to public statements or post-hoc memoirs for establishing reference points, since the former may be less likely to include strategic manipulation. Generally, though, the only solution is for the analysts to keep this possibility in mind and to look carefully for contradictions between stated positions and real behaviors.

hundred degrees outside, you do not need to know a whole lot about a particular individual to assume that he is probably hot” (1998: 11).⁷⁸ Furthermore, once outcomes have been framed, those initial frames tend to be resistant to change (McDermott, 1998: 22). Thus, given knowledge of a combatant’s reference point, it should be fairly simple to determine whether given outcomes will be framed as gains or losses.

Measuring the second and third variables – the perceived range of potential outcomes for fighting and settling – will depend on several factors, including the terms of the proposed settlement, the military balance on the ground, and the combatants’ assessments of their own military fortunes. Since uncertainty is a primary trait of wartime decision making, combatants do not assign singular payoffs to settling and fighting, but instead have to contemplate the range of possible outcomes associated with each choice. Those settlement variables that Kaufmann and Walter identified as increasing the stability of settlements – such as demographic separation, defensible boundaries, strong postwar institutions, and third-party guarantees – should decrease the outcome variance associated with settling. Weakly-enforced, non-credible, or poorly-specified settlement offers should increase the range of potential outcomes for settling.

The range of outcome variance that combatants perceive for continuing to fight should be affected by the military balance on the ground, by the history of recent military campaigns, and by any outside intervention that could bolster or hurt a combatant’s military fortunes. A fluid battlefield will increase the perceived outcome variance for fighting, whereas a long stalemate or entrenched front will decrease the perceived range of outcomes.⁷⁹ A gross imbalance in military capabilities would reduce the possible range of outcomes if victory seems certain for one party and defeat inevitable for the other. Given the importance of territorial control and the psychological salience of battle outcomes, those are the data points most likely to influence how combatants assess their military outlook. If combatants believe they may attract international intervention on their behalf, they are likely to perceive a wide range of outcomes for fighting. Combatants who fear the possibility of such intervention against them will also

⁷⁸ For example, a combatant faced with a settlement which would force it to relinquish a large portion of the territory it presently controls would be hard-pressed to frame such an outcome as anything other than a loss.

⁷⁹ Also, combatants who have recently experienced both victories and defeats, and may thus hope (or fear) that a reversal of fortune is around the corner, may perceive a greater outcome variance for fighting.

perceive a wider possible outcome variance for fighting. Conversely, once international forces have entered the fight and acted to reshape the military balance, they may narrow the perceived outcome variance for fighting. Strong, consistent intervention should reduce the range of outcomes for all parties. Sporadic, unpredictable intervention, however, might widen the perceived range of outcomes for fighting if the combatants believe they can either manipulate or circumvent the interveners.

As with reference points, the relative risks associated with fighting and settling are subjective and difficult to determine with precision. Levy writes:

The probabilities and utilities of outcomes – and, in fact, the prior identification of possible options and their consequences – are not given but instead are judgments and values of political leaders about which we have very little information. Actors usually confront two risky options rather than one, for doing nothing or selecting the status quo or a negotiated agreement also involves risks. These risks are compounded by the fact that each option has future consequences which require a balancing of present and future risks, and by the fact that these consequences are a function of others' choices as well as one's own. Thus, which of the options is more risky is often difficult to define conceptually or measure empirically. (1997: 98-99)

As such, my model requires the use of some proxies to help rank fighting and settling in terms of riskiness. Generally, I think it is a fair assumption that settling will be less risky than fighting, since a negotiated settlement at least represents a known commodity, whereas the chance associated with battlefield outcomes is typically great. However, it is certainly possible that agreeing to a vague, easily-manipulated settlement could pose more risks than continuing to fight, especially if the military capabilities of the two sides were grossly imbalanced.

The analyst's job is to assess, as well as possible, the combatants' perceived outcome variance for fighting and settling. Rather than trying to determine precise probabilities or risk estimates, my model uses outcome variability as a proxy for risk. A combatant's choices may usually be ranked ordinally for risk based on the degree of variance in their potential outcomes (McDermott, 1998: 39; Mercer, 2005: 13). Imagine two choices, fight and settle, each of which has a range of possible outcomes stemming from the best reasonably foreseeable result to the worst. The option that offers both the promise of greater benefits and the chance of larger losses has greater outcome variance, and can be coded as riskier. Actors who select risky options demonstrate risk-seeking; actors who select options with less outcome variance

exhibit risk-aversion.⁸⁰

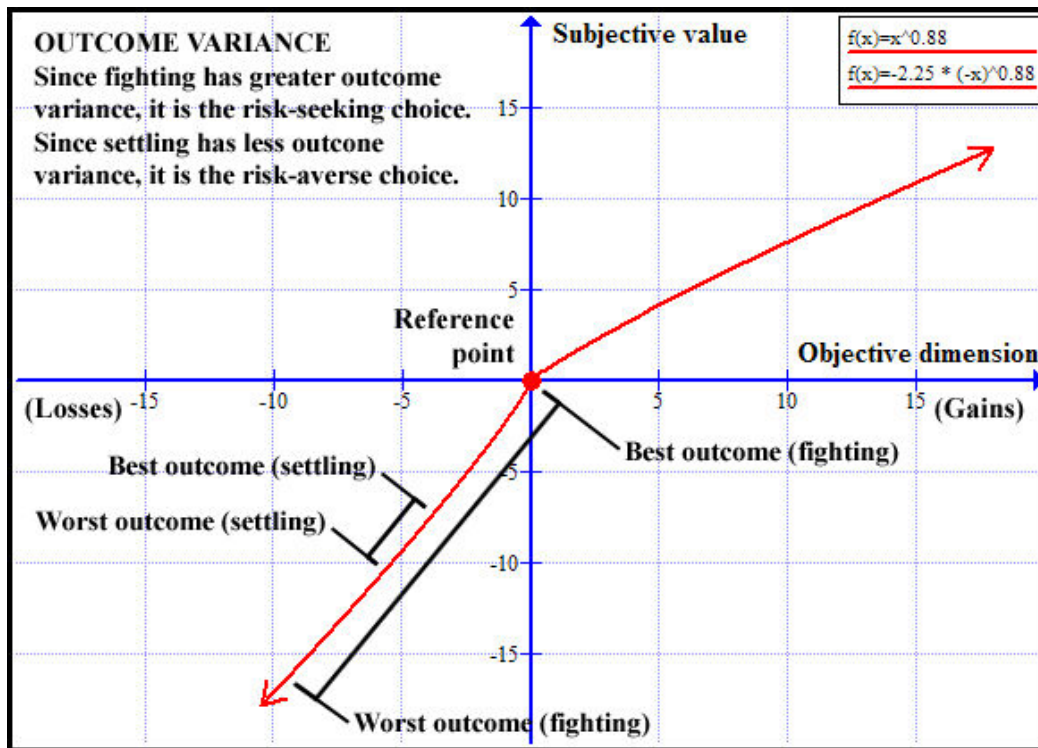


Figure 3. Riskiness and outcome variance

The final variable in my model is the likelihood that a combatant will renormalize its reference point when a decision point arises. Based on the strength of the endowment effect, I assume that combatants always renormalize their reference points to incorporate new gains. Once combatants seize new territory or win new political rights, they should incorporate them into their reference points almost immediately.⁸¹ On the other hand, combatants are unlikely to renormalize lost territory or autonomy.⁸² The result can be a situation in which both combatants perceive themselves to be in the domain of losses:

⁸⁰ Some authors, like Berejikian (2002: 760) narrow the definitions of risk-aversion and risk-seeking to demand that the option selected have a lower expected value than the unselected option. This wrongly conflates the idea of risk orientation with that of irrationality.

⁸¹ The endowment effect is triggered even by unwanted or unrequested gains. So even territory that was seized initially for strategic reasons or as a bargaining chip should still come under the influence of the endowment effect, and combatants will be loathe to give it up even if they scarcely wanted it in the first place. This may provide an alternative to Kaufmann's reasoning for why ethnic combatants hate to lose territory.

⁸² This may account for the "tyranny of small victories" effect, whereby combatants use a string of small victories as a justification for continued fighting, even after absorbing large losses. If those victories are spaced apart, and each is accommodated into the reference point before the next is won, their value will not be reduced by the effects of diminishing sensitivity. Conversely, the large, singular loss will be discounted for that reason. Furthermore, since the battlefield reversal represents a loss relative to the new, renormalized reference point, it will likely prompt risk-seeking behavior from the combatant in an attempt to recoup those losses.

[A]fter a series of gains an individual will treat the possibility of a subsequent setback as a loss rather than as a foregone gain, overweight it, and engage in risk-seeking behavior to maintain her cumulative gains against that loss. After a series of losses, however, an individual will not accommodate as quickly but instead adopt the cumulative frame and engage in risk-seeking behavior to eliminate those losses. (Levy, 1997: 91)

Endowment effects and territorial changes can have a nasty interaction. Also, endowment effects are greatest in situations like those associated with ethnic war. Levy notes that:

[E]ndowment effects are stronger and more consistent if one is given physical possession of a good, as opposed to a property right to receive the good at some point in the future or a chance to receive such a good. [...]

These findings are particularly significant given the relatively trivial items used in the experiments and the fact that the endowments are windfalls and therefore somewhat artificial. In natural settings, where individuals often go to considerable efforts to acquire endowments in the first place and where the symbolic value of endowments may be quite high, we would expect the magnitude of the endowment effect to be even greater. [...]

[T]he longer one possesses a good and the greater the effort and resources expended to acquire it, the greater its perceived value, as cognitive dissonance theory would suggest. This point may be particularly important with respect to the territorial acquisitions that result from wars; the more costly the war in human and economic terms, the greater the perceived value of the new possessions. (1996: 182-187)

Nincic also suggests that endowment effects are heightened by “associating current possession with various forms of symbolic value,” such as raising a flag over conquered territory (1997: 99). As a result, McDermott notes that “arguments over territory can become particularly vicious,” because “[w]hen land is taken away, it is understood as a loss that must be overturned and made right. But when it is gained, it is taken as a rightful claim” (2004b: 299).⁸³ Thus, endowment effects explain how both sides in a war may perceive themselves to be in the domain of losses:

A state that loses territory will generally continue to identify its reference point with the status quo ex ante, see the current status quo as a certain loss, and adopt risk-seeking strategies to recover those losses. At the same time, the state gaining the territory will usually renormalize its reference point (the instant endowment effect), adjust to the new status quo, and engage in risk-seeking strategies to defend it against loss. Thus both actors will engage in more risk-seeking behavior than predicted by expected-utility theory. (Levy, 2003: 226-227)

The perpetuation of histories or rhetoric that claims rightful ownership of lost lands will discourage

⁸³ Losses of territory tend to be renormalized very slowly. McDermott (2004b: 294) notes that: “Fights over land in Northern Ireland or the Middle East, where arguments go back to events hundreds of years ago, speak to the intransigence that many people feel in the face of being asked to accept the loss of something valuable.” Or, as Jervis (2004: 174) puts it: “Most states similarly adjust to losses of power and influence and come to accept reduced status or territory. But they rarely do so quickly. At first they seek to recoup their losses, and their reference point is the earlier rather than the current status quo.”

accommodation to losses. Conversely, combatants who downgrade their expectations and adopt more modest war objectives are more likely to accommodate to previous losses in their new reference point. Similarly, international interveners might urge combatants to update their reference points, or leadership upheavals within a combatant group might lead to the adoption of a new reference point. Changes in a combatant's demands, speeches, or maps could be evidence of a shift in that combatant's reference point.

My prospect theory model thus requires systematic checking to see when and if the combatants renormalized their reference points. In particular, checks for renormalization should be performed when an ethnic war reaches one of the aforementioned critical decision points, such as a peace summit, a ceasefire, a change in combatant leadership, the emergence of a stalemate, or the introduction of third-party intervention. Further inferences about when renormalization is most likely can be drawn from prospect theory. First, since decision makers are more likely to employ analogies, comparisons, and aspiration levels as reference points when facing circumstances that are unstable and uncertain, and more likely to rely on the status quo as a reference point when confronted with stable and familiar situations, combatants should be unlikely to renormalize their reference points to accommodate the status quo so long as an ethnic war remains fluid. Conversely, if the territorial or political status quo in a war stabilizes, perhaps as the result of ceasefires, stalemates, or outside intervention, my model should check for evidence of shifting reference points. Similarly, given Taliaferro's (2004: 193-198) observation that decision makers are unlikely to use the status quo as a reference point when they perceive their situation to be worsening, renormalization should be unlikely so long as combatants are sinking further into the domain of losses, but should be checked for if they stabilize the fight or start to make gains. Finally, given that leaders will tend to define reference points for their groups, a change in a combatant's leadership should be a signal of a possible shift in that combatant's reference point.

Additionally, some reference points may be harder to renormalize than others. Territorial reference points will be highly resistant to change if they involve an ethnic combatant's homeland. Combatants fight especially hard for their homelands, particularly if their population is concentrated in

that area (Toft, 2003: 2-11, 43).⁸⁴ The greater the historical, cultural, and emotional importance of the territory at stake, the less likely combatants will be to renormalize their territorial reference points to accommodate to losses. Similarly, Metz finds that ethnic groups with a history of political autonomy are more likely to launch separatist rebellions (2005: 18). Thus, political reference points that stem from historical analogy should be more resistant to renormalization than those derived purely from aspirations. Generally speaking, reference points rooted in history should be the most difficult to change. Aspiration levels or status quos of more modern vintage should be less resilient under pressure to renormalize.

Similarly, reference points that are embraced by a whole ethnic population, whether they are based on long-standing aspirations or effective combatant propaganda, will be more difficult to change than reference points held by combatant leaders only.⁸⁵ Combatants that have used a particular reference point as a rallying cry or source of legitimacy should be less likely to shift that reference point than combatants who are less invested in the stakes they are fighting for.⁸⁶ Similarly, the more blood and treasure that have been expended to pursue war objectives, the more difficult it may be for combatants to revise their reference points downward. Rallying cries will tend to resist renormalization.

Explanatory and predictive implications. My prospect theory model of ethnic war termination predicts that ethnic combatants will frame the possible outcomes of negotiated settlements and continued fighting as gains or losses relative to their subjective reference points. Combatants who are faced with losses, or whom the status quo places in the domain of losses, should have a risk-seeking orientation. Combatants facing possible gains or in the domain of gains should exhibit a risk-averse orientation. Thus, combatants will choose to settle or continue fighting in accordance with their risk orientations.

As such, my model explains combatant behavior in terms of risk seeking and risk avoidance. If a

⁸⁴ Toft (2003: 2) argues that territorial stakes are least divisible for governments when their states contain multiple ethnic separatist groups, so that the government fears setting a precedent of allowing secessions which might encourage other ethnic combatants to take up arms. Thus, in the case that the government of a multiethnic state is a combatant, that combatant's territorial reference points may be especially resistant to downward revision.

⁸⁵ Thus, leaders who advocate a particular cause or stake as their justification for war may be the victims of their own propaganda. Should their populations adopt that reference point as their own, combatant leaders who might prefer to compromise later find their hands tied by public opinion.

⁸⁶ For example, China's framing of Taiwan as a "renegade province" has been used to bolster the mainland government's legitimacy. Having so publicly and persistently advocated the reference point that Taiwan belongs to China, the Chinese government may not be able to renormalize to the status quo reality of Taiwan's independence.

combatant is mired in the domain of losses, that combatant may run longer and longer risks to try and recoup their previous losses or to avoid having to suffer further certain losses. Even if their chances for victory seem fleeting, such risk-seeking combatants may choose to gamble for resurrection with continued fighting rather than accept a settlement which they frame as a certain loss. Conversely, even combatants who have profited from the early stages of a war may decline a settlement that would freeze many of their gains. Having incorporated those early gains into their reference points, any concessions the combatants are required to make in the settlement would be framed as certain losses, and would trigger risk-seeking attempts to avoid them. Combatants may be willing to risk all rather than surrender a little.

Thus, a prospect theory model of ethnic war termination suggests that, when combatants frame negotiated settlements as certain losses, the war is very unlikely to terminate in a negotiated agreement. The parties are likely to gamble with continued fighting rather than resign themselves to a sure loss.⁸⁷ However, if combatants are in the domain of gains, or can be made to frame a potential settlement as a certain gain, risk-aversion may drive them to settle. At the opposite extreme, my model predicts that combatants who have been driven into a corner, and for whom a negotiated agreement represents the only way to avoid looming and certain defeat, should be willing to sign even a risky, non-credible settlement as a risk-seeking gamble.

Furthermore, my prospect theory model offers an explanation for why combatants may exhibit preference reversals over the course of a war, either accepting settlements that they previously rejected, or abandoning proposed settlements that they had previously judged acceptable. Such preference reversals could occur when combatants shift their reference points (Levy, 1997: 90).⁸⁸ Combatants who shift their

⁸⁷ An alternative explanation could be that combatants in the domain of losses keep fighting because a losses mindset causes them to misperceive the military balance, and thus to believe their chances of victory are higher than they actually are. Prospect theory offers no basis for this alternative explanation, which would have to draw its support from psychological literature on cognitive biases. But I think the case studies presented in chapters four and five suggest that there is little evidence that combatants in the domain of losses were deluded as to the state of the facts on the ground, or that they possessed inexplicably sanguine views about their military prospects.

⁸⁸ The classic experimental example of a framing-induced preference reversal is Kahneman and Tversky's Asian disease problem. Subjects are instructed that a new strain of Asian flu is expected to kill 600 people, and asked to choose between a prevention program that saves 200 lives for sure versus one that has a one-third chance of saving 600 lives but a two-thirds chance of saving no lives. In that condition, subjects prefer the certain choice of saving 200 lives. However, if the options are framed as losses – a sure chance of 400 deaths, or a two-thirds chance

reference points downward may suddenly become willing to compromise on issues that they previously considered to be deal-breakers, as they shift from framing those concessions as certain losses to foregone gains. At the opposite extreme, if combatants renormalize their reference points to accommodate recent gains, compromises that previously constituted foregone gains may now be framed as losses, leading combatants to engage in risk seeking rather than surrender what they were previously willing to concede.

of 600 deaths but a one-third chance of no deaths – people reverse their choice and select the gamble. Note that framing reverses the preference even though the two conditions are identical in terms of expected lives saved (Levy, 1996: 183; Plous, 1993: 72).

Studies have shown that preference reversals can affect serious, real-life decisions, such as a cancer patient's choice of surgery or radiation therapy, depending on whether each treatment's efficacy is framed in terms of survival rates or mortality rates (McDermott, 2004a: 149; Hastie & Dawes, 2001: 301-302; Plous, 1993: 72-73).

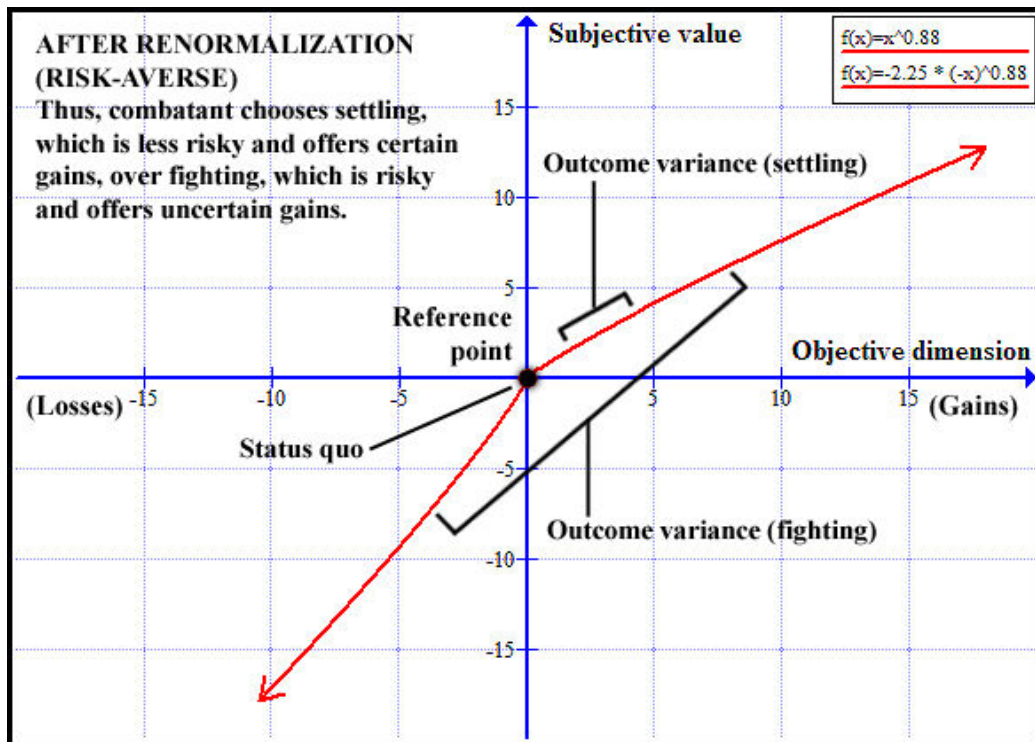
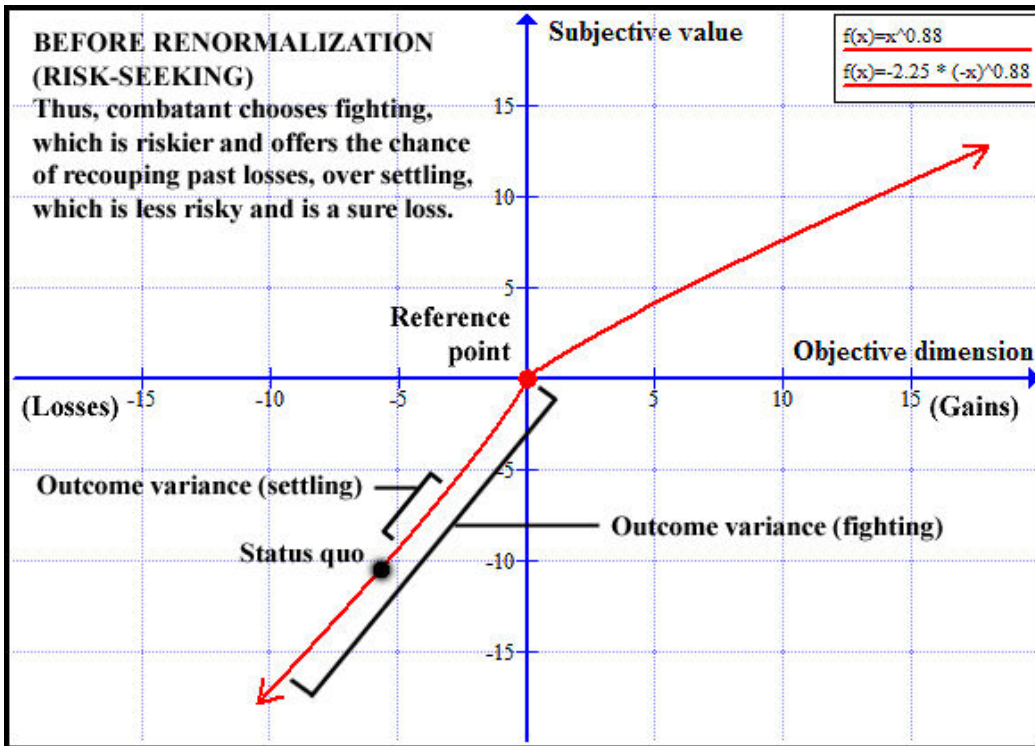


Figure 4. Preference reversal after renormalization

Thus, my model predicts that arriving at settlement terms which all sides can embrace given their risk orientations will be difficult. The divisibility of the stakes, a variable that the rational choice models

credit with little predictive or explanatory power, is thus a central part of my psychological theory of ethnic war termination. If correct, it would validate the common sense idea that civil war settlement rates are so low because the stakes are difficult to compromise. My hypothesized relationship between stakes, reference points, bargaining room, and ethnic war settlement will be discussed at length in chapter six.

Proposed psychological theory and model decision process	
<i>Decision stage</i>	<i>Variables and their measurement</i>
Collection	Collect information relevant to choice problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situation on the ground / military balance • Likely consequences of settling • Likely consequences of continuing to fight
Framing	Frame outcomes as gains or losses relative to reference point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select reference point* (status quo, historical comparisons, aspiration levels, relevant analogies) • Factors affecting likelihood of renormalizing reference point to accommodate present status quo* (domain of gains or losses, international intervention, leadership upheaval, stabilization of status quo, historical legitimacy of reference point, rhetorical investment in reference point) • Assume appropriate risk orientation* (risk-seeking if outcomes framed as losses, risk-averse if outcomes framed as gains)
Evaluation	Assess riskiness of options and apply decision weights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certainty effect • Factors affecting outcome variance for fighting (military balance, battle history, international intervention, territorial control) • Factors affecting outcome variance for settling (terms of settlement, third-party guarantees, defensibility of territory) • Option with greater outcome variance is risky*, option with lesser outcome variance is not risky*
Decision rule	Apply decision rule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settle if risk-seeking and settling is risky, or if risk-averse and settling is not risky • Continue fighting if risk-seeking and fighting is risky, or if risk-averse and fighting is not risky
Implementation	Act on chosen decision
	<i>(* denotes predictive significance)</i>

Table 4. Proposed prospect theory model

Main takeaways. In this section I constructed a psychological model of ethnic war termination based on prospect theory. I believe that my model has a useful parsimony to its explanatory and predictive implications. Armed with just the knowledge of a combatant’s reference point, and the possible range of

outcomes for settling versus continuing to fight, my theory can explain how a combatant will frame those outcomes as gains or losses, and why the resultant risk orientation will lead them to choose a risk-averse or risk-seeking course of action. Changes in a combatant's reference point, or in the state of the military balance, explain changes in the combatant's willingness to settle. Generally, though, my theory suggests that negotiated settlements will tend to threaten ethnic combatants with some certain losses, and risk-seeking to avoid losses may explain the low settlement rate observed for ethnic civil wars.⁸⁹

However, while prospect theory's explanatory and predictive mechanisms are both powerful and simple, they come with their own pitfalls. In particular, my model suffers due to the subjective nature of combatants' reference points and assessments of outcome variance. Without knowledge of these critical variables, the model's parsimonious mechanisms are useless. Yet these variables are difficult to quantify with a high degree of certainty because, as with the rational choice models, they require a window into the combatant's head. Archival research can approximate this required level of knowledge, but never equal it.

One major weakness of prospect theory is that it lacks a theory of framing, just as rational choice lacks a theory of preferences (McDermott, 2004a: 154). Unlike in the laboratory, where experimenters can control the context of decision problems, framing in the outside world is "highly subjective and poorly understood" (Levy, 1997: 91). Boettcher notes that:

Despite a decade of work exploring prospect theory empirically, there has been little progress in developing clear and consistent criteria for simply identifying the frame used by a particular decision maker (or group of decision makers). (2004: 332)

I believe that, through a careful examination of the words and actions of combatants, reference points can be elucidated with some certainty, and that outcome variance can serve as a reasonable proxy for risk assessment and decision weighting. However, analytic judgments about these variables will be open to question. Also, to avoid tautological conclusions, reference points and framing should not be inferred from the riskiness of a combatant's chosen actions.

One additional caveat about applying prospect theory to ethnic war termination is in order.

⁸⁹ By contrast, rational choice theories tend to assume that decision-makers are uniformly risk-averse when dealing with imperfect information (Boettcher, 2004: 331).

Prospect theory describes individual choice behavior – it is not a theory of group decision making. My model attempts to circumvent this problem by assuming that ethnic combatants have unitary leaderships. The three rational choice models employ the same shortcut, since rational choice itself lacks a robust theory of group preference aggregation (McDermott, 2004b: 302).

Group decisions made during wartime may be well-suited for prospect theory, since in those cases individual leaders may exercise great decision-making power and define reference points for the rest of the group (Berejikian, 2002: 782-783; Boettcher, 2004: 334).⁹⁰ However, the assumption of unitary ethnic combatants is suspect enough that it should be kept in mind when these models are employed. The influence of internal divisions and coalition politics may lead to some outcomes that all of these models, applied strictly, cannot explain. As Levy puts it:

In individual cases where the application of a unitary actor assumption is reasonable we can focus on the frame and decision calculus of the dominant decision maker. For the purposes of a general theory of foreign policy, however, the concept of a collective frame around which a collective value function and collective probability weighting function are constructed to generate a collective risk orientation involves an unacceptable reification of individual-level concepts. (1997: 102-103)

Going forward, both prospect theory and rational choice theories of ethnic war will have to take these shortcomings into account if they are to generate robust models of group decision making. As the case studies in chapters four and five make clear, internal politics had a significant impact on the time and type of termination in these ethnic wars.

Finally, one counterargument which I do not believe has much validity is the suggestion that it is inappropriate to apply a theory derived from laboratory experiments on hypothetical monetary gambles to the life-and-death realities of ethnic war. Prospect theory is a description of human decision making under conditions of uncertainty and risk; high-stakes security and military decisions, such as those faced by ethnic combatants, are typified by risk and uncertainty, and are thus a natural subject for prospect theory (McDermott, 1998: 3). Furthermore, significant experimental evidence now demonstrates that individuals display the general behaviors posited by prospect theory when making decisions with real monetary or

⁹⁰ Also, recent experimental and empirical evidence shows that groups can exhibit both loss aversion and risk-seeking in the domain of losses (McDermott, 2004b: 301; Boettcher, 2004: 339; Taliaferro, 2004: 189).

personal safety ramifications (Levy, 1997; McDermott, 2004b). Thus, prospect theory cannot be dismissed as an artifact of the laboratory; in fact, it may be better suited to ethnic war, where the values that decision makers must judge are neither linear nor monetary, than expected utility theory.

Added value of the prospect theory model

Having summarized the key principles of prospect theory and proposed a psychological theory of ethnic war termination based upon them, I will discuss the implications of prospect theory for rational choice models and the added value that prospect theory has for the study of ethnic civil war termination.

Caveats. This is not to argue that prospect theory should supplant the rational choice models described here. Mason and Fett's expected utility model has a useful parsimony to it, and provides an excellent baseline for comparison with other, more complicated theories. Prospect theory will not match expected utility theory for simplicity or clarity of principles. Similarly, by applying the security dilemma to civil war termination, both Walter and Kaufmann made key contributions towards better understanding the strategic interactions related to a combatant's decision to settle or fight. Prospect theory contains no internal mechanisms to account for the idea of responding to an adversary's choices (Levy, 1997: 98).

Furthermore, in many cases, the outcome of an ethnic civil war is likely to be overdetermined. Often, both rational choice theories and prospect theory will lead to the same prediction for how an ethnic war will terminate. At other times, both classes of model will offer plausible explanations for why ethnic combatants made the choices they did. As Levy writes:

[F]oreign policy decision making involves the critical tasks of defining the situation, editing the choice problem, and then evaluating options under dynamic and interactive conditions of present and future uncertainties. Consequently, it is extremely difficult for the analyst to determine whether an actor selects a particular option because of framing, loss aversion, the reflection effect, and probability overweighting, or simply because it is more highly valued in terms of a standard cost-benefit calculus based on expected value. Thus, it is difficult to distinguish empirically between a prospect theory explanation and an expected-utility or expected-value explanation. (1997: 99)

Some degree of analytical overlap between these models is unavoidable. It may even be desirable for scholars to have multiple effective paradigms at their disposal. But even in those cases where a rational choice explanation for the behavior of ethnic combatants is available, applying prospect theory should

have heuristic value if it gets scholars and policy makers to study potentially critical psychological aspects of a conflict – such as framing and risk orientation – that they might otherwise neglect (McDermott, 2004a: 160).

With those caveats noted, I believe my psychological model still provides real added value over the rational choice models discussed in this paper.⁹¹ I will briefly discuss what I think prospect theory can add to Mason and Fett's, Walter's, and Kaufmann's rational choice approaches to ethnic war termination.

Prospect theory and expected utility. Mason and Fett write that: "If G (or R) chooses to continue to fight, it must be the case that G (or R) expects to win eventually" (1996: 548). This is one of the crucial assumptions underlying their model, yet it seems inconsistent with the real actions of ethnic war combatants who spurn negotiated settlements, and choose instead to fight to the finish even in the face of overwhelming opposition. The case study in chapter four provides one such example. Ethnic combatants do not seem to make their choices by coolly calculating the utilities for fighting and settling. Instead, they behave as though some of their utilities are non-scalable, and as though some of their objectives are beyond compromise (Levy, 1997: 98). Prospect theory, with its notions of the reference point and risk-seeking in the domain of losses, provides a more realistic description of these combatants' decision processes than the passionless equations of expected utility theory. Ethnic combatants do not seem to fight for maximum utility, they seem to fight for stakes. Prospect theory can explain why they refuse to abandon those stakes by settling, even as their chances of victory grow perilously slim.

Also, the prospect theory concept of reference dependence can explain the preference reversals that combatants sometimes exhibit, but which are anathema to expected utility theory. In ethnic civil wars, frames do seem to matter. As Levy (1997) puts it:

In terms of debates between prospect theory and expected-utility theory, reference dependence and framing effects are critical. If people always framed around the status quo it would be

⁹¹ Levy (1997: 106) suggests that models based on prospect theory must demonstrate this added value, given the advantage in parsimony of rational choice theories, and expected utility in particular: "On these grounds I argued that in case study applications of prospect theory the burden of proof should be on the proponent of prospect theory to test her theory or explanation against a rival rational choice explanation and to show not only that the evidence is consistent with a prospect theory explanation, but also that the theory provides a better explanation of that behavior than does a rational choice explanation based on a straightforward expected-value calculation."

possible to subsume loss aversion and the reflection effect within expected-utility theory by positing an S-shaped utility function with a steeper slope on the loss side. But preference reversals induced by changes in frames rather than by changes in subjective utilities or probabilities are much more difficult to reconcile with expected-utility theory or with rational choice theories more generally. Evidence that behavior varies depending on whether the glass is seen as half-empty or half-full does not easily lend itself to a rational choice explanation. (92)

Framing effects may explain both why combatants make choices at odds with utility maximizing, and why combatants may reverse their preferences even if little has changed on the battlefield.

Finally, Mason and Fett assume that the utilities for victory and defeat remain constant throughout the course of a war (1996: 549). This assumption makes sense according to the axioms of expected utility theory, which assume that decision makers are concerned only with net assets and not sunk costs (Levy, 1997: 88). Yet combatants do not disregard sunk costs – the losses they have suffered during a war alter their perceived values of victory and defeat. Particularly in those cases where combatants find themselves in the domain of losses but do not renormalize their reference points, the sunk costs they have suffered serve to increase the value of victory and to minimize the loss for defeat, and thus may tilt their preferences towards fighting in a way that Mason and Fett’s model cannot anticipate.

Prospect theory and the security dilemma. Security dilemma models, like Walter’s and Kaufmann’s, suggest that the barrier to negotiated settlements in civil wars is not the divisibility of the stakes, but the low credibility and sustainability of peace plans due the incentives for and danger of defection. Walter writes that combatants will have “great difficulty convincing each other to accept any plan that offers even the slightest chance of annihilation” (1997: 340). Under her theory, the risk of annihilation from settling is unacceptable. Kaufmann’s model makes the same argument. Yet both their theories struggle to explain why ethnic combatants are unwilling to gamble with annihilation at the bargaining table, yet will flirt with annihilation on the battlefield instead. The fear of defection cannot be the only barrier to ethnic war settlement.

In 2000, Gurr wrote that: “Most ethnic nationalist leaders are willing to settle for 50 cents (or less) on the dollar,” once they realize that they are “strategically and politically outmatched” (57).

Prospect theory suggests this is not the case. Concession aversion and the endowment effect will make it

difficult for combatants to divide the stakes in an ethnic war in a way that does not force either party to accept outcomes that they frame as certain losses. Walter and Kaufmann, by assuming that bargains can be struck once the security dilemma is resolved, assume too much willingness on the part of ethnic combatants to bargain away their present holdings or aspiration levels, acquiescing to losses in the pursuit of gains. My prospect theory model suggests that losses will loom larger than supposedly compensatory gains, and that ethnic combatants will take long gambles by fighting rather than accept such losses at the bargaining table. In particular, Walter and Kaufmann seem to overestimate combatants' willingness to part with territory. Walter writes that, as part of a peace deal, combatants will often be required to "shed conquered territory" (1999: 129). Similarly, Kaufmann suggests that ethnic combatants should trade pieces of territory to help create defensible partition lines (1996b: 168). Prospect theory suggests that constructing such trades will be extremely difficult in the face of loss aversion and endowment effects, especially once territory has changed hands during a war.

Thus, the roadblock to peace may not be the credibility or sustainability of settlements – it may be the difficulty of devising settlements in the first place. My model suggests that cooperation under the security dilemma should be easier in situations where it requires combatants to forego gains rather than accept losses (Levy, 1997: 93-94). Thus, the fairly absolute decision rules implied by both Walter's and Kaufmann's models overestimate the likelihood of ethnic war settlement, or at least overstate the simplicity of the obstacles to settlement. These differences between prospect theory and the security dilemma models may have prescriptive implications. Walter and Kaufmann advocate specific strategies for intervention into ethnic conflict, tailored to address what they believe are the barriers to settlement. Walter champions third-party guarantees and robust peacekeeping. Kaufmann argues for direct military intervention to establish defensible partitions and facilitate population transfers. If, however, the rational choice assumptions underlying security dilemma theories are incorrect or incomplete, then such interventions may fail or even trigger perverse escalation of the conflicts they are meant to contain (Butts, 2006). Interventions designed to reduce payoffs for cheating and increase payoffs for cooperation may nevertheless require combatants to acquiesce to concessions that they frame as losses. If so, combatants

are liable to resist interventions with more force and resolve than rational choice theories assume.

Instead, my prospect theory model suggests that successful interventions will lead combatants to reframe settlement outcomes as gains rather than losses, or to renormalize outstanding losses into their reference points.⁹² If it is possible, such strategic manipulation of frames will require close attention to combatants' decision processes. Even if such reframing is not possible, international actors might at least improve their understanding of a conflict by viewing it through the lens of prospect theory, and take this perspective into account when planning an intervention. This will be discussed thoroughly in chapter six.

Prospects for prospect theory. Going forward, my goal is to refine and improve this prospect theory model of ethnic war termination by testing my model and the rational choice models against relevant case studies. The knowledge gained from these case studies can be used to assist with theory building, and may help identify those conditions under which prospect theory is the correct paradigm to apply when investigating ethnic civil war termination. I hypothesize that case study testing will reveal that prospect theory explains cases of ethnic war termination that rational choice theories cannot, and that it provides a more satisfactory explanatory mechanism for understanding the choice behavior of ethnic combatants wrestling with the decision to settle or keep fighting.⁹³ Prospect theory seems to offer a promising model for understanding ethnic war termination. Full theory testing may prove much more difficult, though, given the case-specific research needed to measure the prospect theory model variables as I have presently operationalized them. By comparison, rational choice theories lend themselves to such large-scale theory testing more easily.

⁹² Butts (2006: 31-33) is pessimistic about the ability of international interveners to achieve such dramatic manipulation of the reference points and outcome framing of ethnic war combatants.

⁹³ I would suggest several types of cases that may be particularly useful to study for theory building purposes. First are cases which represent anomalies within the rational choice framework because the combatants behaved in opposition to what would be predicted by rational choice models. One example would be the Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war, which Mason and Fett's model suggests should have been a prime candidate for settlement given its extremely long duration and high casualty totals, but where the two sides instead continued fighting until the Eritrean separatists won a decisive military victory (Mason et al., 2005). Another example would be the war in Bosnia, where combatants continued to wage a bloody war for several years despite the offer of third-party guarantees to enforce peace agreements and the deployment of a large peacekeeping force.

Other cases that could provide useful information are wars with substantial intrawar variation within the combatants' preferences between fighting and settling (Licklider, 1993: 11). Again, the Bosnian case is an interesting one because the parties ultimately agreed to a negotiated settlement after rejecting numerous earlier settlement proposals based on similar terms.

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY OF THE ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN WAR

In this chapter, I use a case study of the Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war to conduct a first-brush test of my psychological theory of ethnic war termination. After discussing my rationale for selecting this case, I review the course and termination of the war. I then test all four models of ethnic war termination by comparing their explanatory and predictive conclusions against the historical record.

Rationale for selecting the case

The Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war is interesting because Mason et al. (2005) acknowledge that it is an instance of a long, costly war that did not produce a settlement (as rational choice theories tend to predict) but instead dragged on for over two decades before the Eritrean rebels won a military victory.

The Ethiopian civil war meets the definition of ethnic civil war I established earlier in this thesis. First, the conflict was an ethnic separatist war, with Eritrean nationalist rebels attempting to break away from Ethiopia to establish an independent state. Thus, the criterion that the combatants must be concerned about the possibility of living together after the conflict is clearly met. Second, multiple sovereignty was present, as will be described more extensively in the next section. Third, battle deaths exceeded the minimum threshold of at least 1,000 per year, with effective resistance mounted by both sides (Licklider, 1995: 688). Finally, the combatants were organized primarily along ethnic lines.

Licklider (1995), for example, codes this case as an identity war which lasted from 1967 to 1991 and caused over 500,000 deaths. Mason and Fett (1996: 567) code it as an ethnic war lasting from 1974 to 1991 (the 17-year duration is the longest in their data set) with a total of 165,000 battle deaths. And Kaufmann (1996b: 160) codes it as an ethnic war, spanning from 1961 to 1991 before terminating in military victory, which caused 350,000 battle deaths.⁹⁴

Course of the Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war

I will examine the Eritrean separatist war in six parts. First, I discuss the history of the conflict. Second, I describe the combatants. Third, I outline the stakes in the war. Fourth, I detail the course of the

⁹⁴ Walter (1997, 1999) does not include this case in her data set, since the war ended too recently to meet her criteria. However, Walter also fails to include this war in her recent refresh of her data set, which she claims includes all civil wars that began between 1940 and 1992 (2002: 169-170). She gives no reason for this omission.

fighting. Fifth, I summarize the war's termination. And sixth, I describe attempts by combatants to settle.

History of the conflict. Eritrea occupies a strategic location on the Red Sea coastline north of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian nation controlled some or all of Eritrean territory at various points in the past, but more recently Eritrea was occupied and ruled by a series of imperial powers, including the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century, and the Egyptians and Italians in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Eritrea, with its present-day borders, became an Italian colony in 1890 (Metz, 2005: 63).



Figure 5. Map of Eritrea

In 1936, Italian forces used Eritrea as a springboard for their invasion of Ethiopia. In addition to colonizing Ethiopia, Italy appended parts of northern Ethiopia's Tigray province to Eritrea (Metz, 2005: 63). Metz notes that: "Some 50,000 Eritrean soldiers took part in Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, and were used for at least several more years in operations against Ethiopian rebels fighting Italian rule" (2005: 71). While under Italian control, Eritrea enjoyed a privileged position compared to Ethiopia. For example,

Italy made Tigrinya, the language of most Eritreans, and Arabic, the religious language of Eritrea's Muslim communities, the official languages for the whole Ethiopian colony, even though Ethiopia's leaders were Amharic-speaking Christians (Metz, 2005: 69-70). Italian officials rewarded Eritreans for their part in the invasion of Ethiopia, while carrying out massive campaigns of repression in Ethiopia proper to deter and subdue uprisings. Metz notes that Italian records contain no mentions of armed dissidence in Eritrea, whereas the ethnically-similar, Tigrinya-speaking Christians in northern Ethiopia launched several rebellions against Italian colonialism (2005: 71-73).

Italy continued to administer both colonies until Italian forces were evicted by Britain in 1941. But differential treatment for Eritrea and Ethiopia continued under British administration. Local Eritrean chiefs were permitted to exercise a greater degree of self-government than their Ethiopian equivalents, and the British even mustered local Eritrean police forces to guard the border with Ethiopia (Metz, 2005: 74-75). The British occupied and administered Eritrea and Ethiopia during World War II and afterward, leaving in 1952 when Ethiopia became an independent, sovereign state (Metz, 2005: 63).

After World War II, Eritrean Christians supported union with Ethiopia. Muslim communities, in contrast, opposed Ethiopian rule, and argued instead for Eritrean independence (Metz, 2005: 64).⁹⁵ The Allied powers submitted the matter to the United Nations for adjudication. In December 1950, the UN voted to join Eritrea with Ethiopia in a federation, with domestic autonomy for Eritrea but with Ethiopia managing all foreign affairs (Metz, 2005: 65-66). The federation was formally established in 1952.

Over the course of the next decade, the Ethiopian government – headed by Emperor Haile Selassie – chipped away at Eritrean autonomy. Under the terms of federation, Eritrea was supposed to have its own governmental bodies and essentially full sovereign power over its own territory (Metz, 2005: 78). However, Metz argues that:

From the beginning Ethiopian officials considered federation a necessary but unpleasant fiction that was to be maintained solely for the benefit of an international audience, a compromise that had to be made in order to avoid a less favorable vote in the United Nations. In 1955, the

⁹⁵ Ethiopian and Eritrean historians bitterly dispute the breadth of support for independence versus union during this time period. As Metz (2005) notes, there does not appear to have been a unified Eritrean position on the subject; rather, opinions were divided across religious lines.

Emperor's representative in Eritrea is famously quoted as saying, in reference to Eritrea, that “there are no internal or external affairs. [...] The affairs of Eritrea concern Ethiopia as a whole and the Emperor.” (2005: 80)

Selassie adopted a new constitution in 1955 that contained no mention of Eritrean autonomy (Erlich, 1981: 8). During the decade of federation, Eritrean autonomy was steadily eroded. For example, newspapers were closed, politicians were jailed, governmental bodies were neutered or disbanded, the Eritrean flag was outlawed, and Amharic was made the official language (Metz, 2005: 80-81).

In 1962, the Eritrean assembly voted to eliminate federalism and for Eritrea to be subsumed within Ethiopia as a normal province. Controversy surrounded the vote.⁹⁶ But whatever the exact circumstances were that triggered the end of the federation, this collapse of Eritrean autonomy led to a separatist rebellion by Eritrean nationalist groups against the Selassie regime.

Combatants in the war. The three main combatants in this war were the Ethiopian government (first under Selassie, then later the Derg military regime), the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).⁹⁷

Erlich writes that, in the Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war, “[t]he essential problem was a matter of identity” (1981: 1). Ethnicity and nationality proved to be the main organizing principles for both sides in the conflict. While there were originally some ideological tones to the war, as Selassie's U.S.-backed imperial regime battled the nominally-Marxist Eritrean rebel groups, this political dimension was rendered defunct by the 1974 military coup that deposed Selassie and replaced him with the Marxist Derg regime (Metz, 2005: 67). Thus, for the bulk of the war, socialist rebels fought a socialist government, with the combatants divided along ethnic lines (Davidson et al., 1980: 53).

Ethiopia's dominant ethnic group was the Amharic-speaking Orthodox Christians who held most positions of power within the government and military (Metz, 2005: 83-84). Power was more loosely divided between Eritrea's ethnic groups. A 1952 census found that Eritrea's population was almost evenly

⁹⁶ Some historians have claimed that Ethiopian officials hand-picked or bribed the Eritrean legislators (Metz, 2005: 66). Others allege that armed police were present in the assembly chamber during the vote, or that no vote was actually taken and that a proclamation from the Emperor dissolving the federation was simply read aloud into the record (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 21).

⁹⁷ Several other small rebel organizations existed, but the ELF and EPLF did the heavy fighting.

split between Christians, who were counted at 510,000, and Muslims, who numbered 514,000 (Erlich, 1981: 3). Eritrean Christians were generally Tigrinya-speaking and lived on the same central highlands as the Ethiopian Christians in Tigray province, just across the border in Ethiopia. West of the highlands lay the Beraka lowlands, and to the east and southeast were Red Sea coastal plains and desert. The Beja, a group of Tigrinya-speaking Muslim nomads, dominated the western lowlands. The coastal plains were inhabited by many smaller Muslim ethnic groups, speaking multiple languages (Metz, 2005: 83-84).

The ELF, a separatist rebel organization, was founded in 1961 in response to the collapse of federalism (Metz, 2005: 66). The ELF was the primary rebel combatant during the 1960s and early 1970s, and was Muslim-dominated and an explicitly Islamic organization, although a few of the group's top leaders were Eritrean Christians (Metz, 2005: 96). Many Eritrean rebel leaders had fighting experience from their service in the Italian military prior to World War II (Metz, 2005: 74). The ELF platform called primarily for Eritrean independence, but Zuljan argues that its main faction "never closed the door to the possibility of an equitable federal union" (2000: n.p.).

As a Muslim organization, the ELF was founded to expel Christian Ethiopian authorities from Eritrea and establish a Muslim Red Sea state (Negash, 1997: 150). While Christian enrollment in Eritrean rebel groups increased throughout the 1970s, Negash writes that: "The ELF, by then committed to a pan-Islamic and pan-Arabic goal, was unable to integrate Christian Eritreans" (1997: 152). The ELF's command structure restricted the participation of Christians in both fighting and decision making. Also, the ELF relied upon Islamic religious rhetoric as a mobilization tool (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 49). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, this caused growing tension over the ELF's orientation as a pan-Islamic front versus an Eritrean nationalist organization (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 29).

The other major rebel combatant, the EPLF, split from the ELF in 1973 (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 30).⁹⁸ The EPLF was mostly Christian and substituted Eritrean nationalism for pan-Arabism as its organizing principle (Erlich, 1981: 17-19). Ideological differences kept the ELF and EPLF from

⁹⁸ The military wing of the EPLF was the Eritrean People's Liberation Army, or EPLA (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 43). However, for simplicity's sake, I simply refer to this whole combatant as the EPLF.

collaborating fully, until the EPLF displaced the ELF as the chief rebel combatant. The EPLF was also a separatist group and pursued full self-determination for Eritrea (Zuljan, 2000). By 1976, Tigrean Christians (nearly all in the EPLF) accounted for over half of the rebel forces (Erich, 1981: 72).

Throughout the late 1970s, the ELF and EPLF competed for power within Eritrea, fighting many battles amongst themselves (Metz, 2005: 67). In 1981, the EPLF won this war-within-a-war; some ELF troops joined the EPLF, while the remnants of the ELF were driven into Sudan (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 30).⁹⁹ For the remainder of the war, the EPLF was the only significant Eritrean rebel combatant. In addition to its military arm, the EPLF had a substantial political arm that fostered multiple sovereignty over the course of the war. Davidson et al. note that the EPLF created “state-like structures” in rebel-held territory in Eritrea, including medical clinics, schools, and civic organizations (1980: 50).¹⁰⁰

The growth and development of the rebel military forces will be discussed later in the section, but it should be noted that rebel forces were substantial. In 1984, Firebrace and Holland wrote that the EPLF army numbered between 40,000 and 50,000 troops, and that rebels were typically better trained than the government army, which relied heavily on conscripts and child soldiers. They noted: “The EPLA is now a larger and better-equipped army than those of most African states, and is now approaching in size the armies of Ethiopia’s larger neighbors, Sudan and Somalia” (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 51).

Issues at stake. Metz categorizes six possible goals for ethnic rebel movements: (1) secession, (2) autonomy, (3) irredentism, (4) state capture, (5) constitutional challenge, and (6) policy challenge (2005: 9). Both the ELF and EPLF were separatist groups whose primary goal was full independence for Eritrea, although the ELF’s range of desired outcomes may have included some form of robust autonomy.¹⁰¹ The

⁹⁹ Zuljan (2000: n.p.) attributes the EPLF’s victory to a combination of superior troop competency and the wider appeal of Eritrean nationalism than pan-Arabism: “In addition to its highly disciplined combatants, the EPLF benefited from its broad base of popular support and its political organization. The EPLF became a de facto government in areas it controlled. It was a highly structured political and military institution involved not only in training its fighters militarily but also in educating them politically.”

¹⁰⁰ EPLF-sponsored social services ran the gamut from hospitals and police forces all the way down to a free watch repair service for rebel soldiers, maintained in an underground bunker and manned by disabled veterans (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 135).

¹⁰¹ It is unclear whether federation was actually an acceptable outcome for the ELF. Given the erosion of Eritrean autonomy under the previous federal system and the ELF’s pan-Arab ideology, I suspect that secession was the real – if not always the stated – goal. This seems to be a case of strategic manipulation.

EPLF's National Democratic Program listed "establish[ing] a people's democratic state" by "abolish[ing] the Ethiopian colonial administrative organs" and expelling Ethiopian forces from Eritrea as the group's top priorities (Davidson et al., 1980: 143). Metz argues that this mobilization for secession was made possible by the development of a distinct Eritrean national identity during the period of Italian colonization, and fueled by Eritrea's experience with greater autonomy under colonial rule (2005: 68). Thus, for the rebels, their stakes in the war were rooted in historical comparisons.

The Ethiopian government had both political and territorial interests at stake. States have a natural interest in preserving their territorial integrity by suppressing secessionism.¹⁰² Especially in a multiethnic state such as Ethiopia, governments may fear that, by accommodating to the demands of an ethnic separatist group, they will set a harmful precedent that will lead other groups to rebel (Toft, 2003). But the government had economic and ideological concerns at stake as well. First, Ethiopia's only access to the Red Sea was through Eritrea, so Ethiopia feared that losing control of its sea ports – especially Asab, in eastern Eritrea – would damage its trade and economy (MacQueen, 2002: 225). Second, just as Eritreans had developed a national identity that fueled their desire for self-determination, Ethiopian national identity included the concept of a "Greater Ethiopia," a multinational empire of which Eritrea was historically a part (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.). Thus, Ethiopian conceptions of the war's stakes, like those of the rebels, were historically based. Finally, Ethiopia's Christian rulers feared encirclement by Islamic states (Sorenson, 1993: 43).¹⁰³ ELF references to the Red Sea as an "Arab lake" exacerbated these fears (Davidson et al., 1980: 53). Thus, the war was an ethnic separatist conflict, with control of Eritrea as the primary territorial stake. However, there were economic and cultural aspects as well.

Course of the fighting. The Eritrean separatist war took place in two phases. From 1961 through 1976, the ELF and EPLF fought a guerilla war against the Ethiopian government, relying on hit-and-run tactics. Beginning in 1977, the rebel combatants began fighting large-scale conventional battles to take

¹⁰² A state's interest in its territorial integrity is similar to a person's interest in his bodily integrity. For a state to lose territory would be the equivalent of a person losing an arm or leg. I thank Daryl Press for this analogy.

¹⁰³ Somalia had been created in 1960 with Arab support, and had laid claim to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, which accounted for nearly a third of Ethiopia's territory. Similarly, a 1962 revolution in Yemen had led to the stationing of Egyptian troops – a former colonizer in Ethiopia – just across the Red Sea (Erlich, 1981: 9).

and hold territory, including the use of armor and trench warfare (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 53-54).

The first large, armed altercations between government and rebel forces occurred in September 1961, but the civil war did not get fully under way until 1971, when the Ethiopian government declared martial law in Eritrea (Africa Watch, 1991: 10; Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 265). Even before war broke out in its entirety, though, atrocities were committed by both sides. For example, between February and April 1967, the government army burned 67 villages in Eritrea (Africa Watch, 1991: 44-45). And, in 1971, ELF rebels massacred dozens of Eritrean Christians when they refused to provide the rebels with supplies (Africa Watch, 1991: 48). Fighting retained these brutal characteristics throughout the course of the war.

Both sides also benefited from international aid at the start of the war. The United States backed Selassie's Ethiopian army with training and weapons, and the Israelis helped train an Ethiopian "crack unit" for anti-guerilla warfare (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 45; Metz, 2005: 67). Rebel forces, meanwhile, received aid and weapons from Arab states, smuggled through Sudan (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 265; Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 49-50). Syria and Algeria in particular supported the ELF (Metz, 2005: 68).

Partly thanks to this military aid from Muslim states, rebel forces grew in strength throughout the early 1970s, reaching the point where they could attempt to take and hold key Eritrean cities (Metz, 2005: 67). The EPLF supported its operations from a base area in mountainous northeast Eritrea, where it had a network of underground workshops, depots, and other infrastructure (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 52). The 1974 military coup that ousted Selassie and installed the even more oppressive Derg as Ethiopia's ruling regime also proved to be a boon for rebel recruitment. Erlich estimates that there were only 2,500 active rebel fighters before 1974, but that the number climbed to between 38,500 and 43,000 by 1977 (1981: 16). Still, after a leadership shakeup and series of political assassinations in November 1974, the Derg government recommitted itself to imposing a military solution on the rebels (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.).

In 1975, rebels tried to capitalize on the weakness of the new Derg regime by launching an offensive campaign. Large groups of insurgents infiltrated the Eritrean capital of Asmara in February, resulting in a protracted urban battle that killed hundreds on both sides (Erlich, 1981: 71). There were fewer than 25,000 government troops in Eritrea between 1975 and 1977, and those units that were in the

theater were “bleeding heavily” and were forced to fall back into urban centers for protection and supplies (Erlich, 1981: 72-75). By 1976, only 17 of the government’s 60 army garrisons remained under Derg control (Erlich, 1981: 72). Meanwhile, rebels began laying siege to key cities, and took control of six former garrison towns over a 5-month span in 1976 (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 53). Rebel forces also surrounded Asmara and attempted to cut off ground access to the city, bottling-up the garrison inside.

The first Derg counteroffensive was the creation of a hastily-trained, 40,000-man militia – the so-called “Peasant’s Army” – in 1976 (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 22-23). The Peasant’s Army was sent to attack Eritrean rebel positions, but instead was crushed by a series of EPLF surprise attacks. Government forces sustained “massive casualties” before retreating, and gained no ground (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 22-23). By the end of 1976, insurgencies existed in all 14 of Ethiopia’s provinces, which also forced the Derg regime to spread its military forces thin (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.).

Rebel forces ratcheted-up their offensive in 1977. The EPLF captured Keren, a city which was “the key to control of western and northern Eritrea,” in July, killing more than 2,000 government troops in a pitched battle (Erlich, 1981: 77). Zuljan notes that:

Encouraged by the imperial regime's collapse and attendant confusion, the guerrillas extended their control over the whole region by 1977. Ethiopian forces were largely confined to urban centers and controlled the major roads only by day. (2000: n.p.)

Rebels soon controlled all the major urban centers except Asmara, Mitsiwa (a key northern port), Asab (the eastern port), Barentu, and Adi Caieh (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 266). Erlich writes that:

By the middle of 1977, the Eritreans had gained almost every military advantage. They had captured some 90 percent of Eritrea’s territory, including the strategic town of Keren. They had twice as many trained fighters as the Ethiopians did. [...] The Ethiopian army, demoralized, politicized, and deprived almost fully [...] of its colonels and generals, was unsuccessfully facing the massive Somali invasion of the Ogaden. Simultaneously, as if Providence were tailoring a golden opportunity for the Eritreans, an important development was occurring in the Red Sea. For the first time in modern history, the strongest Red Sea Arab states were coordinating a common Red Sea strategy. (1981: 15)

In response to these developments, Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam – who had consolidated his control over the Derg – declared a “total people’s war” against the Eritrean rebels in August 1977 (Africa Watch, 1991: 113). Faced with the termination of U.S. support, the Derg sent envoys

to Moscow, who won Soviet approval for a massive program of military aid for the Derg army (Erlich, 1981: 107; Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 24).¹⁰⁴ With Soviet help, the Derg undertook a major military buildup. The “massive airlift of [Soviet] arms” (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 48) included 400 tanks, 50-60 MiG fighters, and thousands of mortars and artillery pieces (Erlich, 1981: 107). Simultaneously, the Derg implemented conscription laws and expanded the government army to over 100,000 regular soldiers and 150,000 militia. With the aid of Russian arms and advisors, as well as Russian and Cuban troops, the Derg defeated the Somali invasion of Ogaden, which also freed up between 60,000 and 80,000 troops for redeployment to Eritrea (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 266).¹⁰⁵ At the same time, external support for the rebel combatants began to dry up, since the Soviet Union had switched sides, and since the EPLF – as a non-Muslim organization – failed to attract support from Arab states (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 59-50).

Thus, in 1978, the Derg escalated the conflict to include full-scale armored warfare. Two Soviet generals commanded Ethiopian forces during the 1978 government counteroffensive (Davidson et al., 1980: 56-57). From June to November, government forces overwhelmed the rebel defenders. ELF units attempted to hold their ground and were crushed, effectively ending the ELF’s role as a combatant in the war. EPLF forces effected a “strategic withdrawal” back to their northeastern base (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 54). After a pitched battle, government forces retook Keren from the EPLF, as well as most of the territory previously held by rebel forces (Erlich, 1981: 118). An EPLF spokesman was forced to admit in 1978 that “Soviet intervention had totally changed the ratio of forces” (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 267).

The fighting in 1978 and 1979 was costly, with more than 20,000 battle deaths estimated for the government side alone (Africa Watch, 1991: 116). However, despite initial successes, the government campaign stalled and failed to eliminate the EPLF forces holed up in their bases and strongholds:

Despite an influx of military aid from the Soviet Union and its allies after 1977, the government's counterinsurgency effort in Eritrea progressed haltingly. After initial government successes in

¹⁰⁴ The Soviet military aid was valued at over \$1 billion – more money than Ethiopia had received from 25 years of U.S. support (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 262).

¹⁰⁵ Zuljan (2000: n.p.) notes that: “Although there is some disagreement, most military observers believe that Cuba refused to participate in the operation in Eritrea because Castro considered the Eritrean conflict an internal war rather than a case of external aggression. However, the continued presence of Cuban troops in the Ogaden enabled the Mengistu regime to redeploy many of its troops to northern Ethiopia.”

retaking territory around the major towns and cities and along some of the principal roads in 1978 and 1979, the conflict ebbed and flowed on an almost yearly basis. Annual campaigns by the Ethiopian armed forces to dislodge the EPLF from positions around the northern town of Nakfa failed repeatedly and proved costly to the government. (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.)

Rebel forces returned to fighting a guerilla-style campaign, and the war settled into a period of stalemate. Casualties continued to climb. By 1980, Nelson and Kaplan estimated a total of 70,000 combat deaths for the conflict (1981: 268). A few years later, an Ethiopian government estimate that Africa Watch describes as “highly credible” put the number at around 90,000 government and 9,000 rebel battle casualties from 1975 to 1983 (Africa Watch, 1991: 122).

In January 1982, the Derg launched the largest offensive of the war – the so-called “Red Star Campaign” – with the intent of crushing the EPLF (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 24). Organized by Soviet advisors, the campaign involved 15 divisions and 100,000 soldiers. Despite this massive offensive push, battles often degenerated into trench warfare, and the government assault failed to breach the EPLF’s defensive lines (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 54-55). Government casualties were estimated at 40,000 (Africa Watch, 1991: 118). A smaller offensive the next year succeeded in breaking through the rebel lines at a few points, but was driven back after four months of fighting (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 55).

By 1984, the government army had grown to an estimated 300,000 soldiers, with 3,000 Soviet advisors, 1,000 tanks, and 90 MiGs (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 48). Around two-thirds of the army was deployed in Eritrea (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 51). As noted above, EPLF forces numbered between 40,000 and 50,000 during the same period, with about 150 captured tanks and armored vehicles. However, despite the numerical mismatch, the military balance began to swing in favor of the rebels. In January, the EPLF won an open-plain tank battle against government armor. In March, EPLF armored forces broke through the trench lines on the northeast front and moved 100 kilometers to capture an Ethiopian armored division and break the trench encirclement of the EPLF’s base area (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 55-57).¹⁰⁶ By the end of the year, EPLF forces had retaken control of most of Eritrea, excluding the eastern port of Asab, and a dozen or so garrison cities (including Asmara, Keren, and

¹⁰⁶ European observers were reportedly impressed by the rebels’ ability to conduct and win a World-War-II-style tank battle (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 57).

Mitsiwa) manned by Ethiopian troops and connected by major roads (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 13-14). The EPLF's Vice Secretary General summarized the changing situation when he said that: "For more than 6 [government] offensives, we were totally on the defensive. Now the initiative is in our hands, we are taking the offensive" (quoted in Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 135).

The Ethiopian army, meanwhile, after suffering "humiliating defeats and heavy casualties," began mining its defensive lines – a sign that it hoped to stalemate the war and had little hope of retaking lost territory (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 58, 129). Meanwhile, the Derg regime – which had been forced to cover the bill for three-fourths of Soviet military aid in recent years – was billions of dollars in debt, with defense spending accounting for 45 percent of the government budget (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 59). A massive famine that struck Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1984 and 1985 was exacerbated by the conscription of farmers into military service (Ali & Matthews, 1999: 37). Both the government and rebels had actively used food as a weapon since 1975, when government troops began interdicting food supplies to drought-stricken villages in rebel areas (Erllich, 1981: 75). Such tactics were put to increasing use during the famine, and likely caused hundreds of thousands of non-battle fatalities during this period (Africa Watch, 1991). At the end of 1985, EPLF forces controlled 90 percent of Eritrea, but the war stalemated again for several years, with neither side able to affect much change to the military balance (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.).

War termination. The war's conclusion began in 1988, when the government's position started to unravel. In February, the Derg executed the popular head of the government armies in Eritrea, which damaged morale and impaired the coordination of government forces (Negash, 1997: 166). The EPLF launched a large spring offensive and, after hard fighting in March, seized the government stronghold of Afabet. Africa Watch called the battle of Afabet the "turning point of the war," since it forced Derg forces to abandon many of their key garrisons (1991: 237). Zuljan described the chain of events:

In March 1988, the EPLF initiated one of its most successful military campaigns by striking at Ethiopian army positions on the Nakfa front north of the town of Afabet, where the Derg had established a base for a new attack against the insurgents. In two days of fighting, the Eritrean rebels annihilated three Ethiopian army divisions, killing or capturing at least 18,000 government troops and seizing large amounts of equipment, including armor and artillery. Subsequently, the town of Afabet, with its military stores, fell to the EPLF, which then threatened all remaining Ethiopian military concentrations in northern Eritrea. [...]

The March 1988 defeats of the Ethiopian army were catastrophic in terms of their magnitude and crippling in their effect on government strategy in Eritrea and Tigray. The capability of government forces in both regions collapsed as a result. [...]

Afabet's fall forced the Ethiopian army to evacuate the urban centers of Barca, Teseney, Barentu, and Akordat. The government also ordered all foreign relief workers out of Eritrea and Tigray, declared states of emergency in both regions, and redeployed troops from the Ogaden to Eritrea. The highly disciplined Eritrean forces faced much larger and better equipped Ethiopian units, but the Ethiopian troops, many of whom were teenagers, had become war weary and demoralized. (2000: n.p.)

The situation further deteriorated in May 1989, when a failed coup almost ousted Mengistu, but instead led to the execution of many of Ethiopia's remaining generals and colonels (Africa Watch, 1991: 308).

Negash writes that: "According to the assessment of military experts, after May 1989 the Ethiopian army had ceased to be a fighting army" (1997: 166).

Although the Ethiopian government still had in excess of 450,000 soldiers, poor morale, poor training, and the growing insurrection within Tigray province of Ethiopia proper prevented the army from mounting much opposition to rebel forces (Africa Watch, 1991: 6). The disappearance of Soviet support further worsened the government's position. In 1990, the EPLF captured the key Red Sea port of Mitsiwa, which left government garrisons with little hope of resupply (MacQueen, 2002: 225). Then, in May 1991, the EPLF laid siege to Asmara, where government forces surrendered on May 25, ending the war in Eritrea (Africa Watch, 1991: 253). Days later, Tigrean ethnic rebels in Ethiopia deposed the Derg and captured control of the Ethiopian state (Metz, 2005: 12).¹⁰⁷ In Eritrea, the EPLF:

[S]et up a Provisional Government of Eritrea under its leader, Issaias Afwerki. In a referendum held April 23-25, 1993, more than 98 percent of registered voters favored independence from Ethiopia. In May 1993, the Government of Eritrea was formed. (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.)

Thus, using the definition for war termination adopted in chapter one, the Ethiopian-Eritrean war terminated in 1991 with a military victory for the rebels. The outcome was a de jure partition of Ethiopia into two sovereign states, Ethiopia and Eritrea.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Zuljan (2000: n.p.) describes the sequence of events: "Using the same tactics employed by the EPLF, the TPLF [the rebel combatant in Tigray] preempted a pending Ethiopian offensive in Tigray with a series of attacks on government positions there in early March. A government attack against central Tigray failed disastrously, with four Ethiopian army divisions reportedly destroyed and most of their equipment captured. In early April, the TPLF took the town of Adigrat in northern Tigray, cutting the main road link between Addis Ababa and Eritrea."

¹⁰⁸ Eritrea was admitted to the UN in 1993.

Attempts to settle. Throughout the course of the war, combatants on both sides made some attempts to propose settlements, and numerous third parties stepped forward to attempt to mediate a solution to the conflict. However, for such a long and costly war, neither side made much effort to seriously explore the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

The most likely window for settlement was in 1974, immediately following the Derg's overthrow of Selassie. From June to November, the new Ethiopian government effectively instituted a unilateral ceasefire while the Derg solidified its control and suppressed uprisings in Ethiopia proper (Negash, 1997: 158). Firebrace and Holland wrote that the coup "brought fresh hope of a peaceful solution for Eritrea" because General Aman Andom, the initial leader of the Derg junta, was Eritrean himself and thought that a military solution to the conflict was unlikely (1985: 22). Aman suggested a political solution involving a return to federalism, which would have maintained Eritrea as part of Ethiopia but with some political autonomy (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 214; Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 22). At the same time, the U.S. tried to tie its aid to the Ethiopian government with progress towards a negotiated settlement (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 260), and Sudanese President Jaafar Numayri offered to mediate Aman's peace proposal (Erlich, 1981: 70). However, Aman and his supporters were assassinated on November 23, 1974 (known as "Bloody Sunday") by the Derg faction committed to a military solution in Eritrea and led by Mengistu (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.). Afterward, the government dropped the peace plan before negotiations even began.

In May 1976, Mengistu's regime proposed its "Nine Point Peace Plan," a document which called for political amnesty, refugee returns, and an "exchange of views" between "progressive" elements of the rebel combatants and the regime (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 22-23). The Nine Point Plan would have required Eritrea to remain within Ethiopia and contained few details about regional autonomy beyond a general statement that Ethiopia's various nationalities should have some right to self-rule within the federal structure (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 214). Rebel combatants do not appear to have seriously considered the proposal, and historians have suggested that the Derg did not offer it in good faith.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Nelson and Kaplan (1981) write that Mengistu's real goal was to split the various rebel combatants, and Firebrace and Holland (1985) suggest that the plan was merely meant to stall the rebels while the Peasant's Army

Ethiopia's third-party patrons made some attempt to mediate negotiations, but no settlement proposals emerged as a result. In 1977, Cuban President Fidel Castro offered to mediate a settlement, but his envisioned Eritrean-Ethiopian-Somali-Yemeni federation had no appeal to any of the combatants (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 23). Also in 1977, East Germany sponsored a series of peace talks between Mengistu's government and the ELF and EPLF in East Berlin, but the talks terminated in June 1978 without any negotiated settlement being proposed (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 23).¹¹⁰

In November 1980, the EPLF called for a referendum on self-determination, to be supervised by the UN and African Union, which would have allowed Eritreans to vote for independence, federation, or full union with Ethiopia (Negash, 1997: 163-164).¹¹¹ The Derg did not address the proposal, responding with a renewed military offensive instead (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 24). After that, between 1982 and 1985, "the EPLF and the Derg held a series of talks to resolve the Eritrean conflict, but to no avail" (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.). The Derg did make one more rhetorical gesture towards negotiating in the 1980s:

The most significant attempt to address the Eritrean issue was embodied in the 1987 constitution, which allowed for the possibility of regional autonomy. At its inaugural session, the National Shengo [Derg legislature] acted on this provision and endorsed a plan for regional autonomy. Among autonomous regions, the plan accorded Eritrea the greatest degree of autonomy. In particular, the plan assigned Eritrea's regional government broader powers than those assigned to the other four autonomous regions, especially in the areas of industrial development and education. Under the plan, Eritrea also was distinguished from other autonomous regions in that it was to have three administrative subregions: one in the north, made up of Akordat, Keren, and Sahel awrajas; one in the south-central part of historical Eritrea, consisting of Hamasen, Mitsiwa, Seraye, and Akale Guzay awrajas; and one encompassing the western awraja of Gashe na Setit. By creating Aseb Autonomous Region, the government in Addis Ababa appeared to be attempting to ensure itself a secure path to the Red Sea. Aseb Autonomous Region comprised Aseb awraja of historical Eritrea, along with parts of eastern Welo and Tigray regions. [...]

The EPLF [...] rejected the reorganization plan, terming it "old wine in new bottles." (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.)

The failed 1989 coup against Mengistu was also launched by officers who wanted to negotiate a political

offensive was in the final stages of preparation. Zuljan (2000) notes the contradictions inherent between the Derg's commitment to a unitary "Greater Ethiopia," Mengistu's commitment to a military solution to the Eritrea problem, and the Nine Point Plan's purported support for ethnic autonomy. As such, he suggests that the plan was merely an attempt to deal "rhetorically and symbolically" with the Eritrean rebels (Zuljan, 2000: n.p.).

¹¹⁰ Firebrace and Holland also write that, acting through Yemeni intermediaries, the Soviet Union offered the nearly-defunct ELF the right to rule an autonomous Eritrean region within Ethiopia if the ELF would agree to settle and to suppress other Eritrean rebel groups (1985: 54). There is no record of whether the ELF declined the offer for ideological reasons, or whether it simply lacked the military ability to deliver what the Soviets demanded.

¹¹¹ There is no indication that either the UN or African Union had volunteered to serve in this capacity.

solution with the rebels, but the coup's defeat ended such possibilities (Africa Watch, 1991: 308).

The Derg regime's precipitous collapse in the early 1990s derailed any final attempts to negotiate a settlement. Ali and Matthews note that "[n]umerous cease-fires were pursued during the last years of the rule of Mengistu," but they suggest that the government was not seriously interested in negotiations but rather was playing for time to regroup and rearm (1999: 42). Finally, the U.S. was active in trying to mediate a settlement in 1990 and 1991, and had scheduled a peace summit in London for May of 1991, but the summit was delayed at the request of the rebel groups, who realized that they were literally days away from victory on the battlefield (Africa Watch, 1991: 376-377).¹¹²

Testing the models against the case

I will now test the four models against this case study, comparing the models' ability to correctly predict the outcome of the war and to explain the behavior of the combatants.

Rational choice explanations. The behavior of the Ethiopian government and Eritrean rebels in this case is frequently inconsistent with the three rational choice models discussed in this thesis.

From the perspective of Mason and Fett's expected utility model, which predicts that settlement is most likely when wars are of long duration and when stalemate lowers each side's perceived probability of victory while raising the costs of continued fighting, the Ethiopian-Eritrean War should have been a prime candidate for a negotiated settlement. Lasting two decades, it was the longest war in Mason and Fett's own dataset. Furthermore, the war settled into protracted stalemates three separate times: in the early 1970s, from 1979 through 1983, and from 1985 through 1987 (Erlich, 1981: 118; Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 55). To top it off, the costs of continued fighting, in terms of both human casualties and economic losses, were high for both sides.¹¹³ Yet the war in this case did not produce a settlement; instead, both sides chose to fight on to the long and costly military conclusion.

Furthermore, Mason and Fett's model suggests that combatants should only choose to keep

¹¹² Under my definition, any settlement that might have been reached at this conference would likely have constituted a negotiated surrender rather than a peace deal, and would have been coded as a military victory anyway.

¹¹³ For example, Firebrace and Holland (1985: 26) note that the economic cost of using foreign ports would have been insignificant compared to the level of military spending that Ethiopia maintained to fight the war in Eritrea, for which one of the rationales was to avoid losing domestic access to the Red Sea.

fighting if they expect to win a military victory. Yet, in this case, combatants on neither side appeared eager to settle even after the military balance had turned strongly against them. After the huge influx of Soviet support dramatically improved the Derg's prospects for victory, and after the growing size of the government army and a series of battlefield defeats should have led the rebels to revise their estimated probability of victory sharply downward, Erlich wrote that "Eritrean victory may realistically be excluded as a future possibility" (1981: 119). However, rather than even making a serious attempt to settle, the rebels chose to keep pursuing the shrinking hope of an "eventual but costly victory" (Davidson et al., 1980: 55). The only rebel-initiated peace plan during this time was the 1980 proposal for a referendum, which – given the certainty that Eritreans would vote for independence – amounted to a request for a negotiated surrender on the part of the Derg government.

Conversely, in the late 1980s, after the tide of battle had turned strongly in favor of the rebels, the Derg made little to no attempt to explore a negotiated settlement as an alternative to fighting a losing fight. Ethiopian leaders do not seem to have been under any illusions about their ability to win the war. Mengistu himself stated publicly that "[t]he Eritrea War may continue for generations" (quoted in Davidson et al., 1980: 79). In 1988, after the government lost the battle for Afabet, Negash writes that "it became clear to the Ethiopian government for the first time that the military option was out of the question" (1997: 166). Yet, beyond pushing for ceasefires to buy time, the Derg regime made essentially no effort to settle between then and the end of the war, and actually devoted considerable energies to eliminating those political and military leaders who suggested exploring such options.

In summary, the expected utility model struggles both to explain generally why the war ended in a military victory rather than a settlement, and specifically why neither combatant appeared eager to settle when their estimated probabilities of victory were low and the costs of continuing to fight were high.

Walter's credible commitment theory correctly predicts the outcome of the war. The evidence presented in this paper suggests that, despite extensive third-party involvement in this war, no third-party

ever went beyond mediation to make a credible commitment to enforce a negotiated settlement.¹¹⁴ Thus, Walter's security dilemma model correctly predicts that the war would not be settled.¹¹⁵

However, Walter's explanatory mechanisms seem to fit this case poorly. Walter's model suggests that the barrier to settlement should have been concerns about the credibility of an agreement, and fear of defection by the other side. Instead, the barrier seems to have been the stakes in the conflict – a variable that Walter insists has no explanatory importance. Metz argues that the goals of a rebel organization define its bargaining range, and that the size of this bargaining range affects the availability of a settlement that is palatable to both sides in the conflict (2005: 150-166). In this case, the stakes appear to have been sufficiently indivisible that the bargaining range was reduced to zero.¹¹⁶ The Eritrean rebels were committed to independence and the Derg was opposed to independence, leaving little room for any kind of power-sharing agreement along the lines envisioned by Walter. For example, regarding the Derg Nine Point Plan's offer of limited autonomy within a federal system, Nelson and Kaplan note that:

Whatever the significance of the PMAC's offer, it was less than the Eritreans would accept, and the PMAC [Derg] was not prepared to go further. After the purges within the PMAC that left him the regime's undisputed leader, Mengistu and his supporters persisted in their choice of a military solution. Their own sense of the nature of the Ethiopian state and the need to control access to the Red Sea precluded genuine Eritrean autonomy, let alone independence. (1981: 214-215)

Similarly, Negash notes that the assassination of Aman in 1974, which led to the demise of his proposal to negotiate a political solution, was not a disappointment for rebel combatants:

For the EPLF but also for the ELF, the death of Aman Andom was received with relief, since it was widely believed that he would have succeeded in convincing the Eritrean people to fight the EPLF and ELF out of existence. (1997: 158)

Even though "[t]hroughout most of the 1980s, neither the EPLF nor the Ethiopian government seriously believed that the war would be resolved militarily," neither side showed any real interest in reaching a compromise (Negash, 1997: 162-163). Specifically, the EPLF refused to negotiate except on the basis of

¹¹⁴ The purported USSR promise to install the ELF as rulers of an autonomous, federal Eritrea comes the closest, but it is a bizarre deal that does not quite match Walter's definition, given that one of the key combatants – the EPLF – would certainly not have agreed to this settlement.

¹¹⁵ In an interesting post-script to this case, Eritrea and Ethiopia fought an interstate war in 1998 over a border dispute. To end that war, the U.S. and Rwanda helped both states to draft a peace agreement, which both sides accepted in June 2000 and signed in December 2000 (Prendergast, 2001: 4-6). A UN peacekeeping deployment was sent to monitor the agreement (Prendergast, 2001: 4-6; MacQueen, 2002: 226).

¹¹⁶ For a thorough general discussion of objectives, stakes, and bargaining room, see chapter six.

self-determination (which, as noted above, realistically meant independence), and the government refused to consider any solutions other than a partial reconstruction of the federal system which had previously left both parties so unsatisfied that they had engineered its collapse (Erich, 1981: 75).

Furthermore, this case cannot be dismissed by claiming that the combatants were unwilling to settle under any circumstances. In 1984, the EPLF Vice General Secretary stated that he would be willing to deal with the Ethiopian leadership: “If they [the government] are prepared to negotiate and accept our referendum proposals the whole problem would be resolved” (quoted in Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 138). Similarly, after government forces were defeated at Afabet in 1988, the next week Mengistu signed a peace agreement with Somalia – an old enemy from the war over the Ogaden – in an effort to free-up forces for the Eritrean front (Africa Watch, 1991: 240). Thus, the problem was not that the combatants were never willing to deal. The problem was that they were unwilling to divide the stakes in this war. Certainly, a negotiated solution that returned Eritrea to the status of an autonomous province within federal Ethiopia would have been fraught with credibility problems, given Eritrea’s recent history with such an arrangement, but the behavior of both combatants suggests that they did not regard such a compromise as acceptable in the first place because it did not satisfy their basic aims. Thus, while Walter’s model correctly predicts the outcome, her explanatory principle, that credibility is the “critical barrier to civil war settlement,” does not fit the decision processes of the combatants in this case.

Finally, the Ethiopian-Eritrean case has interesting ramifications for Kaufmann’s demographic separation theory. The ultimate outcome of the war was a *de jure* partition into two sovereign states with independent defensive forces, and is thus consistent with Kaufmann’s prediction that large-scale ethnic wars will only terminate with a physical separation of the warring groups. However, as with Walter’s model, Kaufmann’s specific explanatory mechanisms are less successful than his broad predictive criteria.

Eritrean ethnic groups (both religious and linguistic) tended to be relatively concentrated in separate, homogeneous areas (Nelson & Kaplan, 1980: 76-77, 110). However, the partition line in this case – the old Italian colonial border – did not follow those established demographic fronts, but rather runs directly through the middle of many ethnic groupings, particularly the Tigrinya-speaking Christians

who inhabit both Eritrea's central highlands and Ethiopia's Tigray province. Furthermore, Eritrea's eastern border – which is of particular importance, given its close proximity to the port at Asab – runs through the middle of a desert rather than along naturally-defensible terrain (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 13-14).

Proposals that would have partitioned Eritrea along more defensible or ethnically homogeneous lines were rejected. Prior to the war, a British proposal to partition Eritrea by giving the western lowlands (with their Muslim populations) to the Sudan while joining the rest of Eritrea with Ethiopia was rejected by both sides (Firebrace & Holland, 1985: 18; Metz, 2005: 87). Similarly, Eritrean rebels objected to the terms of Ethiopia's 1987 constitution, which promised regional autonomy to Eritrea but would have partitioned the eastern coastal plains to assure Ethiopian access to Asab. Zuljan writes that the rebels “expressed particular outrage over the creation of Aseb Autonomous Region, viewing it as another WPE [Derg] attempt to annex a significant part of the historical colony of Eritrea to Ethiopia” (2000: n.p.). Thus, historical boundaries seemed to carry more weight than demographic separation or defensibility.

Also, the causal mechanisms that Kaufmann posits are present only in varying degrees. Atrocities throughout the course of the war would seem sufficient to cross the threshold for ethnic hardening, and the history of antagonism between Eritrean and Ethiopian forces (stemming back to the colonial period) should have offered plentiful evidence for each side to read malign intent into the other's actions. As Kaufmann predicts, this does seem to have benefited hard-liners on both sides. Erlich writes that:

[B]etween 1962 and 1978 [...] in both the Ethiopian and Eritrean camps, the hard-liners were gaining the upper hand in the internal struggle for leadership. Those who stood for a decisive victory through the use of military force defeated those who advocated a policy of political compromise. (1981: 13)

However, identity hardening does not seem to have caused the combatants to fight to the last man to defend stretches of friendly territory, or to attempt to cleanse enemy ethnics from captured territory, as Kaufmann predicts. In particular, the EPLF's 1978 strategic withdrawal directly contradicts Kaufmann's assertion that surrendering territory is fatal for ethnic combatants. Nor are there records of Derg forces trying to cleanse Eritrea of its ethnic groups, or of any large-scale population transfers across the border.

In summary, the explanatory mechanisms and implied decision processes of the three rational choice models discussed in this paper do a poor job of accounting for this case of ethnic war termination.

Prospect theory explanation. I believe my prospect theory model explains why both the Derg government and Eritrean rebels chose to keep fighting a long, costly war rather than accept compromise solutions that would have forced them to accept certain losses.

The first variables to be measured are the reference points employed by the combatants. The stakes at issue and the evidence in this case suggest that the two sides held incompatible reference points. For the rebels, outcomes were framed around their historically-rooted aspiration level of total territorial and political control over Eritrea. The government employed a similar reference point, which had historical roots as well but also stemmed from the post-federalism status quo prior to the war.

The rebel combatants appear to have framed outcomes by using the concept of an independent, sovereign, self-governing Eritrea as a reference point. Eritrean nationalism developed as a result of Eritrea's experiences under colonial rule, and was "historically rooted in the struggle of the Eritrean people against diverse forms of alien rule" (Davidson et al., 1980: 34). In particular, the period of Italian colonialism, under which Eritrea experienced European-style government and economic development, and was governed separately (and preferentially) from the rest of Ethiopia, represents a "definitive break" that determined the aspiration levels of Eritrean rebels (Sorenson, 1993: 43). British promises of self-determination to Eritrean leaders, in exchange for assistance in expelling the Italians during World War II, may have solidified the salience of self-determination as a reference point (Davidson et al., 1980: 35).

Metz's study of ethnic rebellions finds that the prior experience of autonomy leads ethnic groups to believe that they deserve autonomy, and to be more likely to adopt separatism as a goal (2005: 18, 48). This is consistent with prospect theory and the endowment effect, and fits with this case.¹¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Metz found that Eritrean nationalists emphasized their distinct political and cultural histories when discussing their aims (2005: 87-89), lending further support to the notion that they employed the

¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Metz (2005) suggests prospect theory as a possible theoretical support for his findings, which marks one of the few previous applications of prospect theory to ethnic war.

self-determination aspiration level as their reference point for framing outcomes. As such, the presence of Ethiopian forces in Eritrea placed the rebel groups in the domain of losses. For example, the Ethiopian governor of Eritrea observed in 1965 that:¹¹⁸

Eritrea as a result of a half a century of Italian colonialism had reached a much higher state of development than the rest of the Empire. Consequently, Eritreans did not wish to be dragged down to the level of the other provinces. (Quoted in Metz, 2005: 89)

Furthermore, Metz notes that the manner in which Ethiopia dissolved Eritrean autonomy under federalism represented a loss for Eritrean nationalists:

[O]ne of the main sources of Eritrean discontent against Ethiopia was the perception that the Ethiopian government did not keep promises regarding Eritrean autonomy it had made by ratifying United Nations Resolution 390(V), and that it revoked many of the institutions of autonomy Eritrea had already possessed on the eve of federation. In the eyes of dissidents, Eritrean autonomy gained an important degree of legitimacy from the UN imprimatur. (2005: 91)

Finally, Metz quotes a U.S. diplomat assigned to Eritrea in 1962 about the sense of loss felt by Eritreans as their autonomy was eliminated:

The various derogations of Eritrea's sovereignty have given rise to much ill feeling in Eritrea. There is a wide-spread impression that Ethiopia's sole aim is to assimilate Eritrea and make it the fourteenth province of the Empire. [...] Eritreans also resent the fact that they are allowed no control over education although this was a right guaranteed to the Eritrean Government according to the constitution. Such further measures as control of the police and the stationing of numbers of Ethiopian troops in Eritrea all seem to the Eritreans as measures designed to keep a tight rein on their territory. (Quoted in Metz, 2005: 94)

Thus, Eritrean leaders were already in the domain of losses when war with Ethiopia broke out; the use of Eritrean nationalism, and historical comparisons to greater autonomy and preferential treatment under colonial rule, as mobilization tools would have discouraged renormalization of the rebels' reference point to accommodate reduced autonomy or territorial losses on the battlefield. Instead, the presence of Ethiopian forces in Eritrea represented an outstanding loss that Eritrean rebels would run risks to reverse, and any battles or territory lost would only drive them deeper into the domain of losses. Any negotiated settlement that required rebel combatants to give up portions of territory that historically belonged to

¹¹⁸ Similarly, Eritrean leaders wrote, in a letter to U.S. President Lyndon Johnson, that: "In Eritrea, a decade of British administration and a [greater] degree of industrialization rendered it more receptive to the concepts of organized labour unions, student unions and other social organizations. But with the coming of the Ethiopians they were all dissolved and forbidden" (Quoted in Metz, 2005: 90).

Eritrea, or to remain in a union with Ethiopia, would have represented further certain losses. As such, prospect theory explains why risk-seeking rebel leaders chose to keep fighting, even under dire circumstances like those after Soviet intervention and the 1978 government offensive, when settling for federalism and some autonomy would have represented a much less risky option.

For the government side, evidence suggests that both Selassie and the Derg's reference point was a "Greater Ethiopia" that included territorial and political possession of Eritrea. Erlich notes that "[t]he core regions of today's Eritrea (essentially, the Christian-populated central highlands) were undoubtedly an integral part – indeed, the cradle – of Ethiopian civilization, statehood, and history" (1981: 12). Thus, a historical analogy justifying this reference point was readily available to Ethiopian leaders. Eritrean sovereignty or independence represented losses to the Ethiopian government, which it had fought to reverse. In particular, Ethiopian elites felt that Eritrea had been "stolen by Italy" (Nelson & Kaplan, 1981: 41), and Mengistu referred to Eritrea as an "artificial Italian-made entity" (Sorenson, 1993: 42).

This reference point accurately reflected the territorial and political status quo when federalism was terminated in 1962.¹¹⁹ However, after the outbreak of war, the emergence of multiple sovereignty and the loss of territory to rebel forces placed the Ethiopian government squarely in the domain of losses. Any settlement that gave Eritrea real political autonomy and territorial control – much less self-determination or full independence – would have forced the government to acquiesce to a certain loss compared to its reference point. Thus, my model predicts that the government should have engaged in risk-seeking behavior, which appears consistent with the Derg's determination to pursue a military solution even in the face of vanishingly small odds of victory. Prospect theory is not needed to explain why, in June of 1978, after constructing a large military and benefiting from a massive influx of Soviet aid, the Derg declared that Eritrean rebels "must be fought to the last man" (Erlich, 1981: 114). But prospect theory does help explain the puzzle of why, after suffering a crippling defeat at Afabet in 1988, Mengistu publicly declared his intent to escalate the war, stating: "from now on, everything to the battlefield" (Africa Watch, 1991:

¹¹⁹ Even if prior Ethiopian reference points did not include full territorial and political control over Eritrea, the instant endowment effect suggests that they should have been renormalized to include those aspects at this time.

240). Prospect theory offers an explanation for why Mengistu chose to gamble on a fleetingly small chance of a favorable military reversal rather than even attempting to strike a deal that would offer Eritrea some autonomy but prevent the de jure partition of Ethiopia that would accompany a rebel victory.

Trapped in the domain of losses, Mengistu turned down his chance for half a loaf in favor of none at all.

Combatants' reference points in the Ethiopian-Eritrean war		
<i>Reference point dimension</i>	<i>Combatant</i>	
	Rebels (ELF / EPLF)	Government (Emperor / Derg)
Political	“Self-determination” and independence for Eritrea	Keep Eritrea within unitary, multinational “Greater Ethiopia”
Territorial	Control of territory defined by European colonial borders	Control of territory defined by imperial borders, including Eritrea

Table 5. Ethiopian case study reference points

The second and third key variables are the relative outcome variance associated with settling and fighting. Throughout the course of the war, evidence suggests that combatants perceived fighting to have greater outcome variance than settling. The two most prominent settlement proposals – the Derg’s 1976 Nine Point Plan, and the EPLF’s 1980 suggestion for an internationally-monitored referendum – would both seem to have held little perceived outcome variance for both sides. The return to watered-down federalism offered by the Nine Point Plan (and later again by the 1987 constitution) would have offered a fairly certain outcome to both combatants, given their recent experience with such a system and their lack of illusions about what a return to federalism would amount to. When EPLF leaders called the 1987 offer “old wine in new bottles,” it was because they knew this vintage of federalism meant a certain loss. Similarly, given that the weight of Eritrean public opinion was against the Derg, the EPLF’s suggestion for a referendum would have left the combatants with few perceptions of uncertainty about its outcome. A vote on the EPLF’s terms would have led to a call for independence, and a certain loss for the Derg.

By contrast, combatants had reasons to believe that fighting offered greater outcome variance. War had brought multiple swings in the balance of power, as battlefield outcomes or outside intervention tilted fortunes first one way and then the other. For example, at the time the Derg proposed the Nine Point Plan, the battlefield was certainly fluid, with the rebels making large territorial gains, seizing key towns,

and crushing the Peasant’s Army in 1976. However, only two years later, Soviet intervention and Derg victory in the Ogaden had vastly increased the firepower the government could bring to bear against the Eritrean rebels, and soon the Derg had retaken most of Eritrea and forced the rebels into retreat. Even during the stalemate from 1979 to 1983, when the EPLF was holed-up in its mountain base, battlefield outcomes ebbed and flowed. The massive 1982 Red Star Campaign ended in disaster for the Derg, but a smaller assault the following year proved that government forces could breach rebel lines.

Throughout the war, both combatants responded to military setbacks with escalation rather than concessions, which is consistent with risk-seeking in the domain of losses. Rather than submitting to settlement proposals, which were often made in bad faith, and which called for compromises that the combatants were unwilling to make, the government and the rebels chose to risk the greater outcome variance of the battlefield rather than accept the certain losses that faced them at the bargaining table.

Outcome variance in the Ethiopian-Eritrean war	
<i>Option</i>	<i>Perceived outcome variance</i>
Settle	Low outcome variance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience with federal arrangement • “Self-determination” certain to mean formal independence
Continue to fight	High outcome variance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluid battlefield situation • Salient history of victories and defeats on both sides • Wide swings in combat capabilities due to battlefield outcomes and outside intervention

Table 6. Ethiopian case study outcome variance

The final variable is whether the combatants shifted their reference points over the course of the war. In this case, while renormalization could have been triggered at several critical decision points, the evidence contains no sign that either the rebels or government shifted their reference points.

The most obvious potential renormalization point was the 1974 coup that replaced Selassie with the Derg. As noted in the previous section, there is evidence that some Derg leaders, like Aman, had revised their expectations downward and shifted their reference points to permit a compromise solution that could have included some meaningful political autonomy for Eritrea. However, the assassination of Aman and his allies by Mengistu and his faction – who clearly had not shifted their reference points, and

were still committed to a military solution – prevented any meaningful shift in the government’s reference point. Instead, the unreformed Derg escalated the war through the Peasant’s Army offensive and the successful courting of the Soviet Union as a military benefactor. The reported relief of the Eritrean combatants upon the death of Aman and his peace plan suggests that they did not renormalize either, and thus had no taste for a political settlement that granted them only some of their war aims. The failed 1989 coup against Mengistu by proponents of a political solution represents another attempt at renormalization through leadership change that was thwarted by hard-liners. Thus, this case underscores the importance of internal politics in changing or maintaining reference points; to the extent that ethnic hardening, as posited by Kaufmann, advantages hard-liners like the Derg and EPLF over moderates, it also makes renormalization less likely, since hard-liners are apt to be less likely to revise their reference points.

Nor did international involvement lead to renormalization. Soviet intervention in 1977 and 1978 changed the character of the war from an insurgent conflict into a full-scale conventional war. But, rather than causing the EPLF to revise its war aims downward, the EPLF maintained its reference point and escalated the conflict instead, until rebel forces too were fighting tank battles and engaging in trench warfare. The eventual Soviet withdrawal came too late in the war to have a major impact, but again there is no evidence in the record to suggest that it caused the Derg to shift its reference point. The suppression of the anti-Mengistu coup and the Derg’s use of ceasefires to try and buy time to rearm suggest that, even up until the very end, the Ethiopian government maintained a hard-line reference point which put settling out of the question.¹²⁰ Evidence also suggests that neither party renormalized its reference point as a result of international mediation at the 1977-1978 East Berlin peace talks, or even in response to U.S. mediation from 1990 to 1991. That none of these conferences produced a draft peace agreement suggests that the combatants’ reference points remained incompatible, and that stakes were the barrier to settlement.

Finally, no renormalization seems to have occurred even when stalemate led to stabilization of the territorial status quo between 1979 and 1983, or from 1985 to 1987. Combatants responded to

¹²⁰ Indeed, from 1989 to 1991, the Derg made a dedicated effort to kill those Ethiopian leaders who would have renormalized the regime’s reference point, a practice which contributed to the government’s collapse.

stalemates not by shifting their reference points to open the door for a negotiated peace, but by redoubling their military efforts to achieve a decisive battlefield result. The Derg launched its largest campaign of the war, the 1982 Red Star Campaign, in the middle of the first stalemate, and the EPLF ultimately broke the second stalemate by breaking the Ethiopian army's defenses and seizing Afabet and other key cities.

The fact that no renormalization occurred can be explained by my model.¹²¹ First, this conforms to the general prediction that combatants in the domain of losses will be slow to renormalize, if they do so at all. Second, the salient historical analogies that served as foundations for both combatants' reference points made them resistant to revision. Third, the sheer amount of rhetorical and political capital which the hard-line combatants invested in their reference points helps explain why they were not revised downward, and why internal factions that attempted to do so were opposed so violently.

Reference point renormalization in the Ethiopian-Eritrean war		
<i>Critical decision point</i>	<i>Combatant</i>	
	Rebels (ELF / EPLF)	Government (Emperor / Derg)
Leadership change	N / A	Failed to renormalize after 1974 coup or attempted 1989 coup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to renormalize crushed by internal politics
Outside intervention	Failed to renormalize after Soviet intervention	Failed to renormalize after Soviet withdrawal
Peace talks	No evidence of renormalization	No evidence of renormalization
Stalemate	Redoubled military efforts to break stalemate rather than renormalize	Redoubled military efforts to break stalemate rather than renormalize

Table 7. Ethiopian case study renormalization

This is a relatively simple case for my prospect theory model. Both sides had easily identifiable reference points derived from historical analogies, and the basic incompatibility of those reference points generates a simple prediction that war would leave both sides mired in the domain of losses, and thus apt to seek risks through continued fighting rather than accept sure losses through settling. Furthermore, the wide swings in battlefield outcomes over time likely reinforced both sides' perceptions of high outcome

¹²¹ Furthermore, the fact that neither combatant renormalized its reference point helps explain why, despite each combatant's changing fortunes on the battlefield, neither side demonstrated a preference reversal. Instead, both preferred fighting to settling throughout the conflict, even when the odds of victory were vanishingly slim.

variance for fighting, whereas the recent experience with federalism decreased the perceived outcome variance for the most likely terms of any settlement. Finally, the absence of any evidence that combatants renormalized their reference points is consistent with the absence of observed preference reversals.¹²²

As a counterfactual question, it could be asked how the war would have terminated differently had the combatants adopted different reference points. If both the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean rebels had aspired to more limited objectives, a compromise solution that did not force both sides to endure certain losses might have been available. If the EPLF had demanded only regional autonomy rather than independence, and if the Ethiopian government had viewed just the territorial preservation of the Ethiopian state as their objective (and thus been willing to accept meaningful Eritrean autonomy), then an agreement similar to the original terms of federation might have been struck. However, this seems far-fetched, given that both sides had recent experience living under such a federal arrangement, and both had perceived it as a loss. Furthermore, had the combatants held such limited reference points, the federal system could have survived and there would have been no cause for an ethnic war in the first place.¹²³

Comparative evaluation of models. This first-brush case study seems to support my hypotheses. First, my prospect theory model explains a case of ethnic war termination that Mason and Fett's expected utility model struggles to explain. Second, prospect theory offers an explanation for why the combatants in this war elected to keep fighting costly battles even when their odds of victory were slim. Third, while the security dilemma models correctly predict the outcome of this case, I feel my prospect theory model provides a superior explanatory account of how and why the outcome occurred. Further study is needed to refine and revise my theory, but this case suggests that a descriptive, psychological model derived from prospect theory shows promise for better explaining and understanding ethnic civil war termination.

¹²² More accurately, some Derg leaders did seem to renormalize their reference points to allow for a political settlement, but those same leaders also seemed to get assassinated by hard-liners who refused to accommodate previous losses through renormalizing, and instead preferred to keep chasing a military solution.

¹²³ An interesting question is what could have happened if Derg leadership shakeups had ousted Mengistu and allowed Ethiopian leaders to renormalize their reference points. Even if Derg leaders hospitable to the idea of a political solution had gained power, I think a successful settlement would have been unlikely, given that the EPLF showed no willingness to compromise on its demand for self-determination, and for even the more flexible Derg leaders the concept of a political solution probably did not include allowing Eritrea to secede at the ballot box.

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE STUDY OF THE BOSNIAN CIVIL WAR

In this chapter, I perform another first-brush test of my prospect theory model using the Bosnian civil war as a case study.¹²⁴ I discuss my rationale for selecting this case, after which I review the course and termination of the war. Finally, I test all four models of ethnic war termination by comparing their explanatory and predictive conclusions against the historical record.

Rationale for selecting the case

The Bosnian case is an interesting one for this thesis. First, it is an example of a relatively short, intense war which nevertheless ended in a negotiated settlement. Second, while the combatants in the war ultimately accepted a settlement brokered and guaranteed by third parties, they did so only after rejecting earlier settlement offers based on similar terms and principles. Finally, the substantial within-case variation in the combatants' decisions creates a difficult test for the models of ethnic war termination, which must generate compelling explanations for these preference reversals.

The Bosnian civil war meets the criteria specified in chapter one for an ethnic civil war. Of the three primary combatants in this ethnic separatist war, two (the Bosnian Serbs and Croats) attempted to secede from the state controlled by the third combatant (the Bosnian Muslims); thus, the prospect of living together after the war was a key concern for all combatants.¹²⁵ Second, multiple sovereignty was present to such an extent that the Serbs and Croats created functioning statelets within Bosnia. Third, battle deaths exceeded 1,000 per year from 1992 through 1995, and were distributed across combatants in a manner that satisfies the requirement for effective resistance by the weaker parties.¹²⁶ Finally, the combatants were organized primarily along ethnic lines.¹²⁷

Neither Licklider (1995), nor Mason and Fett (1996), nor Kaufmann (1996a, 1996b) include this

¹²⁴ While Bosnia's full name is Bosnia and Herzegovina, for brevity's sake I refer to it simply as Bosnia.

¹²⁵ To avoid confusion, I use this shorthand in referring to the various combatant groups: Bosnian Serbs are called "Serbs," whereas "Serbian" is used to refer to forces from Serbia proper. Similarly, "Croats" refers to Bosnian Croats, whereas "Croatians" are from Croatia proper. Finally, I use Muslims to refer to Bosnian government forces.

¹²⁶ A CIA report estimated total casualties of 156,500 civilian deaths and 81,500 battlefield deaths over the course of the war, including 45,000 Muslim combatants killed, 6,500 Croat combatants, and 30,000 Serb combatants (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 169-170).

¹²⁷ For example, by 1994, the Bosnian government army contained fewer than 5 percent Serbs (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 139).

case in their data because it terminated too recently to meet their criteria. Walter omits this case from her articles (1997, 1999) for the same reason, but includes it in her 2002 data set, where she codes it as an ethnic civil war spanning from 1992 to 1995 that terminated in a successful settlement (2002: 170).

Course of the Bosnian civil war

In this section, I examine the Bosnian war in six parts. First, I discuss the history of the conflict. Second, I identify the combatants. Third, I outline the stakes in the war. Fourth, I detail the course of the fighting. Fifth, I summarize the war’s termination. And sixth, I describe the attempts to settle the war.

History of the conflict. Modern-day Bosnia gained its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992; geographically, it sits between the two most powerful ex-Yugoslav states: Croatia and Serbia.



Figure 6. Map of Bosnia

Bosnia’s territorial frontiers have remained fairly constant for centuries (Bert, 1997: 23-24). However,

during that period, Bosnia did not exist as a state, but rather was controlled by a series of foreign nations.

The Ottoman Empire ruled Bosnia from the fifteenth century until the end of the nineteenth. When the Ottomans seized Bosnia, the local populations were Slavic and differentiated mainly between Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities (Baumann et al., 2004: 3-7). A substantial proportion of the Bosnian population converted to Islam; under Ottoman rule, the new Bosnian Muslim community enjoyed a privileged economic and political status. The remaining Catholic and Orthodox populations came to identify themselves with Catholic Croatia and Orthodox Serbia, respectively.

Austria occupied Bosnia from the Ottomans in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. Under Austrian rule, Muslim political and social dominance ended, while Bosnia's Catholic community rose in stature (Baumann et al., 2004: 7). Austrian rule also brought European government and bureaucracy to Bosnia, with seats in the Bosnian parliament apportioned by religious affiliation (Baumann et al., 2004: 9). Following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bosnia was incorporated (along with Croatia, Serbia, and other Balkan states) into Yugoslavia. However, Bosnia disappeared from 1929 to 1945 when Yugoslav King Alexander, a Serb, redrew the state's internal divisions (Baumann et al., 2004: 12). In 1938, Alexander created a large, autonomous Croatian province that included most of Bosnia.

Bosnia and neighboring areas were occupied by the Axis powers and were the scene of fierce fighting during World War II. In particular, the brutal conflict between Serbian Chetniks and Croatian Ustashi "has become a major reference point for the demonization, historical distortion, and ethnic stereotyping that is central to ethnic conflict" (Bert, 1997: 24). After World War II, Yugoslavia was reassembled under the communist regime of Josip Broz Tito. When Tito first created Yugoslavia's internal republics, both Croatia and Serbia lay claim to Bosnia, but Bosnia was instead declared its own republic with the same borders as the present-day state (Bert, 1997: 24-26). Under the Yugoslav system, ethnic groups with "national" status were granted guaranteed rights and employment opportunities; Serbs and Croats were recognized as nations from Yugoslavia's founding, but Bosnia's Muslim community was not granted this status until 1964 (Bert, 1997: 25-26). Bosnian Muslims were the only nation without an undisputed claim to be the titular ethnic group within a republic (Silber & Little, 1995: 229-330).

Following Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia began to unravel. Slovenia seceded in 1991, followed by Croatia. Whereas ethnic nations had guaranteed rights under the Yugoslav system, the status of minority ethnic groups in the newly independent republics was uncertain (Cousens & Cater, 2001: 21). War erupted in 1991 between the nationalist Croatian government and its minority Serb population, which rebelled with the assistance of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), then largely under the control of Serbia. Within the first months of fighting, Croatian Serbs and the JNA seized control of nearly a third of Croatia's territory, including large swathes along the border with Bosnia (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 46-47).

Unlike the other Yugoslav republics, Bosnia did not have a majority ethnic group. According to the last pre-war census, Muslims constituted a 44 percent plurality, followed by sizable Serb and Croat minorities of 32 and 17 percent, respectively (Bert, 1997: 146). Ethnic populations were distributed unevenly across the country, creating numerous enclaves that resembled a "leopard spot" pattern.¹²⁸ In Bosnia's first open election in 1990, voting occurred along ethnic lines, with the Muslim nationalist Party of Democratic Action (SDA) winning 34 percent of the vote, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) taking 30 percent, and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) claiming 18 percent (Bert, 1997: 31).

Alija Izetbegovic, the head of the SDA and Bosnia's first president, had campaigned on a promise to not keep Bosnia "in a mangled Yugoslavia, in other words, in a greater Serbia," should other Yugoslav republics elect to secede (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 46-47). A 1992 referendum on independence, initiated by the governing Muslim-Croat coalition, became the proximate trigger for ethnic civil war in Bosnia.

Combatants in the war. The three main combatants in this war were the Muslim Bosnian government, the Bosnian Serb separatists, and the Bosnian Croat separatists. Two outside states, Croatia and Serbia, also participated in the war to varying degrees, both by supporting the HDZ and SDS as proxies and through the direct involvement of Croatian and Serbian forces. But I treat the three Bosnian ethnic groups as the primary combatants, since they were most directly involved in the fighting.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ For a map of Bosnia's prewar ethnic distribution, see Burg & Shoup (2000: 28).

¹²⁹ In reality, the Muslim, Serb, and Croat combatants were far from unified actors. Each was an unwieldy alliance of political organizations, armed forces, militias, and even criminal gangs. Also, the control of Croatian and Serbian leaders over their Bosnian proxies was far from complete (Burg & Shoup, 2000; Silber & Little, 1995).

The SDA was founded in March 1990 and led by Izetbegovic, who became Bosnia's president after the 1990 elections (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 46). While ostensibly a multi-ethnic party, the SDA was "a political alliance of Yugoslav citizens belonging to the Muslim cultural and historical traditions" (Silber & Little, 1995: 228), and it had an "overtly Islamic and Muslim nationalist orientation" (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 47). The SDA was committed to building a strong, unitary, independent Bosnian state, and opposed ethnic secession or the creation of autonomous ethnic regions (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 108). Similarly, the SDA supported direct, one-man-one-vote elections, which would have allowed Bosnia's Muslim plurality to control the government. Following the outbreak of war, the SDA assumed essentially full control over the Bosnian state and armed forces. Muslim combatants were strongest in central Bosnia and Sarajevo, the Bihac pocket in northwest Bosnia, and urban enclaves in eastern Bosnia.

The chief strengths of Bosnia's Muslim forces were morale and sheer numbers. The Muslims had between 80,000 and 100,000 soldiers in 1993, and their ranks grew to between 220,000 and 266,000 in 1995 (United States Institute of Peace, 1995: n.p.).¹³⁰ But the Muslims were plagued by a lack of weapons, a situation which was worsened by the imposition of an international arms embargo on Bosnia. However, Muslim forces eventually benefited from arms transfers from Islamic states.¹³¹ By 1995, the United States Institute of Peace wrote that "the Bosnian forces have improved in organization, training, and general professionalism to become a good light infantry" (n.p.). Nevertheless, Muslim combatants remained at a severe disadvantage in heavy weaponry throughout the course of the war. Also, the Muslim political leadership was split by internal divisions, which hurt its performance on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. By the end of the war, the Muslim leadership was "virtually paralyzed" by differences between Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 358).¹³²

The chief Serb combatant, the SDS, was also established in 1990 and led by Radovan Karadzic

¹³⁰ The 1995 figure includes Croat forces, since the Muslims and Croats formed an alliance in 1994, which will be discussed at greater length later in this section.

¹³¹ For example, Saudi Arabia claimed to have funneled \$300 million in arms to Bosnian forces through Croatia and with at least the tacit assistance of the U.S. (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 308-309, 339).

¹³² In particular, during the negotiations over the war-terminating Dayton Accords, the Muslim delegation reversed positions so frequently that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was driven to wonder whether the Muslim factions were divided on the basic question of whether war or peace was preferable (Chollet, 2005: 162).

(Burg & Shoup, 2000: 47). General Ratko Mladic, a former JNA commander, served as the head of the Bosnian Serb army. The SDS was “opposed to any form of Bosnian independence from Yugoslavia, or to any changes in Bosnia itself that might subject the Serb minority to rule by an ethnically alien majority” (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 47). The Bosnian Serbs supported ethnic nationality as the basis for government, and insisted that Bosnia’s “constituent nations” had a right to self-rule. Serb combatants had their power base in rural eastern Bosnia, around Banja Luka in northwest Bosnia, and in the suburbs of Sarajevo.

Bosnian Serb forces benefited chiefly from a large advantage in artillery, tanks, airpower, and heavy weaponry. This nearly ten-to-one lead in equipment allowed Serb combatants to “take and hold positions without incurring significant casualties” (United States Institute of Peace, 1995: n.p.). The shared border between Serb-held eastern Bosnia and Serbia also gave the Bosnian Serbs an advantage in strategic geography. Serb personnel were estimated at 67,000 to 80,000 in 1993 and between 96,000 and 105,000 in 1995. The primary Serb weakness was low morale; desertion was common, and forces from Serbia proper showed little enthusiasm to fight for Bosnian Serbs (Burg & Shoup, 2000).

HDZ, the primary Croat combatant, was similarly founded in 1990 as a branch of Croatia’s ruling nationalist party. Burg and Shoup note that the positions of the Bosnian HDZ reflected those of its Croatian parent: the HDZ supported Bosnian independence, “[b]ut, at the same time, the party declared it would support ‘realization of the right of the Croat people to self-determination including secession’” (2000: 48). Hard-line nationalist Mate Boban served as HDZ president at the war’s outset, but shakeups within the Croat leadership were common, and the HDZ was “torn by rivalry between moderates who supported the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and extreme nationalists seeking to partition the republic and join Croat populated areas to Croatia” (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 48). Croat combatants were strongest in northern Bosnia, southern Bosnia around Mostar, and western Herzegovina (southwest Bosnia), which Burg and Shoup call the “breeding ground of Croat nationalism” (2000: 25).

Croat forces were bolstered by arms, training, and troops from the Croatian military. In March 1994, the HDZ and SDA – under intense U.S. pressure – signed an agreement to form the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and combine their forces in the fight against the Serbs (Bert, 1997: xvii). Croat-

Muslim military cooperation was far from perfect – the two combatants continued to fight each other occasionally, and relations between the groups remained so tenuous that U.S. Undersecretary of State Richard Holbrooke wrote that the Federation “existed only on paper” (1998: 61). However, following the 1994 Washington Agreement, Croat forces worked more or less in tandem with the Muslim armed forces.

Finally, both Serbia and Croatia also acted as combatants at times.¹³³ The Serbian and Croatian political leaderships were particularly important because they exercised some degree of control over the actions of their Bosnian proxies, and because Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic became active participants in negotiating a settlement to the Bosnian civil war. While Tudjman and Milosevic initially supported the actions of their Bosnian proxies, both leaders had their own agendas which did not perfectly correspond with those of the Bosnian combatants.¹³⁴ Thus, while Serbia and Croatia did not formally participate in the Bosnian war, their interests must be considered.

Issues at stake. Using Metz’s (2005: 9) categorizations, both the SDS and HDZ were separatist organizations whose primary goal was obtaining separate sovereignty for Bosnian Serbs and Croats, respectively, either through the formation of new, ethnically-pure states or through the annexation of Bosnian Serb and Croat regions into Serbia and Croatia.¹³⁵

For Bosnian Muslims, their first goal was to assure Bosnia’s independence, and thus to avoid remaining in a rump Yugoslavia dominated by Serbia (Silber & Little, 1995: 238). As the plurality ethnic group, and thus the group naturally positioned to control an independent Bosnian state, the Muslims had a stake in preserving Bosnia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty (McQueen, 2005: 55). This gave the Muslims a related stake in resisting regional autonomy or political power-sharing based on ethnicity, either of which would have reduced the scope of the Muslim-controlled central government’s authority.

¹³³ Generally, they did so by supplying men and material to the Bosnian Croat and Serb combatants, but outside forces were occasionally involved directly in the fighting.

¹³⁴ In particular, Bert writes that “Belgrade’s control of the situation in Bosnia” was “far from complete and local leaders, specifically Karadzic and Mladic, often defied Milosevic, especially in the later stages of the war” (Bert, 1997: 44). At Dayton, Tudjman and Milosevic negotiated on behalf of the Croat and Serb combatants, and the discord between Milosevic’s and the SDS’s positions was particularly pronounced. Chollet notes that, at Dayton, “it was no secret that Milosevic would sell them out [Karadzic and the Bosnian Serbs] for any deal” (2005: 163).

¹³⁵ Both the SDS and HDZ favored the dismemberment of Bosnia (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 12). Moderate elements within the HDZ would be more accurately characterized as autonomy seekers rather than secessionists, but there seems to be little question that the battlefield elements of the Croat combatants were fighting for secession.

Serb objectives were to remain in Yugoslavia, or to avoid living as a “protected minority” in Muslim-dominated Bosnia (Bert, 1997: 42). “The Serbs insisted they would not live under the religious domination of the Muslims,” which they compared to Ottoman rule (Clark, 2001: 32). Bosnia’s Serbs (and Croats, as well) questioned the existence of a Muslim ethnicity and the legitimacy of the Bosnian state, calling it an artificial entity (Bert, 1997: 23-24).¹³⁶ At stake for the Serbs was their chance to be part of a “Greater Serbia” by seceding from Bosnia and joining their holdings to those of Serbia, Montenegro, and land seized by the Croatian Serbs (Bert, 1997: 32). Failing that, Bosnian Serbs demanded their own sovereign state, which would be able to form special ties with Serbia (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 109). Thus, the stakes for the Serb combatants included both political independence and territorial control.

The stakes were similar for the Bosnian Croats. Croat hard-liners wanted to secede from Bosnia and form a union with Croatia. Moderate Croat nationalists wanted substantial autonomy within Bosnia, including control over Croat-majority territories (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 197). As with the Serbs, the issues at stake for Bosnian Croats were ethnicity as the basis of governmental authority and territorial division.

Serbia and Croatia also had stakes in the Bosnian civil war. For Milosevic, at stake was the establishment of a viable Serb entity on Bosnian territory, which would have increased Serbia’s influence in the Balkans (Silber & Little, 1995: 309). Milosevic also had an economic stake in the conflict, given that Serbia was the target of international sanctions for its involvement in the Yugoslav wars, and relief from sanctions was tied to peace in Bosnia (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 206). Tudjman’s stake was similar to Milosevic’s: a Croat entity on Bosnian territory would bolster Croatian power and be a step towards the Croatian nationalists’ dream to “unite all Croats in one country, under one flag” (Holbrooke, 1998: 162).

Thus, the stakes in this war were both political and territorial: “In Bosnia, the continued existence of the common state was the object of contention” (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 9). And, if the state was to be partitioned, what would be the territorial division between the resultant entities?¹³⁷

¹³⁶ In contrast, Bert argues that Bosnia “has had consistent approximate borders from the thirteenth century, demonstrating more durability than any territorial state or unit assembled by the Serbs or Croats” (1997: 23-24).

¹³⁷ Silber and Little describe the conflict thusly: “Serbs clung to their right to remain in Yugoslavia, Croats to leave what was left of the federation, and Muslims to sovereignty” (1995: 233).

Course of the fighting. The proximate causes of the Bosnian civil war were set in motion in 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, leaving Bosnia in a Serbia-dominated rump Yugoslavia. Izetbegovic and the SDA made good on their promise to seek independence for Bosnia, introducing a bill in the parliament to call for a national referendum. Responding to this, Karadzic told the parliament in October 1991 that the Serbs would secede if Bosnia attempted to leave Yugoslavia.¹³⁸ The Serb delegation was rebuffed, and thereafter largely withdrew from the parliament, effectively ceding control of the Bosnian government to the SDA. The SDS declared the creation of a sovereign Bosnian Serb state, the Republika Srpska (RS), in January 1992, with its capital at Pale (McQueen, 2005: 55). Serb paramilitary forces returned to Bosnia from Croatia, where they had fought on behalf of the Croatian Serbs, and the JNA began developing the RS's fledgling combat forces.

The SDS encouraged Serbs to boycott the referendum on independence, which was held on February 29. With Serbs protesting the election and both the SDA and HDZ supporting independence, the referendum passed with over 99 percent of the vote (McQueen, 2005: 55). Following the vote, irregular Serb forces began their attacks against the Muslim government and non-Serb civilians (Bert, 1997: xiv).

The war escalated rapidly in April 1992, when Serbian irregulars crossed the border into Bosnia and began seizing Muslim towns and massacring Muslim civilians (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 119). The Serbs launched a major offensive throughout eastern and northern Bosnia, seizing major towns and roads (McQueen, 2005: 55). Most of the early fighting was performed by the JNA, acting on behalf of the RS (Bert, 1997: 35). At the same time, the JNA was providing Bosnian Serb forces with weapons, training, and soldiers (Silber & Little, 1995: 248). The early Serb initiatives were designed to seize key territory and transportation networks in eastern Bosnia, giving the Serb combatants easy access to supply routes from Serbia. In northern Bosnia, the offensive was designed to open a "northern corridor" linking Serb areas in eastern Bosnia with Serb holdings around Banja Luka and Serb-held regions of Croatia. The initial wave of Serb successes left Muslim forces "defeated and demoralized" (Bert, 1997: 47).

¹³⁸ Karadzic threatened the Muslim leadership: "Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina into Hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps lead the Muslim people into annihilation, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war" (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 237).

Serb advances continued in May, particularly in the north, where Serb forces took the key towns of Brcko and Doboj, securing the northern corridor between east and west Bosnia, and between Serbia and Croatia (Silber & Little, 1995: 256). In central Bosnia, Serb forces surrounded Sarajevo and began pounding the Bosnian capital with artillery. An attempt to seize the city failed, but Serb troops maintained the artillery barrage and began a siege that would last until 1995 (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 131).¹³⁹ The shelling of a Sarajevo breadline that same month led the UN to impose economic sanctions against Serbia and to a takeover of the Sarajevo airport by UN monitoring forces (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 132).

The UN admitted Bosnia in May 1992, recognizing its independence. The JNA, now considered a foreign army, was required to withdraw from Bosnia (Bert, 1997: xv). Before doing so, Milosevic and Mladic placed Bosnian Serbs in the JNA under the control of the RS, and the JNA left its weapons in Serb hands as it withdrew. This created a regular Bosnian Serb army of some 80,000 well-armed forces (Silber & Little, 1995: 268; Baumann et al., 2004: 25). By comparison, the Muslim government army had between 35,000 and 40,000 soldiers, in addition to up to 120,000 irregulars in militias and criminal gangs, but with only small arms and essentially no heavy weapons (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 75).¹⁴⁰

An offensive by Croat and Muslim forces at the end of May rolled back a few Serb gains, but a June Serb counteroffensive erased the changes (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 133). This was typical of the early war, when Muslim forces had little ability to resist Serb advances or reclaim lost land. Croat combatants, on the other hand, armed with new supplies from Croatia, pushed the Serbs forces out of Mostar in June, marking the first real Serb defeat (Silber & Little, 1995: 326). And, in July, Boban declared the creation of an independent Croat state, called Herceg-Bosnia, in western Herzegovina, dealing a further blow to the Muslim government, which was helpless to exercise authority outside its shrinking area of control (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 66). UN monitoring forces (UNPROFOR) arrived in September, but had neither the firepower nor the mandate to have a meaningful effect on the war (Silber & Little, 1995: 288).

¹³⁹ On the same day as the attack into Sarajevo, Izetbegovic was detained by the JNA at the Sarajevo airport. While the initial intent may have been for a faction of Bosnian Muslims to stage a coup aimed at keeping Bosnia in Yugoslavia, Izetbegovic was instead traded for a trapped JNA garrison (Silber & Little, 1995: 255-268).

¹⁴⁰ The Serbs, for example, had around 300 tanks, 40 fighter jets, and 800 artillery pieces, compared to the Muslim army's handful of tanks and armored personnel carriers (Off, 2000: 203).

Throughout the fighting, numerous atrocities were committed, and while Serb combatants were the chief perpetrators, all sides engaged in violence against enemy civilians (Bert, 1997: 52-57; Burg & Shoup, 2000: 169-188). In particular, all sides employed ethnic cleansing to purify territory they seized, and to make permanent their territorial gains. An August 1992 report by the U.S. Senate estimated that ethnic cleansing in Bosnia was already nearly complete and that, particularly in the 70 percent of Bosnian territory then occupied by Serb forces, nearly all enemy ethnics had fled (Silber & Little, 1995: 277).

At the end of 1992, the picture was bleak for the Muslim government. While it held control of several major urban enclaves, including Sarajevo, the Bihac pocket in the northwest, and Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde in the east, Muslim combatants had been outclassed by Serb forces, who had achieved huge territorial gains (Silber & Little, 1995: 283). Nor, barring outside intervention, did Muslim prospects for improving their position look good. McQueen describes the result of the first year's fighting:

The Serb campaign proved effective. In a two-week period, the cities commanding the roads into Bosnia from Serbia and eastern Bosnia were taken by Serb forces. With these major towns in their possession, the Serbs went about opening up the roads connecting them, thus creating a supply network that would allow them to persist in the consolidation of territory even though they controlled only a third of the population of Bosnia. By August, Serb forces occupied almost 70 percent of Bosnian territory, a percentage of land they were to hold until Operation Deliberate Force and the Croat-Muslim offensive of September 1995. (2005: 55)

The Muslim government faced an inauspicious beginning to 1993 as well. In January, Muslim and Croat forces, which until that point had cooperated loosely, turned to fighting in central Bosnia. Croat forces tried to seize territory to improve their position should the state be divided as envisioned by the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP) then under debate (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 134-135). In particular, Croat forces lay siege to the key city of Mostar. Meanwhile, a springtime Serb offensive left the eastern Muslim enclaves cut-off and in danger of being overrun (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 135). Silber and Little write that: "Muslim central Bosnia was now surrounded on all sides by enemy forces – a landlocked island of territory, cut off from the capital Sarajevo, and from the outside world" (1995: 329-330).

Now fighting a two-front war, the Bosnian government turned to risky measures in its attempt to attract international intervention, particularly U.S. military support. Izetbegovic lobbied for an end to the arms embargo and for NATO air strikes against Serb forces. There are also several documented instances

of Muslim forces firing on their own civilians, then blaming the attacks on Serbs in an attempt to attract international sympathy (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 164-167). Events came to a head in April 1993, when a Serb offensive was on the brink of overrunning the Muslim enclave at Srebrenica. Spurning the Bosnian government's requests for air strikes, the UN instead declared a "safe area" around Srebrenica and called for the withdrawal of attacking forces (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 140). Other Muslim enclaves were later added to the list of safe areas. However, the UN waffled on providing sufficient troops to police the safe areas, which became staging grounds for Muslim raids into Serb territory (McQueen, 2005: 74-75).¹⁴¹

Renewed Serb offensives in the summer further constricted Muslim positions in eastern and central Bosnia, and threatened Sarajevo directly.¹⁴² Bert notes that, in August 1993, some Western analysts "were predicting the Serbs were on the edge of a complete victory" (1997: 47). Although the government managed to retake small amounts of territory around central Bosnia before the end of the year, Serb forces still held a large territorial advantage over the Muslims, who were trapped in central Bosnia, the Bihac pocket, and the eastern enclaves.¹⁴³ Croat forces, meanwhile, held significant territory in western Herzegovina, around Mostar in southern Bosnia, and west of Sarajevo in central Bosnia.

Burg and Shoup argue that the war was more or less stalemated during the next year (2000: 311). The UNPROFOR deployment increased to around 20,000 troops, but was still spread too thinly and was too lightly armed to police the safe zones or dampen the fighting (Clark, 2000: 32). The February shelling of a Sarajevo marketplace led NATO to demand that the Serbs place their artillery under UN supervision. Karadzic and Mladic ultimately agreed to do so when Russia offered its troops to supervise the weapons (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 145-146).¹⁴⁴ Later, in March, the Croats and Muslims signed the Washington Agreement, forming the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and allying against the Serbs. At the time, the Croatian army had around 30,000 troops in Bosnian proper (Silber & Little, 1995: 355).

¹⁴¹ Of the 34,000 troops it was initially estimated the UN would need to enforce the safe areas, only 7,000 were deployed (Silber & Little, 1995: 304).

¹⁴² For a map of the areas controlled by the combatants in June 1993, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 136), who also write that, at this stage in the fighting: "Even among the most dedicated supporters of Bosnian territorial integrity there was doubt that the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina could be saved" (2000: 270).

¹⁴³ See Burg and Shoup (2000: 144) for a map of the combatants' areas of control in September 1993.

¹⁴⁴ The shelling of the Bosnian capital stopped, but would later resume in spite of efforts to place Serb weapons under third-party control.

Spring brought a lull in the fighting, with the exception of the April effort by Serb forces to capture the Gorazde enclave, a UN safe area which sat on a key line of communication in eastern Bosnia (Silber & Little, 1995: 361). NATO responded by conducting pinprick air strikes against Serb positions. The UN blocked further strikes, but Serb forces ultimately proved either unable or unwilling to take the town.¹⁴⁵ In August, following the Bosnian Serbs' rejection of the Contact Group Peace Plan (CGPP), Milosevic largely severed his ties with the RS, promising to close the border and prevent further arms transfers (Bert, 1997: xvii; Burg & Shoup, 2000: 309). Another bad turn for the Serbs came in November, when Muslim forces launched a small offensive that made the Bosnian government's first real territorial gains since the start of the war (Bert, 1997: 48). However, a four-month ceasefire, brokered by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in December, ended the fighting for the year (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 324).¹⁴⁶

War termination. Fighting up to 1995 had resulted in a rough "stand off": the Serb position had been weakened by bad leadership, low morale, and the lack of a war-winning strategy, but at the same time "the Muslims did not seem capable of winning back on their own the territory they had lost to the Serbs" (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 185-186). In 1995, the military balance changed, and the international community became increasingly involved, putting great pressure on the combatants to settle.

The Muslims used the Carter ceasefire to improve their combat forces (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 328-329). The Croatian army was also assisted by retired U.S. generals (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 339). Fighting resumed in March, when Muslims broke the ceasefire by attacking Tuzla in central Bosnia and launching raids from the eastern safe areas (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 324). Burg and Shoup report that in April, following the new Muslim offensives, Mladic warned the RS leadership that he was pessimistic about the ability of the Serb military to win the war or to keep the territory it held (2000: 334).

The Croatian army launched a campaign in May that succeeded in retaking nearly all of the Serb-held territory in Croatia proper with almost no resistance from Serbian forces in the area (Burg & Shoup,

¹⁴⁵ At this time, air strikes were still managed under the "dual-key" system, which required both NATO and UN officials to give approval ("turn their keys") before strikes could be launched (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 146-150). Shortly after the debacle at Gorazde, NATO commanders were given wider authority to call for strikes.

¹⁴⁶ Prior to this point, the Bosnian government had refused to agree on any long-term ceasefires, and combatants had consistently broken any short-term ceasefire agreements (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 153).

2000: 328). That same month NATO also bombed Bosnian Serb ammo dumps in response to attacks against UN peacekeepers. Serb forces retaliated by taking over 400 UN personnel hostage, forcing NATO to halt the bombing (Bert, 1997: xvii-xviii). This precipitated an international crisis, as Serb combatants continued to take UN hostages during June when they launched attacks against the eastern Muslim enclaves, threatening to overrun the UN safe areas and seize Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde (McQueen, 2005: 86). In July, Serb forces under Mladic's command massacred between 5,000 and 10,000 Muslims in Srebrenica, after seizing the town without forceful UN or NATO resistance (Bert, 1997: xviii).

An August explosion in a Sarajevo marketplace, attributed to Serb artillery, served as the trigger for NATO air strikes targeted at Serb forces around Gorazde and in western Bosnia, where Federation troops were starting to advance (Bert, 1997: xviii).¹⁴⁷ Operation Deliberate Force lasted from August 30 to September 20, and while there is debate about how much the bombing degraded Serb capabilities, it did provide some air support to the developing Muslim-Croat offensive (Baumann et al., 2004: 29).

With a series of September attacks, Federation forces – particularly the Croats – began taking sizable chunks of territory from the Serbs.¹⁴⁸ Cousens and Cater note that the changing military situation on the ground in late 1995 “brought the territorial holdings of the warring parties into a remarkably close alignment with the proposed basis for negotiation,” a 51-percent/49-percent territorial split between the Federation and the RS proposed by the Contact Group (Cousens & Cater, 2001: 24). Combined, the Muslims and Croats controlled 51 percent of Bosnia. However, Croats held 28 percent of Bosnia, which was 10 percent more than they had been allotted by the Contact Group, whereas Muslims controlled only 23 percent, which left them 10 percent short (Chollet, 2005: 105). By the end of September, though, the Bosnian Serbs – purportedly with help of from Serbia – had managed to regroup in defensive positions around key towns like Banja Luka, and the Muslim-Croat offensive slowed (Chollet, 2005: 105).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Burg and Shoup (2000: 167) note that the marketplace bombing, which served as the public justification for NATO's air campaign against the Serbs, may actually have been conducted by Muslim forces.

¹⁴⁸ Holbrooke admits that he and other U.S. diplomats encouraged the Muslims and Croats to seize as much territory as possible, to improve their bargaining positions at upcoming peace talks (1998: 199).

¹⁴⁹ For maps displaying the territorial changes during 1995, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 332-333).

In October, the combatants signed a 60-day ceasefire (Bert, 1997: xviii; Chollet, 2005: 112).¹⁵⁰ The following month, Tudjman, Izetbegovic, and Milosevic met with U.S. mediators at Dayton, Ohio, where they hammered out the Dayton Peace Accords, a settlement which nominally maintained Bosnia as a single state but partitioned its territory between the Federation and the RS in a 51-49 split. Tudjman and Milosevic signed the Accords on behalf of the Bosnian Croat and Serb combatants, respectively. Following the formal ratification of the accords in Paris the next month, an implementation force (IFOR) of 60,000 NATO troops began deploying to Bosnia to interpose themselves between the combatants and monitor implementation of the accords (Bert, 1997: xviii-xix; Burg & Shoup, 2000: 377). Thus, the Bosnian civil war terminated in December 1995 in a negotiated settlement.

Despite international attempts to speed the end of the Bosnia civil war, events since the signing of the Dayton Accords – and the difficulties encountered in attempting to implement their terms – have led observers to comment that renewed war in Bosnia may be likely in the future. Burg and Shoup wrote that:

None of the Bosnian actors appears to view the Dayton agreement as a permanent, or “preferred” outcome. Each had to be compelled to accept it. None appears yet to have given up the possibility of achieving their preferred – and incompatible – outcomes by other means. (2000: 385)

Similarly, Byman and Seybolt argued in 2003 that:

Combative nationalism is far more prevalent today in Bosnia than it was before the violence that began in 1991. Communal leaders – including those who won elections overseen by the international community – use their positions to foster hatred, not reconciliation. Attempts to make Bosnia a harmonious multinational state are failing, as members of each group confiscate or pillage the homes of their rivals and murder those who resist. Many refugees have not returned home, and intercommunal institutions are weak. (49)

Given the empirical findings presented in chapter one that ethnic civil wars which terminate in negotiated settlements are the most likely to relapse into conflict, these concerns seem valid.

Attempts to settle. There were numerous attempts to negotiate a settlement to the Bosnian civil war. Over the course of the fighting, four major peace plans were proposed: the Vance-Owen Peace Plan,

¹⁵⁰ Cousens and Cater report that Muslim leaders were reluctant to accept the ceasefire, since Federation military commanders believed they could have seized all Serb holdings in western Bosnia given more time (2001: 26-27). Byman and Waxman similarly argue that Muslim and Croat battle successes, combined with NATO air strikes and economic sanctions, had pushed the Serbs to the point where defiance of the international community “might lead [the Serbs] to defeat at the hands of their enemies rather than just to further air strikes” (2002: 121). Holbrooke, in contrast, argues that Federation troops had reached their “point of maximum conquest” when the ceasefire was declared (1998: 194).

the Owen-Stoltenberg Peace Plan, the Contact Group Peace Plan, and the Dayton Peace Accords. The first three plans were rejected, while the Dayton Accords ultimately led to the war's termination.

It is noteworthy that none of the major peace plans were developed by the combatants themselves; rather, they were either conceived wholly by third parties, or were the product of third-party mediation between the Bosnian combatants.¹⁵¹ But if international peacemaking efforts were often inconsistent, peacemaking efforts between the combatants themselves were virtually nonexistent. The evidentiary record of the war contains basically no mention of any serious, good-faith efforts by the combatants themselves to develop or negotiate a peace settlement that could be acceptable to all three sides. Some bilateral negotiations did occur. Muslims and Croats concluded the federation agreement, but did so only under intense pressure from the Clinton administration. Also, Milosevic and Tudjman met in 1991, followed over the years by several other meetings between Serbian and Croatian leaders, to discuss partitioning Bosnia. Bosnian Serb and Croat leaders had a similar meeting in February 1992, before the war broke out, and several others later (Silber & Little, 1995: 242). However, no agreement came out of such discussions, and in any case none of the Serbian-Croatian proposals for the partition and annexation of Bosnia would have been acceptable to the Muslim combatants.

International mediation accelerated in August 1992, when the European Community and the UN formed the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY). The first comprehensive proposal to come out of the ICFY was the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP).¹⁵² Work on VOPP began in October 1992, the completed plan was presented in January 1993, and it was rejected by May (Bert, 1997: xvi).

The VOPP attempted to bridge the gap between the political demands of the Serbs and Croats, who wanted three sovereign ethnic entities with separate armies that were joined by, at most, a loose confederation, with those of the Muslims, who wanted a strong central state with weak, multiethnic

¹⁵¹ Both the U.S. and EU were active in this area, with European diplomats generally favoring peace proposals to partition Bosnia, which would have had the effect of freezing some Serb gains, whereas U.S. policy makers favored multiethnic power-sharing, which they perceived to be a more "just" outcome for Bosnia's Muslims (Bert, 1997: 130). Although international coordination improved over time, mediation and intervention into the Bosnian civil war were generally disorganized, and often seemed motivated more by a desire to be seen to be "doing something" than by a coherent strategy for creating an effective settlement (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 128-129).

¹⁵² The Vance-Owen plan was named after the ICFY's two co-chairs, former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Lord David Owen.

subunits (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 216-217).¹⁵³ The plan maintained a single Bosnian government but divided the state into 10 cantons – 3 with a Muslim majority, 3 with a Serb majority, 2 with a Croat majority, 1 mixed Muslim-Croat canton, and 1 joint canton around Sarajevo (McQueen, 2005: 57).¹⁵⁴ Each canton would have contained sizable minority populations, and some were not geographically contiguous (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 223-224). The VOPP also contained political terms for power-sharing and the protection of minority rights (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 217-218).

In December of 1992, NATO had ruled against sending troops to enforce VOPP, so the plan was designed for the combatants themselves to implement demilitarization (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 221). In February 1993, though, the Clinton administration agreed that the U.S. would participate in enforcing any Bosnian peace agreement that all three combatants would accept, and in May the U.S. publicly committed to furnishing between 5,000 and 20,000 troops (of the proposed 60,000-soldier NATO force) to help implement VOPP (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 233-234, 253; Silber & Little, 1995: 319).¹⁵⁵

The VOPP map was announced after the Muslims, Serbs, and Croats had a chance to submit their own proposed maps.¹⁵⁶ In their proposal, the Serbs demanded 75 percent of Bosnia, including those areas where they claimed Serbs were the majority, where Serbs would have been a majority if not for historical discrimination, and where the Serb army was in control. The Muslim government insisted on borders that diluted the Serb cantons. Croats demanded at least two cantons (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 219-223).

The final VOPP map was in accordance with the Croat demands, assigning their desired territory to the Croat cantons (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 224). Silber and Little report that the Croats “loved the plan”:

Mate Boban, the Bosnia Croat leader, could scarcely conceal his glee when he saw the map. It gave the Croats exactly what they wanted: their provinces formed large blocks of territory, joined to Croatia proper and stretching into the very heart of central Bosnia. (1995: 307)

Thus, the HDZ “signed the entire package immediately” (McQueen, 2005: 57).

¹⁵³ However, Burg and Shoup (2000: 216-217) suggest that the Croats were willing to sacrifice some trappings of sovereignty in exchange for the very favorable territorial settlement that they would have achieved.

¹⁵⁴ In reality, the “joint” Sarajevo canton would have had a solid Muslim plurality – if not majority – and the Croats would have been in an advantageous position in the mixed canton.

¹⁵⁵ Posen (1996: 107) notes that: “Without agreement among the three parties, neither the UN nor NATO had any intention of trying to force their way into the parts of Bosnia in dispute to impose a local peace.”

¹⁵⁶ For the combatants’ maps and the final VOPP map, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 219-235).

The Bosnian government first rejected the VOPP because “the powers allotted to the central government appeared so weak that the ethnic provinces would, in effect, be self-governing. They saw in it the ethnic partitioning of their country” (Silber & Little, 1995: 306-307).¹⁵⁷ The government then reversed its position and signed VOPP, not because it wanted the settlement, but because the Muslims wanted to gain international support by appearing willing to compromise, and they could safely sign VOPP because they knew the Serbs would reject the plan, placing the onus for its failure on the RS (Silber & Little, 1995: 306-307). Also, Clinton administration officials reportedly told Izetbegovic that, if he accepted VOPP and Karadzic rejected it, then the arms embargo might be lifted (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 236).

The VOPP map awarded the Serbs, who had seized more than 70 percent of Bosnian territory and who demanded 75 percent in negotiations, only 43 percent of Bosnia (Bert, 1997: 195-196). As such, VOPP called upon the Serbs to surrender nearly 40 percent of their battlefield gains, including territory that had been ethnically cleansed (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 230; Silber & Little, 1995: 309). Furthermore, the Serb cantons were non-contiguous, and the map awarded the Muslims large swaths of territory in eastern Bosnia and cut the northern corridor. The VOPP “denied the Serbs the single, unbroken land mass they had fought the war to create” (Silber & Little, 1995: 306).¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, the VOPP denied the Serb entities the right to form foreign relations with Serbia proper.

After the RS rejected the plan, Milosevic urged the Serb leaders to accept VOPP, arguing that the plan could never be implemented as written and thus cost the Serbs nothing (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 225-227).¹⁵⁹ Serbian leaders also sent a letter to Karadzic and the RS parliament, claiming that VOPP offered “an honorable peace with guarantees of your equality and freedom. The other option is an unnecessary war” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 311). At an emergency summit in Athens, which Vance dubbed

¹⁵⁷ The Muslims demanded additional territory around Brcko, the Bihac pocket, Sarajevo, and eastern Bosnia, and also wanted the central government strengthened (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 225-226). Bert also argues that U.S. diplomats first encouraged Izetbegovic to reject VOPP and hold out for a better deal (1997: 195).

¹⁵⁸ SDS leaders demanded changes in the map to make Serb cantons more contiguous and flush with the Serbian border, which would have facilitated the RS’s secession at a later time (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 239). Instead, revisions made to the map (at the insistence of the Muslims) awarded Brcko to the Muslims, completely cutting the northern corridor. Burg and Shoup write that the “decision by the co-chairs [Vance and Owen] to sever the so-called northern corridor ensured that the Bosnian Serbs would reject the plan” (2000: 235).

¹⁵⁹ Silber and Little (1995: 308) argue that UN sanctions were what split Milosevic from Karadzic; Milosevic hoped that, by supporting VOPP, he could get relief from the sanctions.

“the last chance café,” Karadzic was cornered by Milosevic and international mediators and browbeaten into accepting the VOPP, conditional on the approval of the RS parliament (Silber & Little, 1995: 313-315; Burg & Shoup, 2000: 248-249). Milosevic and other Serbian leaders appeared personally before the Pale legislature to lobby for the VOPP, but the Serb parliament still rejected the plan.¹⁶⁰ In a May 1993 Serb referendum, VOPP was defeated, with 96 percent of voters balloting against it (McQueen, 2005: 68).

The next major peace proposal, the Owen-Stoltenberg Peace Plan (OSPP), was advanced in August 1993.¹⁶¹ Negotiations had begun in July, and the plan collapsed soon after it was unveiled. In June, Serbia and Croatia had proposed a partition which created three autonomous republics, leaving the rump Muslim Bosnia with 30 percent of the territory (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 265-268). This became the basis for negotiations. Under OSPP, the three republics would have been joined in a union, but each had the right to join international organizations and offer dual citizenships, and conditions were established for the secession of a republic (Bert, 1997: 206-207). Furthermore, the Bosnian union would have no standing army: “In other words, it was a plan for tripartite partition” (Burg & Shoup: 2000: 271).

The proposed OSPP map featured a territorial division that included isolated Muslim enclaves in the east linked by thin, indefensible corridors, and a similar chokepoint where the Serb northern corridor narrowed at Brcko.¹⁶² The chief territorial sticking points were the fate of Sarajevo, which would have been administered by the UN as an open city, and the overall territorial division. The OSPP awarded 54 percent of Bosnia to the Serbs, 30 percent to the Muslims, and 16 percent to the Croats.¹⁶³ By this time, the Bosnians were willing to negotiate on partition (which will be discussed in the next section), but they balked at the OSPP map (Bert, 1997: 206-207), and Izetbegovic backed out of peace talks after U.S.

¹⁶⁰ Silber and Little (1995: 316) report a critical moment in the debate when Mladic attacked the VOPP map: “One map showed the military situation on the ground. Another depicted the demographic distribution of the Serbs. But the piece de resistance was a transparency overlay of the Vance-Owen provinces, which Mladic superimposed on the map showing the front lines. Not only would the Serbs have to hand over huge chunks of territory, but part of the Serb population would be left in isolated and vulnerable areas.”

¹⁶¹ Norwegian Ambassador Thorvald Stoltenberg had replaced Vance as a co-chair of the ICFY.

¹⁶² For the preliminary and final OSPP maps, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 272-275).

¹⁶³ Burg and Shoup write that: “The main virtue of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan lay in its effort to recognize the reality of Bosnia’s now deep ethnic and military divisions. Although the Serbs were required to give up approximately 20 percent of the territory they then held [...] the map clearly favored the Serbs in the west and the east. Drawing internal boundaries along Bosnia’s rivers [...] had long been a Serb idea. On the other hand, the Muslims were placed in a position that could only be characterized as disadvantageous in the extreme” (2000: 277).

officials suggested that NATO bombing of Serb targets might commence (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 267).¹⁶⁴

The Contact Group, which included the U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Russia, was formed in April 1994 and replaced the ICFY as the chief mediator (McQueen: 2005, 76). In May, the Group restarted negotiations on the basis of a new proposal: a 51-percent/49-percent territorial split between the Bosnian Federation (Muslims and Croats) and the RS (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 301). The Contact Group Peace Plan (CGPP), introduced in July 1994 but abandoned in September, served as the “forerunner” for the Dayton Accords (Bert, 1997: 211-212). The territorial distribution under the CGPP was similar to that of the OSPP.¹⁶⁵ Federation territory included the Bihac pocket, most of central Bosnia, and the eastern enclaves under Muslim control, while the Croats were awarded western Herzegovina and northern Bosnia between Bosanski Brod and Brcko. In percentages, this represented 33 percent of Bosnia for the Muslims, and 18 percent for the Croats. The Serbs’ 49-percent share included the remainder of eastern Bosnia and northwestern Bosnia, with the two regions connected by a corridor running past Brcko that was literally the width of a highway overpass. Sarajevo was placed under UN administration. Politically, the CGPP maintained the appearance of a single Bosnian state but granted de facto sovereignty to the RS.¹⁶⁶

Izetbegovic balked at the CGPP map, demanding 58 percent of the territory. But he nevertheless accepted the CGPP, admitting that he did so because he knew that the Serbs would torpedo the deal: “If we evaluate the Serbs will say no, then we shall say yes” (quoted in Burg & Shoup, 2000: 303-304). Izetbegovic further dismissed the CGPP as “unjust and unfair” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 378).

Milosevic, still hoping to get a peace deal made to win relief from sanctions, pleaded with the RS leadership to accept the CGPP, but Karadzic had rejected the plan even before negotiations began (Bert, 1997: 215-216). The CGPP map, which called for the Serbs to relinquish 33 percent of the territory their military held, was singled out for criticism (McQueen, 2005: 76). Karadzic professed relief upon seeing

¹⁶⁴ A modified version of the OSPP map was renegotiated aboard the HMS *Invincible* in September 1993. For the *Invincible* map, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 281). Again, the plan called for a “union of republics,” to which all three sides agreed in principle (Silber & Little, 1995: 336). The Bosnian government had insisted on access to the sea and additional land in eastern Bosnia. Yet, despite winning concessions on some of these points, the Muslims again rejected the plan (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 280-281; Silber & Little, 1995: 338-339).

¹⁶⁵ For the CGPP map, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 304).

¹⁶⁶ The CGPP was unique in that it represented the first unequivocal U.S. support for a de facto partition, and it was presented to the combatants as a “take it or leave it” offer (Bert, 1997: xvii).

the CGPP map, expressing his pleasant surprise that “[t]here won’t be a single Serb who would accept this [map]” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 376).

Several changes occurred between the failure of the CGPP and the November 1995 summit at Dayton, Ohio. First, the territorial situation on the ground changed so that the status quo resembled the 51-49 split envisioned by the CGPP.¹⁶⁷ Second, mediators cut the Bosnian Serbs out of the loop, instead attempting to deal with Milosevic.¹⁶⁸ Thus, while there were still big differences between the combatants and the combatants were still generally unwilling to compromise, the presence of Tudjman and Milosevic (who purportedly represented the Bosnian Croats and Serbs) and the U.S.’s increased willingness to put pressure of Izetbegovic changed the tenor of the negotiations (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 360).¹⁶⁹

Political issues proved to be the least contentious. Bosnia would be a union of two entities: the Federation and the RS. The Dayton Accords created strong entities joined by a weak central government in which power was shared on the basis of ethnicity; the governing structures essentially gave each ethnic group a veto at the federal level (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 366). Nor were the Federation and the RS required to disarm, merely to withdraw their forces back to their own territory. Additionally, both the Federation and the RS could establish “parallel special relationships” with Croatia and Serbia, respectively (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 356; Chollet, 2005: 79). An implementation force (IFOR) of 60,000 NATO troops, including 20,000 U.S. soldiers, would enforce the agreement. The Accords charged IFOR with policing the ceasefire and separating the combatants by making sure their militaries withdrew to behind the inter-entity border.¹⁷⁰ The U.S. also agreed to help “train and equip” the new Federation army, which was an “essential condition” for the Bosnian government to accept the Accords (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 318).

The map proved to be a trickier problem. It was agreed that the final settlement would follow the 51-49 split first proposed by the CGPP, and the U.S. delegation created a map which became the basis for

¹⁶⁷ For a map depicting the combatants’ areas of control at the time of the summit and the inter-entity border drawn at Dayton, see Burg and Shoup (2000: 365).

¹⁶⁸ Silber and Little (1995: 383) write that: “For the West, increasingly frustrated by the successive failures of all peace initiatives, ironically, Milosevic became their lynchpin for achieving peace and stability in the region.”

¹⁶⁹ U.S. General Wesley Clark also noted that Dayton “was planned as a make-or-break event: bring them all there, keep them there until it’s done” (2001: 61).

¹⁷⁰ IFOR had the ability, but not the obligation, to engage in additional missions such as assisting with elections, refugee return, and arresting war criminals (Holbrooke, 1998: 222).

negotiation.¹⁷¹ The Dayton map differed from the CGPP in that it incorporated many of the changes on the ground caused by the 1995 fighting. In particular, Muslim enclaves which had been seized by the Serbs were given to the RS, and the sections of western Bosnia seized by the Muslim-Croat offensive became part of the Federation. However, several key issues remained in contention, particularly Sarajevo, Brcko and the northern corridor, and the Muslim enclave at Gorazde (Holbrooke, 1998: 272-273).

Milosevic agreed to let the Muslims have a fairly wide corridor to Gorazde, representing the first major territorial concession in the peace process (Holbrooke, 1998: 280-281). Milosevic next conceded Sarajevo and the surrounding territory (which was occupied by Serb forces), stating that Izetbegovic had earned the right to keep Sarajevo (Holbrooke, 1998: 291). In making these concessions, Milosevic went behind the backs of the Bosnian Serb delegation, who were “essentially isolated” at Dayton (Holbrooke, 1998: 243).¹⁷² However, Milosevic balked upon discovering that his deals had dropped the RS’s share of Bosnia to 45 percent; Milosevic stood firm on the 51-49 split, claiming it was what he had promised the Serb delegation, saying: “Give me anything [...] rocks, swamps, hills – anything, so long as it gets us to 49-51” (quoted in Holbrooke, 1998: 299). Silajdzic offered Milosevic an egg-shaped piece of land in western Bosnia. However, that land was controlled by the Croats. Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic killed the deal, claiming that there was “zero point zero zero” chance Tudjman would accept it. Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak erupted similarly, telling Silajdzic: “You have given away the territory we conquered with Croatian blood” (quoted in Holbrooke, 1998: 299).¹⁷³ Tudjman demanded the Muslims make at least 25 percent of the territorial concessions required to bring the Serb share up to 49 percent.

However, when presented with the final map, the Bosnian delegation torpedoed the deal, making a new demand for control of Brcko (Holbrooke, 1998: 304-306). In response, the mediators announced that the summit would be terminated the next day if the Muslims did not accept the map. The following

¹⁷¹ Holbrooke called attempts to get the combatants themselves to draw the map “a disaster” (1998: 255).

¹⁷² Clark recalled that Bosnian Serb delegates were ignored at Dayton, and that when they made objections, mediators simply circumvented them by dealing with Milosevic and the Serbian officials (2001: 62). Holbrooke similarly writes that Milosevic had “virtually written off the Bosnian Serbs” by that time (1998: 150).

¹⁷³ This is a perfect example of the endowment effect. Even though the territory in question was worthless, the Croats did not view it as a mere bargaining chip to be conceded lightly. Rather, having fought to gain possession of those lands, they became endowments that had to be protected against loss.

morning, Tadjman and Milosevic suggested they would sign the Accords without the Muslim delegation, and Milosevic agreed to place Brcko under UN control for one year and have an arbitration panel assign the city to either the Federation or RS. Finally, the U.S. threatened to end its support for the Muslims if Izetbegovic scuttled the talks (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 366). Izetbegovic relented, accepted the arbitration plan, and signed the Accords. The following month, with a formal signing of the Dayton Accords in Paris and the deployment of IFOR to Bosnia, the Bosnian civil war terminated in a negotiated settlement.

Testing the models against the case

I will now test the four models against this case study, comparing each model's ability to predict the outcome of the war and to explain the behavior of the combatants.

Rational choice explanations. The behavior of the Bosnian combatants in this case is frequently inconsistent with the explanatory and predictive implications of the three rational choice models.

Of the three combatants, the decisions by the Croats are the most amenable to rational choice explanations. The Croats accepted all of the major peace plans. Thus, there are no preference reversals that need be accounted for. The Croats would have received high utility from settling, given that the proposed settlements awarded them most of their war aims. For example, the Croats eagerly accepted the VOPP, which awarded them nearly all their desired territory, gave them disproportionate influence and autonomy within Bosnia, and left them well-positioned for eventual union with Croatia. The decision to federate with the Muslims can be explained in similar terms.¹⁷⁴ The Bosnian Croats wound up "sharing land and power within the Federation in significant disproportion to their population" (Cousens & Cater, 2001: 43). In addition to the territory they won in the Washington Agreement and Dayton Accords, the Croats also got de facto sovereignty and the chance to form a de facto union with Croatia, thus fulfilling their political goals as well.¹⁷⁵ Thus, from an expected utility perspective, settling brought the Croats

¹⁷⁴ Burg and Shoup also note that, since the Croat areas of the Federation would be allowed to form "special relationships" with Croatia, the Muslim-Croat alliance was thus "a clear victory for Zagreb and a step in the direction of fulfilling historical Croatian territorial aspirations in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (2000: 295).

¹⁷⁵ Oliver noted that the Croat statelet within Bosnia has its own flag, institutions, and effectively its own army, since the Federation military is still divided by ethnicity (2005: 84). A 1997 OSCE report concluded that Croat territory in Bosnia was "a region that in every respect, from military and security matters to business ties, is part of Croatia" (quoted in Burg & Shoup, 2000: 377).

nearly as much utility as victory, but at a lower cost. From a security dilemma perspective, the Croats had little reason to be worried about their safety, given that their territories shared a border with Croatia, that Croatia was presumably committed to their defense, and that the Croatian army had thousands of soldiers deployed in Bosnia. Thus, the fear of defection would have been a lesser concern for the Croats, and the sucker's payoff would not have loomed so large. Similarly, the Croats were well positioned to resolve problems of demographic separation through ethnic cleansing and de facto sovereignty in Croat areas.

However, the decisions of the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs are much more at odds with rational choice predictions and explanations. Thus, I will focus on the decisions of these combatants in detail.

Mason and Fett's expected utility model has moderate predictive success in this case. Generally, Mason and Fett suggest that ethnic wars will terminate in settlements when the combatants have low perceived probabilities of victory and high costs of continued fighting. These variables are measured using the size of the government army, the duration of the war, and the presence of stalemates as proxies.

For duration, the Bosnian civil war lasted for 46 months. That places this war near the dividing line of four years, before which Mason and Fett suggest that settlement is unlikely, and after which they argue it is likely (1996: 561; Mason et al., 2005: 3). In terms of stalemates, several analysts argue that the Bosnian war reached a kind of stalemate in late 1995, just before the Dayton Accords were signed. For example, Bert writes that "no military victory could have been reached by any party without substantial outside assistance" (1997: 48).¹⁷⁶ However, the combatants' perceived probabilities of victory, not the actual facts on the ground, are the key variable in Mason and Fett's model. As noted above, Federation forces were optimistic about their prospects for military victory before the Dayton summit, so it is unclear how well Mason and Fett's model predicts the outcome in this case. Given the existence of a longer stalemate in 1994, Mason and Fett's model would suggest that a settlement should have been likely in

¹⁷⁶ Bert (1997: 228) further argues: "Given the balance of forces, it was unlikely that the war could be won by either side, and the Bosnian Serbs, abandoned by Milosevic, routed from Croatia, and pummeled by the NATO air war in Bosnia, had little option but to seek a negotiated settlement. The Croats, having regained control over most of the land they had previously held (except for Eastern Slavonia), were ready to settle at least temporarily for 'peace', and the Bosnian government, having regained much lost land (a considerable portion during the bombing), were facing a long, hard war if they chose to try and conquer all of Bosnia." However, Bert's statement that the Bosnian Serbs "had no choice but to seek a negotiated settlement" rings false, given that the Serbs ultimately had to have a settlement foisted upon them by Milosevic rather than signing it willingly.

1994, but in fact the combatants rejected the CGPP – a deal similar to the Dayton Accords – that year.¹⁷⁷

Mason and Fett’s model thus seems to do a poor job of explaining how the Muslims and Serbs chose between continuing to fight and attempting to settle. During the early stages of the war, when the Muslim government was at a severe disadvantage on the battlefield, paying heavy costs of fighting, and had little chance of military victory, the Muslim leadership chose to keep fighting rather than negotiate an acceptable settlement. The government’s complete lack of interest in the VOPP – which would have maintained a competent central state and given the Muslims a much more favorable territorial distribution than they held on the battlefield – is particularly striking. Similarly, the Serbs made few real attempts to pursue a settlement in the late stages of the war, even after their military campaign had stalled and they were beginning to lose ground. The Bosnian Serbs had “no good war-ending strategy”; all they could do was try to hold their positions and outlast the Bosnian government (United States Institute of Peace, 1995: n.p.). Mason and Fett argue that combatants will not keep fighting if they have no hope of victory. Yet the Serbs preferred fighting to settling, and had to have a negotiated peace foisted upon them by Milosevic.¹⁷⁸

Finally, there seems to be a great deal of evidence that combatants did not judge the outcomes of their choices in terms of absolute utility, but instead valued potential outcomes relative to some reference point. For example, Holbrooke expresses disbelief that the Muslim delegation almost scuttled the Dayton talks over less than one percent of Bosnia’s territory (1998: 304-306). He recounts how Christopher presented the Bosnians with a chart detailing the concessions they had received; afterwards, Christopher said he could not see how Izetbegovic could “responsibly walk away from these gains and allow his country to go back to war” (quoted in Holbrooke, 1998: 294). From a rational choice perspective, Christopher was right to state that the Bosnians had made gains at Dayton. However, from a prospect

¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the model predicts that the Muslim government should have been most willing to settle at the start of the war, when its army was smaller. Yet the Bosnian Muslims opposed settling at the start of the war. Conversely, the model predicts that the Bosnian Serbs would have been more likely to settle as the war progressed and as the size of the government army grew. In fact, though, the Bosnian Serbs did not judge settlement offers to be any more attractive as the war progressed; if anything, the VOPP received the most open hearing, while later proposals were rejected more or less out of hand.

¹⁷⁸ As Posen writes: “Bosnian Serbs were only pushed to sign the Dayton Accords by the combined military power of Croatia, the Bosnian Croats, the militarily rejuvenated Bosnian Muslims, large-scale NATO air strikes, and a diktat by their patron, Slobodan Milosevic” (1996: 83).

theory perspective, the Bosnian leaders still felt themselves to be in the domain of losses relative to their reference point – they did not frame the concessions at Dayton as gains. Thus, how combatants valued outcomes does not seem consistent with the decision process inferred by expected utility theory.

Walter's credible commitment theory generates similarly mixed results. Her singular predictive variable is the presence of credible third-party guarantees to enforce a negotiated settlement. Thus, Walter correctly predicts that the Bosnian civil war would be settled, since the Dayton agreement was backed by a very credible commitment from NATO to deploy IFOR, which at 60,000 troops was well beyond Walter's requirement of 10,000 soldiers for a strong guarantee. However, the problem is that Walter's model also predicts that the VOPP, OSPP, and CGPP should have resulted in successful settlements because they were backed by the same NATO commitment.¹⁷⁹

In fact, the seeming indifference of both the Muslim and Serb combatants to proffered third-party guarantees is striking. In rejecting settlements like the OSPP and CGPP, Bosnia's Muslim leaders turned down the chance to win back at the negotiating table what they had lost on the battlefield and to be protected by a strong third-party monitoring force. Given how desperately Izetbegovic was trying to attract international intervention on the Muslims' behalf, the fact that they consistently passed up chances to gain international protection through settling requires explanation. Conversely, although settlements like the OSPP and CGPP would have required the Bosnian Serbs to give up some of the territory they held on the battlefield, the deployment of an international monitoring force would have frozen many of their territorial gains, protecting them against attack and enshrining them in international agreements. This is particularly puzzling, given that Serbia had used UN peacekeeping forces to freeze its territorial gains in Croatia. As Burg and Shoup write:

¹⁷⁹ The VOPP is particularly telling, because the NATO guarantee was introduced in the middle of negotiations. As noted in the previous section, NATO had ruled out sending troops to enforce the plan in December 1992. Then, in March 1993, the U.S. committed to sending troops should the parties settle. Finally, in May 1993, the U.S. and NATO openly committed to enforcing the VOPP. Yet, the addition of a third-party security guarantee during negotiations did not cause any of the combatants to change their preference from fighting to settling.

A counterargument could be that, prior to the NATO bombing campaign in 1995, NATO guarantees were not credible because the alliance had not yet demonstrated any willingness to use force, particularly against the Bosnian Serbs (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 210-211). However, this counterargument seems unconvincing, given that NATO's members perceived they had significant credibility stakes tied to fulfilling their commitments in the Bosnian civil war, such as to ensure the safety of UN peacekeepers.

The UN presence allowed Serbia to retain control over territory it might have been hard put to keep if the fighting had continued, and which it appeared [...] ready to abandon in the face of international sanctions. This created a precedent that the Bosnian Serbs could seek to adopt for themselves; namely, to seize territory by force and then push for a cease-fire and a UN presence along the confrontation line in order to freeze their gains. (2000: 92)

The fact that the Bosnian Serbs chose not to use third-party guarantees to freeze their gains, and instead chose to gamble on the battlefield rather than concede some territory, cannot be explained by Walter's model. Rather than use third-parties as a tool to resolve the security dilemma, the Serbs alienated them by taking UN peacekeepers as hostages – just one example of the increasingly risky gambles that the Serbs were willing to run rather than make even small territorial concessions (Byman & Waxman, 2002: 145).

This case also argues against two of Walter's explanatory principles: that combatants who elect to negotiate will be able to strike a satisfactory bargain, and that security concerns rather than indivisible stakes will be the obstacle to peace. Instead, Burg and Shoup argue that a defining characteristic of the Bosnian war was that it was waged between combatants with "neither the inclination nor the experience to make concessions for the sake of peace" (Burg and Shoup, 2000: 191).¹⁸⁰

Furthermore, the issues which proved most intractable at the bargaining table were not related to defensible borders, guaranteed political participation, or credible commitments; rather, issues of identity and indivisible territorial demands stymied negotiations. Burg and Shoup wrote that, on many territorial issues, "including control of the northern corridor, the status of Sarajevo, and the fate of the eastern enclaves, compromise between the parties appears to have been impossible" (2000: 260).¹⁸¹ Holbrooke also noted that: "Contrary to our initial hopes, there had been no trade-offs between Dayton's political provisions and the map" (1998: 289). Nor were carrots or sticks able to get the combatants to make concessions on identity issues, particularly their demands to live in areas where their ethnic group constituted the majority, and to be governed by their co-ethnics.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ One Russian diplomat reportedly observed that the only way to get the Bosnian Serbs to concede any territory was for the Federation to take it by force (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 302). Similarly, Burg and Shoup argue that, "[b]y the beginning of 1994, if not earlier, the Muslims had lost interest in negotiations to end the war" (2000: 284).

¹⁸¹ For example, the dispute between the Serbs and Muslims over control of the eastern enclaves could not be settled at the negotiating table; instead, it was "solved" on the battlefield (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 331).

¹⁸² As one Croatian Serb responded when asked why he would go to war, when doing so would lead to death and poverty: "Yes, it is nice to live well, to have good pay, to have good clothes, a good car. However there is

Furthermore, the Dayton Accords amounted to a de facto partition – a kind of settlement which Walter assumes is not viable. And the Accords left the combatants’ armies intact instead of forcing them to disarm – a step which Walter argues is central to civil war settlement. The de facto partition provided by Dayton removed this security dilemma obstacle, contrary to Walter’s assertion that governments will never agree to a negotiated partition for security and reputational reasons.

Kaufmann’s demographic separation model performs better in predicting the outcome of this case. The Dayton Accords resulted in a de facto partition of Bosnia into Muslim, Croat, and Serb statelets, which is consistent with Kaufmann’s prediction that large-scale ethnic civil wars can only be terminated through the separation of the warring groups into ethnically homogeneous zones. However, as with the other rational choice models, the record for Kaufmann’s explanatory mechanisms is mixed.

Identity hardening did take place during the conflict, as Kaufmann predicts. Perceptions of the importance of the stakes in the conflict became heightened as the war grew increasingly brutal and as tales of atrocities spread (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 128). For example, Silber and Little note that, as the war dragged on, Muslims “no longer spoke of Serbs and Croats, but of Chetniks and Ustase” (1995: 332). Ethnic cleansing was both a cause and effect of this identity hardening: “the technique had a clear political purpose” and was “designed to render the territory ethnically pure, and to make certain, by instilling a hatred and fear that would endure, that Muslims and Serbs could never again live together” (Silber & Little, 1995: 271). The speed and determination with which these cleansing campaigns were carried out conveys the priority which combatants accorded to removing enemy populations from their lands.¹⁸³ The Dayton Accords included provisions for refugee return, which are anathema to Kaufmann’s theory, but it seems likely that the combatants agreed to such human rights provisions only while knowing that they would prove to be unenforceable (Cousens & Cater, 2001: 36-37).

something which money cannot buy. What cannot be bought is our Serb dignity. We would rather go hungry, as long as we are together with our Serb people.” (Quoted in Bert, 1997: 39).

¹⁸³ Oliver (2005: 84) notes that the Muslim-Croat Federation was founded out of “military necessity,” and was “not born out of any substantial political desire for the two ethnic groups to live together permanently.” Similarly, the presence of significant ethnic minorities within the VOPP’s proposed cantons was one of the primary reasons cited by the Bosnian Serbs for rejecting the deal (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 224).

However, the biggest problem with Kaufmann's explanatory mechanisms is his assumption that the defensibility of interethnic boundaries is of primary importance when drawing partition lines. The Bosnian civil war is replete with instances of combatants insisting on territorial demands that would leave their positions indefensible, while rejecting calls to swap sections of territory to increase the defensibility of their claims – a mechanism upon which Kaufmann relies in assuming that secure borders can be drawn.¹⁸⁴ An August 1994 Clinton administration memo suggested that, in future negotiations, American mediators would “push the parties to negotiate ‘more viable borders’ reflecting the recent changes on the ground in Bosnia, such as pressing the Bosnians to trade vulnerable areas like Gorazde for Serb-held territory” (Chollet, 2005: 43). Yet, in 1995, Holbrooke reports that while Izetbegovic admitted that the eastern enclaves could not be held, he steadfastly refused to trade them away (1998: 75). When negotiations began at Dayton, the Muslims refused to discuss giving up the vulnerable Gorazde enclave, and Izetbegovic insisted that the CGPP map – which awarded Muslims the enclaves at Srebrenica and Zepa, which had been subsequently overrun by the Serbs – serve as the basis for negotiation (Chollet, 2005: 157). Thus, defensibility seems to have been less of a priority for the Bosnian combatants than Kaufmann's model suggests, and the combatants seem to have been generally unwilling to engage in territorial trades meant to shore up the security of their regions.

Finally, Kaufmann's assumption that political sovereignty is irrelevant, that only demographic separation determines the outcomes of ethnic civil wars, seems belied by the Bosnian civil war. Demographic separation of the combatant populations was largely complete after the first months of fighting, thanks to aggressive ethnic cleansing campaigns. Yet Bosnian Serb and Croat demands for full

¹⁸⁴ For example, when talks over OSPP broke down, “differences over only 3.7 percent of territory separated the Serbs and the Bosnians, 1.7 percent in the Bihac area and 2 percent in the east of Bosnia” (Bert, 1997: 209). The OSPP map featured non-contiguous zones connected by thin, indefensible corridors, yet the main sticking points proved to be issues like control of Sarajevo and the overall fractions of territory the combatants would receive. In making territorial demands, defensibility did not appear to be the combatants' top priority, nor did they appear willing to make concessions in order to draw more secure borders, nor was indefensibility the reason that combatants rejected the proposed map. The same series of events recurred with the CGPP map, which Clark bemoaned “did not follow any clear military principles in assigning the key terrain, but instead seemed to be purely the result of political brokering” (Clark, 2001: 38). Yet, in their bargaining behavior, combatants continued to prize quantity and subjective importance of territory over its defensibility, and were unwilling to bargain away even clearly indefensible territory.

sovereignty, and Muslim resistance to those demands, remained a sticking point. That sovereignty was such an important part of the combatants' war aims also seems to suggest that Kaufmann's model treats it too lightly, and that Kuperman's modified version of Kaufmann's hypothesis (discussed in chapter two) is right to treat autonomy and sovereignty as key explanatory and predictive variables.

In summary, the explanatory mechanisms and implied decision processes of the rational choice models discussed in this paper do only a mixed job of accounting for this case of ethnic war termination.

Prospect theory explanation. I believe my prospect theory correctly explains why the combatants in the Bosnian civil war chose to keep fighting rather than agree on the first three peace plans, as well as why the combatants reversed their decisions and elected to settle at Dayton.

The first variables to be measured are the initial reference points employed by the combatants. The evidence in this case supports the notion that the combatants employed incompatible reference points at the outbreak of the war. Serbs and Croats seem to have framed outcomes around their desire for sovereign states and their territorial aspirations, whereas the Muslim government measured outcomes against its objective of maintaining the territorial and political integrity of a unitary Bosnian state.

The Bosnian government's initial reference point seems to have been a single, unitary Bosnian state without autonomous ethnic regions. This reference point had territorial and political components. It was grounded in the international recognition of Bosnia as a state, as well as the historical precedent set by Bosnia's borders within Yugoslavia. As Burg and Shoup note, to Muslims, international recognition meant that Bosnia was a sovereign state, and thus entitled to rule and defend its territory (2000: 195). Any loss of territory or political authority, such as partition or ethnic power-sharing, would have represented a loss relative to that reference point.¹⁸⁵ At a January 1992 conference, Izetbegovic "was fundamentally opposed to any division of Bosnia" (Silber & Little, 1995: 242). In April 1992, he elaborated:

[Lord Peter] Carrington [the EC peace envoy] advised me to start to negotiate to find the solution while their [Serb] forces were attacking us. I told him that it was impossible. Their demand, their objective was to destroy Bosnia as a country. (Quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 279)

¹⁸⁵ Chollet (2005: 61) notes that the Muslim government "did not want a divided state" but "was equally unenthusiastic about sharing governmental powers with its Serb enemies."

Muslims were further motivated by fear that Bosnia might be reduced to an enclave in between Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia, which would have represented a severe loss (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 15).

While this Muslim aspiration level had some international legitimacy, it was less firmly rooted in history or culture than the reference points of the other combatants. Because the Serb insurrection began just as Bosnia became independent and the Muslim government had been unable to exercise real authority within Serb areas for months before Bosnia became a state, the Muslims had no recent precedent or status quo ex ante upon which to anchor this reference point. Nor did the Muslims have any history of an autonomous or self-governing Muslim Bosnia upon which to draw; Burg and Shoup note that:

Unlike Serbia or Croatia, whose dominant ethnic groups and leaderships considered themselves as nations with natural borders embracing areas outside their existing frontiers, Bosnia-Herzegovina was first and foremost an administrative unit whose boundaries, because they persisted over time, came to gain a certain political weight. [...]

At no stage in this process of changing regimes [Bosnia's colonial history] were the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina free to choose their own destiny. (2000: 16-20)

McQueen comments similarly on the poor historical hand dealt to Muslim nationalists:

Bosnia [...] in many ways was cobbled together from its diverse ethnic mix more as a buffer zone between its more dominant neighbors Serbia and Croatia than as a political entity embodying the aspirations of a clearly defined nation. (2005: 53-54)

Thus, the reference point employed by SDA leaders was not likely to be resilient.

Bosnian Serbs had a stronger cultural foundation for the aspiration level which served as their reference point. Regardless of its historical accuracy, “the myth of pan-Serb unity remains central to Serb culture and mindset” (Oliver, 2005: 5). Furthermore, the Serbs could frame their war against the Muslim government through historical analogy to resistance against Ottoman rule. As one member of the Serb parliament remarked upon Bosnia's declaration of independence: “We are witnessing the birth of a Muslim bastard on the territory of the land of our grandfathers” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 243). Thus, it is not surprising that Bosnian Serb leaders appear to have framed outcomes relative to what they perceived to be their legitimate claims to national sovereignty and historical territory.¹⁸⁶

Politically, the Serbs demanded sovereignty and self-determination for the Serb nation, which

¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, this reference point appears to have enjoyed a high degree of mass-level support.

meant living in a Serb majority state. The minutes of an October 1991 meeting hosted by Carrington recorded the Bosnian Serb position as this: “It was essential for all Serbs to live in one state, not in a number of independent republics bound by little more than interstate relations” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 211-212). Similarly, Bosnian Serb leaders assured their Croatian Serb counterparts that:

[T]hey had no intention of allowing what they considered the Serb territories of Bosnia to leave Yugoslavia. Should Bosnia go ahead with its independence declaration, they would follow the precedent set by [Croatian Serbs] and wage a war to redraw Bosnia’s borders. (Silber & Little, 1995: 223)

Linked with this political reference point was a territorial reference point derived from the Serb version of Bosnia’s demographic history and their aspirations for the territorial holdings of a new Serb state.¹⁸⁷ Unclassified CIA maps of land claimed by Serb and Croat nationalists (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 75) show that Bosnian Serbs aspired to control essentially all of eastern Bosnia, a wide northern corridor (roughly from Brcko to Zenica), and the majority of western Bosnia (excluding the Bihac pocket). A similar map drawn by the SDS and published in a Sarajevo newspaper in March 1992 shows Serb claims in western Bosnia expanding southward and westward, to include Bihac (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 115). The northern corridor is narrower, and Brcko is allotted to the Croats. Also, in eastern Bosnia, enclaves at Srebrenica and Gorazde remain under Muslim control, but Sarajevo and its central Bosnian suburbs are added to the Serb share. Finally, a map drawn by the “interior ministry of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina” for a meeting between Karadzic and Boban in May 1992 depicted the RS as holding all of eastern Bosnia (including the Muslim enclaves), all of western Bosnia (except the Bihac pocket), a somewhat thin northern corridor (including Brcko), and Sarajevo (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 192).

All told, the Serbs wanted around 70 percent of Bosnia, of which 10 percent was disputed with the Croats and 20-30 percent was disputed with the Muslims. The sharpest areas of dispute were eastern Bosnia, Sarajevo, and the northern corridor (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 192-193). Sarajevo was important because of its symbolic value, and eastern Bosnia was logistically important because it straddled the

¹⁸⁷ Burg and Shoup caution that, “[d]espite their insistence on partition [...] the Bosnian Serbs were wary about producing maps showing precisely where and how partition should be achieved” (2000: 192). An exception was Karadzic’s plan to partition Sarajevo by constructing a wall through the middle of the city. Karadzic kept a map of the proposed wall in his office, and was legendarily eager to show it to guests (Silber & Little, 1995: 256).

Serbian border (Bert, 1997: 44-45). The northern corridor was critical because it provided the land link between Serbia, the Bosnian Serbs in western Bosnia, and areas of Croatia under Serb control.¹⁸⁸

Drawing upon similar historical and cultural justifications, the Croats aspired to carve out a Bosnian Croat entity that would have sovereignty over Croat areas and could be joined to Croatia proper (Bert, 1997: 46). Bosnian Croat leaders were publicly committed to the creation of at least a “parastate,” if not a fully independent Croat republic, in Herceg-Bosnia (Cousens & Cater, 2001: 43).¹⁸⁹ Examining the maps generated by Bosnian Croat nationalists (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 75, 114, 273) shows the Croats were primarily interested in western Herzegovina and southern Bosnia (including Mostar), northern Bosnia around Bosanski Brod and Brcko, and central Bosnia around Jajce and west of Sarajevo.

Combatants’ reference points in the Bosnian civil war		
<i>Reference point dimension</i>	<i>Combatant</i>	
	Muslims	Serbs
Political	Unitary Bosnian state without ethnic autonomy or power-sharing	Self-determination for Serb nation and creation of Serb majority state with ties to Serbia
Territorial	Territorial integrity of Bosnian within official borders	Control of territory claimed by new Serbian state
<i>Reference point dimension</i>	<i>Combatant</i>	
	Croats	
Political	Creation of sovereign Croat “parastate” with ties to Croatia	
Territorial	Control of Croat-majority territory by Herceg-Bosnia	

Table 8. Bosnian case study reference points

The second and third key variables are the relative outcome variance associated with settling and fighting. The main combatants in the Bosnian civil war would have perceived the pre-Dayton settlement offers to have low outcome variance. While certain terms within each settlement – significant minority populations in the VOPP cantons, the loosely-specified political terms of the OSPP, the indefensibility of

¹⁸⁸ As one Banja Luka Serb said of the northern corridor: “The corridor is the very air we breathe. It is our life as a nation” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 283).

¹⁸⁹ Like the Serbs, the Croats were somewhat coy about their territorial ambitions; Silber and Little note that the HDZ was “never explicit” about Herceg-Bosnia’s intended borders (1995: 326-327).

the eastern enclaves in the CGPP map, for instance – may have contributed to perceptions of increased outcome variance, the constant factor among all three settlements – the promise of a large NATO deployment to implement the agreement – would have substantially reduced the outcome variance associated with settling.¹⁹⁰ Conversely, fighting presented the combatants with greater outcome variance. The battlefield was not particularly fluid following the Serb offensives of 1992 and early 1993, which normally would contribute to a perception of low outcome variance. Similarly, the one-sided nature of the fighting to that point would also normally reduce perceived outcome variance. However, the combatants seem to have perceived the military contest to have been more fluid than it was. Even though the initial Serbian offensive was largely successful, it did not live up to the Serb leadership's April 1992 prediction of a 10-day war (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 130). Furthermore, the failure of Serb attempts to take Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves, despite their overwhelming conventional advantage, may have buoyed Muslim forces with the tyranny of small victories. Most importantly, though, the looming specter of international intervention led to high outcome variance associated with fighting. The perceived possibility that either Muslim lobbying or Serb atrocities might bring western air forces or armies into the fight on behalf of the Bosnian government would have led both the Serb and Croat rebels and the Muslim government to perceive greater outcome variance associated with electing to continue fighting rather than settling.¹⁹¹

At Dayton, however, the outcome variance for fighting and settling reversed for the Muslims and Serbs. After the Muslim-Croat offensive, the Serb military position deteriorated, as evidenced by Mladic's April 1995 assessment that his army was hard pressed to hold its ground. By November 1995, the Serbs had lost nearly a third of their land, controlled less than half of Bosnia, and were no longer in

¹⁹⁰ For the Serbs, signing on to VOPP, OSPP, or CGPP would have required them to accept some sure losses by giving up territory their military had captured and by settling for a federal union that provided them with only some of the trappings of sovereignty which they had been fighting for. At the same time, the settlements would have allowed them to freeze many of the advances they had made relative to the status quo ex ante. For the Bosnian Croats, the proposed settlements would have secured their autonomy while also assuring their control over swathes of territory which they had no assurance of being able to take by force. And, for the Muslims, the settlements would have required them to sign away large amounts of territory and governmental authority. But the plans also would have brought the international military presence that the Muslims had lobbied so desperately for, restored to the government large sections of territory which it had proved incapable of reclaiming on the battlefield, and freed the Muslims from the prospect of further losses – perhaps even military defeat – at the hands of the Serbs.

¹⁹¹ The inconsistent involvement of Croatia and Serbia proper in the Bosnian civil war would also have heightened the riskiness of continued fighting.

the territorial “driver’s seat” (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 362). This, combined with the intervention of NATO air power on behalf of the Muslims, painted a bleak military picture for the Serbs. Furthermore, given the clear evidence that Milosevic had abandoned the RS to its own devices, refusing the deal that Milosevic negotiated at Dayton would likely have meant the end of all Serbian military support for the RS, while also ensuring that western contributions to the Federation military effort would increase. Thus, for the Serbs to defy Milosevic, NATO, and the U.S. by rejecting Dayton and continuing to fight would have left them facing low outcome variance of the battlefield. The Serb army would have no chance to win back the territory it had lost, and would be nearly certain to lose more, with the only question being how much. Conversely, submitting to the settlement at Dayton offered the Serbs some chance of stemming the tide against them by establishing special ties with Serbia and withdrawing their military forces into the RS to rearm and reorganize. Thus, there was a chance that territory lost at Dayton might be recovered, whereas losses on the battlefield would almost surely be permanent.

For the Muslims, a similar reversal occurred. If the Bosnian government took the blame for scuttling the Dayton talks, the subsequent loss of NATO and U.S. support would have left Muslims with little hope of making further gains on the battlefield. The Muslims would be unlikely to lose territory to the Serbs, but their ability to recover more land would also have been limited. Conversely, the train and equip provisions of the Dayton Accords turned settling into a gamble with large outcome variance. On the one hand, international ratification of the de facto partition and third-party monitoring could freeze the territorial status quo. On the other hand, a Muslim army restocked with western arms would later have a chance to reclaim even more of the territory held by the Serbs. As Burg and Shoup write, train and equip:

[C]reat[ed] a more realistic military foundation for the continuing ambitions of the Bosnian Muslims to regain control over more of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It seems clear that it would not have happened in the absence of an agreement at Dayton. Thus, for the Muslims, the deficiencies of the Dayton agreement likely represented a necessary, if bitter, step. (366-367)

Rejecting the Dayton Accords would have left the Muslims with little choice but to accept the territorial status quo, whereas train and equip offered them a risky chance to reclaim lost land by temporarily dealing it away. Losses associated with negotiated concessions were no longer certain, but speculative.

Outcome variance in the Bosnian civil war	
<i>Option</i>	<i>Perceived outcome variance</i>
Settle (pre-Dayton)	Lower outcome variance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International guarantee to enforce agreements • Opportunity to freeze holdings through international involvement
Continue to fight (pre-Dayton)	Higher outcome variance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyranny of small victories • Possibility of international intervention into the conflict
Settle (Dayton)	Higher outcome variance (Muslims and Serbs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train and equip creates potential for new Muslim offensive • Territorial losses perhaps not irrevocable
Continue to fight (Dayton)	Lower outcome variance (Muslims and Serbs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of international alignment if settlement rejected • Rebalancing of ground forces after 1995 offensives

Table 9. Bosnian case study outcome variance

The final variable is whether the combatants shifted their reference points over the course of the war. There is evidence that both the Muslims and Croats renormalized their reference points, and that a de facto renormalization occurred for the Serbs due to Milosevic’s usurpation of their negotiating rights.

The Bosnian Muslims appear to have renormalized their reference point in the summer of 1993. Two developments occurred at that time which could have triggered renormalization. First, the political status quo in Bosnia had stabilized into a de facto partition between the Bosnian government, which was no longer able to exercise its authority beyond Muslim enclaves, and the statelets created by the Serbs and Croats, which had become de facto governments over the territory those forces held. This political stalemate was reinforced by the international mediators, who, following the collapse of the VOPP, largely abandoned attempts to maintain Bosnia as a unitary state and instead refocused negotiations on an ethnic partition.¹⁹² Given the importance of international norms as a foundation for the Muslims’ initial reference point, these developments were a clear signal to look for renormalization. Second, the prospect of U.S. ground forces intervening on behalf of the Muslims was effectively eliminated at this time. Izetbegovic had assumed that the international community – particularly the U.S. – would support Muslim efforts to

¹⁹² Along these lines, Silber and Little (1995: 331) argue that: “The fall of Srebrenica, the rejection by the Serbs of the Vance-Owen Plan, the international community’s subsequent failure to enforce the Plan, and, finally, the outbreak of the Muslim-Croat war all occurred within a few weeks in April and May 1993. Together they forced the Bosnian Government and Army to confront the new reality.”

maintain Bosnia's territorial integrity. Changes to this underlying assumption would cause the Muslims to reevaluate their war objectives and reference point. Statements of support from American officials may have discouraged the Muslims from renormalizing their reference point after they suffered initial losses from the Serb offensive.¹⁹³ However, beginning in mid-1993, American officials emphasized that they would not send U.S. troops to roll back Serb and Croat seizures of territory.¹⁹⁴ Izetbegovic stated that: "The Americans told me – we support you in everything, but do not expect that we are ready to send a single soldier and have him return in a coffin" (quoted in Burg & Shoup, 2000: 278-279).

Finally, the Muslim reference point may have been vulnerable to renormalization because it was weakly rooted in history and culture, and relied more upon outside norms for its legitimacy. Burg and Shoup note that: "The Bosnian Muslim claim to statehood and legitimate government control rested on formal diplomatic and legal foundations" (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 194). When international diplomatic support for a non-divided Bosnian began to slip, the Muslim reference point started sliding with it.

Politically, the Muslim reference point was renormalized to allow a de facto partition, so long as Bosnia remained the internationally-recognized sovereign and so long as the partition resulted in a viable Muslim state (Bert, 1997: 32). Burg and Shoup document some evidence of this change:

In a letter to Lord Owen on July 7 [1993], Izetbegovic conveyed his belief that the realities in Bosnia had now changed, implying his readiness to consider some kind of partition plan. On July 9, in an interview with Sarajevo radio, Izetbegovic noted that concessions would have to be made for the sake of peace and declared: "My intimate preoccupation is with saving the Muslim nation. [...] I am worried that the bare survival of Muslims is threatened." (2000: 269)

At the HMS *Invincible*, Izetbegovic conceded that partition "will give Muslims a Bosnian state. For the moment the idea of a multi-ethnic Bosnia is dead. Future generations can hope for such a state" (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 337). Similarly, when addressing the Bosnian parliament about the *Invincible* summit, Izetbegovic said that "it looks like we must partition" (quoted in Burg & Shoup, 2000: 278). The

¹⁹³ For example, one UN official remarked of U.S. Ambassador Madeline Albright's pro-Bosnian speeches: "If anything emboldens the Muslim government to fight on, it's things like this. They can point to that and say, See, the Americans are with us" (quoted in Burg & Shoup, 2000: 151). This is consistent with Kuperman's (2005) moral hazard theory of ethnic rebellion.

¹⁹⁴ For example, during Izetbegovic's September visit to the White House, Clinton reportedly told him four times during a short meeting that the U.S. would not send troops to Bosnia, and a similar message was delivered to Izetbegovic from a Congressional delegation (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 278-279).

Muslim leadership stressed that Bosnia had to remain a single state, but suggested that they would be willing to delegate substantial autonomy to the Serb and Croat statelets (Holbrooke, 1998: 97). As Burg and Shoup write: “In effect, Izetbegovic was willing to accept ethnic partition – at least as an interim solution – in order to secure Muslim power over a definable territory” (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 362).

The territorial aspect of the Muslim reference point was thus also renormalized downward to securing a satisfactory Muslim statelet in a partition deal. Maps generated by the Bosnian presidency help to clarify where their territorial reference point settled. A June 1993 map showed two large Muslim zones – one in the Bihac pocket, one in central and eastern Bosnia – connected by an indefensible corridor (see Burg & Shoup, 2000: 272). The map awarded Sarajevo, Mostar, all the eastern enclaves, Brcko, and Jajce to the Muslims, more than doubling the territory that Muslim armed forces held. It severed the northern corridor and reduced Serb holdings to four non-contiguous zones. Croat claims in central Bosnia were also eliminated. Similarly, in response to a January 1994 partition proposal by Milosevic and Tudjman, which would have increased the Muslim share of Bosnia to 33.5 percent, the government insisted that:

If Bosnia was to be partitioned, the Muslims demanded 40 percent of the territory of the republic, access to the sea at Neum, a linkup of the eastern enclaves, and access to the Sava River. (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 284-285)

Thus, while the new Muslim reference point included significantly reduced territorial aspirations, it still placed the government deep in the domain of losses compared to the territorial status quo.

There is also evidence that the political component of the Croat reference point underwent a small renormalization as the result of a leadership change. In February 1994, as the Muslim-Croat federation was being negotiated, Tudjman removed Boban as the head of Herceg-Bosnia and replaced him with a more moderate Croat.¹⁹⁵ This new Croat leadership appears to have employed a more modest political reference point, de facto autonomy rather than de jure independence for Bosnian Croat areas, which enabled the Croats to accept the Washington Agreement as a gain, whereas Boban had obstructed the

¹⁹⁵ Burg and Shoup (2000: 293-294) suggest that the threat to impose sanctions on Tudjman forced the Croatian President to reshuffle the leadership of his Bosnian proxies. For Tudjman, securing an autonomous Croatian statelet in Bosnia would satisfy his aspiration level. Thus, insisting on a de jure partition, which would have represented a gain, was a less compelling interest than avoiding sanctions, which would have been framed as a loss. Tudjman’s willingness to forego speculative gains rather than suffer losses is consistent with loss aversion.

negotiations, which from his reference point threatened the Croats with losses.¹⁹⁶

Unlike the other primary combatants, the Bosnian Serbs did not renormalize their reference point during the war. This is consistent with my prospect theory model, which suggests that reference points rooted in historical analogy and comparisons, which are used as rallying cries and justifications for war by combatant leaders, and which enjoy mass-level acceptance, will be highly resistant to renormalization.

Checking for evidence of renormalization at major decision points during the conflict – peace summits, proposed settlements, major changes in the level of international involvement, the military stalemate in 1994, et cetera – reveals no sign of a shift in the Serb reference point.¹⁹⁷ Indeed:

The Bosnian Serb political leadership remained surprisingly united in pressing their claims, even as the war dragged on and it became clear that the Serbs would have to settle for far less than the 70 percent they had initially controlled or seized by force. (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 194)

Prior to the Dayton conference, as the war was beginning to terminate, Mladic reportedly told Holbrooke and Milosevic, violently, that “[n]o one can be allowed to give away a meter of our sacred Serb soil” (quoted in Holbrooke, 1998: 150). Similarly, Karadzic insisted even during the last months of the war that the RS have the full trappings of sovereignty (such as control over foreign policy), demonstrating that the Serbs’ political reference point had not been revised downward (Holbrooke, 1998: 177). At Dayton, the Serb delegation objected to any settlement provisions which gave power to the central Bosnian state.

However, the Bosnian Serb reference point did undergo a de facto renormalization in late 1995, when Milosevic usurped Karadzic and Mladic as the recognized negotiator for the Serbs.¹⁹⁸ This, in effect, constituted a de facto leadership upheaval. Milosevic’s reference point was substantially less

¹⁹⁶ Burg and Shoup write: “Tudjman appeared to have abandoned the tripartite partition of Bosnia in exchange for securing the territorial integrity of Croatia and a bilateral partition of Bosnia. The Croats could accept the Bosnian (Muslim-Croat) Federation proposed by the Americans because the fighting between Muslim and Croat forces had resolved a number of the military control issues concerning western Herzegovina in favor of the Croats; because the agreement provided extensive local control for ethnic minorities within cantons, thus delaying the inevitable confrontation between Croats and Muslims over control of the mixed cantons; and because by accepting the agreement Croatia would get the United States behind partition” (2000: 293-294).

¹⁹⁷ Renormalization could have occurred at the 1993 Athens summit, when Karadzic was browbeaten into accepting the VOPP, which would have signified a major downward revision in the Serb leadership’s political and territorial reference points. However, the Serb parliament’s subsequent rejection of VOPP may be an example of the resistance of mass-level reference points to change, and Karadzic’s subsequent actions suggest that this event was an aberration and not indicative of a genuine shift in his framing of outcomes.

¹⁹⁸ In August 1995, Milosevic had obtained written assurance from RS leaders that he would be authorized to represent them in international negotiations (Holbrooke, 1998: 105-108).

ambitious than that of the Bosnian Serbs. While Milosevic may, at one point, have aspired to the creation of a “Greater Serbia,” he had revised his reference point downward prior to the outbreak of the Bosnian civil war. While Milosevic was willing to support the Serbs so long as doing so did not endanger his own goals, the Bosnian Serbs “would not be allowed to jeopardize the creation of a new Yugoslavia consisting of Serbia and Montenegro”:¹⁹⁹

While in July 1991 Milosevic and [Yugoslav President Borislav] Jovic appeared set on creating a greater Serbia, by late 1991/early 1992 Milosevic appeared more committed to the idea of a new, less extensive Yugoslavia, for emotional as well as purely pragmatic reasons. Serbs outside this new Yugoslavia would not be incorporated into this new state, but would exercise the right of self-determination in order to retain de facto independent status within Croatia and Bosnia. (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 89, 103)

Milosevic’s political and territorial reference points were more modest than those of his Bosnian counterparts. He argued that “not all Serbs can live in one state, and that Serbs in the homeland [Serbia] cannot be held hostage to those living outside Serbia” (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 90).

From a political standpoint, Milosevic seems to have used the creation of a viable Serb entity on Bosnian territory as a standard for judgment (Silber & Little, 1995: 309). Such a statelet would provide Serbia with an expanded sphere of influence and a territorial buffer against the Muslims and Croats. From a territorial perspective, Milosevic’s aspiration was for the Serb entity to control eastern Bosnia, which was strategically important given its location on the Bosnia-Serbia border (Silber & Little, 1995: 247).²⁰⁰ Later in the peace process, Milosevic also seems to have embraced the Contact Group’s 51-49 rule as his reference point for judging the overall territorial division of Bosnia (Holbrooke, 1998: 299).

This difference in reference points is evident from the different way in which Milosevic and the RS responded to the VOPP. Milosevic supported the plan and chastised the Serb parliament that they “could not afford to gamble everything they had [...] only to lose it all ‘like a drunken poker player’” (quoted in Silber & Little, 1995: 316). The provisions of the VOPP satisfied Milosevic’s reference point;

¹⁹⁹ Milosevic had already demonstrated such risk aversion in the domain of gains when he put the breaks on the Croatian Serbs’ war with Croatia: “Milosevic called a halt to the war when the Serbs, backed by the JNA, had won all they were capable of winning without an endlessly bloody and costly conflict” (Burg and Shoup, 2000: 83).

²⁰⁰ For example, during the HMS Invincible negotiations, Milosevic insisted that the Serbs control most of eastern Bosnia as a “bare minimum” for him to endorse the proposed settlement (Silber & Little, 1995: 338-339).

he was in the domain of gains, and the concessions the Bosnian Serbs would have to make represented foregone gains. For the Serbs, though, the status quo placed them in the domain of losses, and the territory and autonomy that VOPP required them to renounce represented further certain losses:

The idea of “Greater Serbia” was not one that could be satisfied by setting up semi-autonomous provinces in a multiethnic state. It required, rather, the unification of all Serbs in a unified state. From the Bosnian Serb perspective, Vance Owen might be a slight improvement from the prewar situation where they were simply a minority without autonomy, but the proposed organization of the state of Bosnia still fell well short of creating a greater Serbia. (Bert, 1997: 193)

As such, the Serbs chose to continue fighting rather than settling for VOPP, despite Milosevic’s urgings.

Reference point renormalization in the Bosnian civil war		
<i>Critical decision point</i>	<i>Combatant</i>	
	Muslims	Serbs
Leadership change	N / A	De facto renormalization after Milosevic gains control of negotiations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New political reference point of viable Serb entity • New territorial reference point of controlling Bosnia-Serbia border
Outside intervention	Renormalization after international opposition to partition ends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New political reference point of viable Muslim entity • New territorial reference point of favorable territorial division 	No evidence of renormalization
Peace talks	No evidence of renormalization	Aborted renormalization after 1993 Athens summit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undone by RS parliament
Stalemate	No evidence of renormalization	No evidence of renormalization
<i>Critical decision point</i>	<i>Combatant</i>	
	Croats	
Leadership change	Renormalization after 1994 shakeup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New political reference point of Croat autonomy 	
Outside intervention	No evidence of renormalization	
Peace talks	No evidence of renormalization	
Stalemate	No evidence of renormalization	

Table 10. Bosnian case study renormalization

Given these variable inputs, my prospect theory model of ethnic civil war termination explains the decisions of combatants in the Bosnian civil war and predicts the war's eventual outcome. As with the rational choice explanations, the behavior of the Croats is fairly straightforward from a prospect theory standpoint. The major peace plans effectively conceded to the Croats their war aims. These settlements featured territorial divisions that were consistent with Croat aspirations, and political provisions that effectively created an autonomous Croat statelet just across the border from Croatia proper. Framing these settlements relative to their reference point, Croat combatants would have found themselves in the domain of gains, and thus adopted a risk-averse orientation, leading them to select the option with lower outcome variance: settling. This accurately describes the behavior of the Croats in this case, who were the only combatants to genuinely support the early settlement plans. The renormalization of the Croat reference point in 1994 also helps account for the willingness of the Bosnian Croats to join the Federation, sacrificing some trappings of sovereignty in exchange for improved military prospects.²⁰¹

The model explains the behavior of the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs in terms of risk-seeking in the domain of losses. After the initial Serb offensive, the situation in the Bosnian civil war left both combatants in the domain of losses. For the Muslims, who judged outcomes not against the status quo but against their ex ante reference point of a unitary state with total territorial integrity, the loss of land to the Serbs was a certain loss to be recouped, not a sunk cost to be disregarded. Thus, plans like the VOPP, which offered the Muslims more territory than their armed forces currently held, were not perceived as gains; rather, they were framed as sure losses, and Izetbegovic's government chose the risk-seeking option of continuing a desperate – and, at those times, losing – war rather than ratifying those perceived losses at the bargaining table. Similarly, the Serbs, having seized 70 percent of Bosnian territory and incorporated those holdings into their reference point through the endowment effect, were also threatened with sure losses by the proposed peace deals. By requiring the Serbs to make territorial concessions, the

²⁰¹ U.S. diplomat Joseph Kruzel's observation in early 1994 that the Croats "are now, or soon will be, a status quo power in the region, delighted with what they have and willing to fight to hold on to it," is consistent with my model's depiction of the Croats as risk-averse in the domain of gains, but nevertheless still subject to endowment effects and loss aversion if their position became threatened (quoted in Chollet, 2005: 53).

peace plans triggered loss aversion and risk-seeking in the domain of losses, which explains why the Serbs chose to press their luck on the battlefield rather than settle and take advantage of third-party enforcement to freeze many of the gains they had achieved relative to the status quo ex ante. Furthermore, the political components of the peace proposals, which maintained a token central Bosnian government and denied the Serbs many of the trappings of sovereignty, also represented sure losses.

Furthermore, my model explains the successful settlement at Dayton and accounts for the related preference reversals of the combatants (who had earlier rejected similar settlement proposals) in terms of shifts in the combatants' reference points and the relative outcome variance for settling and fighting. For the Muslims, the downward revision of the political component of their reference point in 1993 meant that the de facto partition created by the Dayton Accords no longer placed them in the domain of losses. Despite the numerous territorial concessions from Milosevic, the Dayton map still left the Muslims facing losses, since it gave away areas like Srebrenica which were still included in the Muslims' more limited territorial reference point. However, from a territorial standpoint, the changing military balance and the inclusion of train and equip in the Dayton Accords reversed the outcome variance associated with fighting and settling, such that accepting the Accords became a risk-seeking strategy for the Muslims, who took a long-term gamble to reclaim lost lands they would have been hard-pressed to win at that time. Thus, the Muslim choice to settle at Dayton is explained as a joint product of renormalization of their political reference point, and risk-seeking in the domain of losses for their territorial stakes.

Serb intransigence was circumvented at Dayton because the RS leadership, which had not shifted its reference point, was displaced by Milosevic, whose more modest reference point opened bargaining room where none had existed previously. This quasi leadership change amounted to a de facto renormalization of the Serb position, with both the political and territorial components of their reference point revised sharply downward. Milosevic was able to make concessions – giving the Muslims a corridor to Gorazde, giving away Sarajevo, and agreeing to international arbitration on Breko – which the Serbs would have framed as catastrophic losses, but which Milosevic could regard merely as foregone gains. Milosevic was thus able to negotiate unencumbered by loss aversion, endowment effects, and risk-

seeking in the domain of losses, and was able to propose a deal that the Federation could (grudgingly) accept and that would “break the backs” of the Bosnian Serbs, who had become an impediment to him (Chollet, 2005: 171). The Pale government was horrified upon learning of the concessions that Milosevic had made: Burg and Shoup report that the Serbs went “berserk” after reading the Accords (2000: 367), and Milosevic himself joked that the RS leaders had fallen into a “coma” after seeing the map (quoted in Holbrooke, 1998: 310). However, they had little choice but to accept the *fait accompli* which Milosevic thrust upon them. The Serbs’ position had deteriorated to the point where they could not defy the U.S., NATO, and their former patron by scuttling the Accords because it was further fighting that presented them with the prospect of sure losses, whereas Dayton offered them some chance of stemming the tide.

Comparative evaluation of models. This case study complements the findings of the earlier case and again supports my hypothesis that prospect theory can be usefully applied to ethnic war termination.

The Bosnian war presents a more complex test of my proposed model than the Ethiopian case, given the increased number of combatants, the additional complexities created by outside mediation and intervention, and the renormalization of the combatants’ reference points over the course of the war. But once again a prospect theory approach explains the combatants’ decision processes and predicts their resultant choices with greater effectiveness than the rational choice models. Mason and Fett’s expected utility model struggles to explain why the Muslims and Serbs scuttled peace deals which would have provided them with substantial utility gains compared to the status quo, even at times when the costs of continued fighting were high and their prospects for victory low. Walter’s model correctly predicts a settlement at Dayton, but cannot explain why settlement did not occur earlier when third-party guarantees were also available. Also, security issues and non-credible commitments do not seem to have been the barrier to settlement; rather, the combatants were unable to compromise on the stakes in the conflict. Finally, Kaufmann’s demographic separation model correctly predicts that partition was the ultimate outcome, but seems to overstate the importance of defensibility to the combatants, while understating the impact of political sovereignty. I believe that my model provides plausible and compelling explanations for these events without having to resort to dismissing the combatants’ behaviors as irrational.

CHAPTER SIX: PRESCRIPTIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION

In this chapter, I review the four models of ethnic war termination – Mason and Fett’s expected utility theory, Walter’s credible commitment theory, Kaufmann’s demographic separation theory, and my psychological theory – and assess their prescriptive implications for international efforts to shorten ethnic civil wars through humanitarian military intervention. I first summarize the general arguments in favor of intervention and develop a typology of intervention strategies. Next, I assess each rational choice model’s prescriptive conclusions, highlighting pitfalls for interveners if my prospect theory model of ethnic war termination is correct. Finally, I draw implications for intervention from prospect theory. I conclude that, if ethnic combatants behave in accordance with prospect theory, the outlook for humanitarian intervention into ethnic civil wars is more pessimistic than the rational choice models suggest.

Humanitarian intervention and ethnic war

Two-thirds of worldwide violent conflicts are ethnic in nature, and ethnic civil wars erupt at twice the rate of ideological civil wars and four times the rate of interstate wars (Toft, 2003: 3). Given the prevalence of ethnic civil war, and the long duration of civil wars in general, questions about how and why such wars ultimately terminate are of keen importance for policy makers.

Given that reducing violent conflict and ameliorating human suffering are generally regarded as desirable ends, scholars and policy makers have increasingly advocated humanitarian intervention into ethnic civil wars as a means to these ends.²⁰² Such intervention may take diplomatic or economic forms, but increasingly it includes a military component as well. While a lively debate exists between proponents and opponents of humanitarian intervention into ethnic civil wars, the practice of such intervention gained traction within the international community following the Cold War (Mason et al., 2005: 5).²⁰³

²⁰² I use “humanitarian intervention” to refer to intervention into civil war by a third party, for which the desire to save lives is the main stated objective. Thus, U.S. entry into the Vietnam War would not be considered humanitarian intervention, whereas the U.S. mission to Somalia in the early 1990s would fall under this heading.

²⁰³ For a general defense of humanitarian intervention, see Solarz and O’Hanlon (1997) or Mueller (2000). Solarz and O’Hanlon, for example, suggest that outside powers have a moral obligation to intervene militarily in civil wars when doing so could prevent great loss of life at a modest risk to the intervening forces (1997: 4). On the opposite side of the debate, Luttwak (1999) makes a humanitarian argument against intervention, suggesting that such operations often increase or perpetuate the suffering they are meant to alleviate.

While some interventions are designed to prevent the outbreak of ethnic civil wars, Mason et al. (2005) suggest that shortening the duration of ongoing wars may be a more practicable and effective goal.²⁰⁴ Writing for the APSA Task Force on Political Violence and Terrorism, Mason et al. note that the international community has moved in this direction as well:

Duration is also one feature of civil wars that is most amenable to influence by external actors. Indeed, it is safe to say that the international community can have a greater effect on the amount of conflict in the international system – the number of wars on-going at any given time and the cumulative destructiveness of those wars – by taking steps to shorten existing wars than by trying to develop early warning systems to prevent civil wars from breaking out in the first place. [...]

Once a civil war is underway [...] there are strategies that the international community and its member states – individually or in multi-national coalitions – can employ to shorten the war and thereby reduce its cumulative destructiveness. [...] Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, the international community has employed the more aggressive “peacemaking” operations, whereby combat troops from major powers intervene in a civil war to compel the warring parties to stop fighting. By forcing the combatants to put down their weapons, peacemaking operations make it possible for the UN to broker a more permanent peace settlement. (2005: 5)

Mason et al. argue that such intervention has emerged as “the primary means to bring to an end civil wars that otherwise would have dragged on interminably” (2005: 5). Similarly, Byman and Seybolt describe the international community’s “current approach” to ethnic war as “intervene[ing] militarily to halt the fighting and preserve peace for a short period of time while diplomats forge a political settlement and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) carry out humanitarian work” (2003: 35).

Causes for concern. The rational choice models reviewed in this thesis are of particular importance because they come with prescriptive recommendations for policy makers contemplating humanitarian military intervention into ethnic civil wars. However, these three models run headlong into the problem that, as Hastie and Dawes put it, “[b]oth the economists’ paradoxes and the psychologists’ experiments have repeatedly shown that subjective expected utility theory is not a valid descriptive theory of human behavior” (2001: 289). The psychological theory of ethnic war termination I presented in this thesis, and the case studies I use to test the explanatory and predictive mechanisms of that theory, provide suggestive first-brush evidence that the implied decision processes and causal mechanisms posited by

²⁰⁴ Preventative interventions are hobbled by the difficult intelligence problem of predicting where ethnic civil wars will erupt ahead of time, and the related obstacle of convincing outside powers to commit scarce resources to addressing a conflict that hasn’t yet grabbed the headlines.

these rational choice theories do not correctly describe the behavior of ethnic combatants. If this is the case, then it should be asked whether the prescriptive implications drawn from such rational choice theories are fully valid, or whether they might provide interveners with poor or even counterproductive advice. If, in fact, ethnic war combatants behave in accordance with the descriptive principles of prospect theory rather than the normative rules of rational choice, then they may not respond to intervention as rational choice models assume they should (Butts, 2006). Rather than settling their differences, combatants may escalate their fighting, both against each other and the intervention force.

In particular, my prospect theory model suggests that the intervention strategies prescribed by rational choice theories seek to influence the wrong aspects of a combatant's choice between settling and fighting. Rational choice theories assume that combatants are willing to settle, provided that the payoffs for doing so exceed those for fighting, and thus the primary aims of their preferred interventions are to increase the payoff for cooperation, decrease the payoff for cheating, and lessen the severity of the sucker's payoff. On the other hand, rational choice theories tend to discount the importance of the stakes in a conflict. This divergence is puzzling, given that common sense suggests the payoffs for fighting and settling should be related to the stakes that the combatants are fighting for, and whether or not those stakes leave room for compromise. My psychological theory of ethnic civil war termination suggests that the willingness of combatants to settle will be determined not just by the payoffs for fighting and settling, but by their reference points. If those reference points are so incompatible that they leave no bargaining room for a settlement that would not force either side to accept sure losses, then combatants will continue to engage in risk-seeking fighting and may even escalate the conflict rather than settle.

Thus, stakes matter, not just payoffs. As Byman and Seybolt note, interveners often take the existence of bargaining room as a given: "Policymakers in the West often suffer from a particularly acute delusion: that compromise is possible" (2003: 47).²⁰⁵ They make this assumption at their own peril. The

²⁰⁵ For example, in the Bosnian civil war (used as the case study in chapter five), Burg and Shoup note what they call the "reality gap" between interveners, who were chiefly concerned with human rights, and the combatants themselves, who were motivated by ethnic identity. "The result was a gap in perceptions between the international community and the nationalists concerning where the solution to the crisis lay" (Burg & Shoup, 2000: 11).

success of humanitarian interventions into ethnic civil wars will be related to the amount of bargaining room available between the combatants' opposing reference points. When the reference points suffer from significant overlap, indivisible stakes will inhibit combatants' ability and willingness to compromise and blunt the effectiveness of interventions that focus too closely on combatants' hypothetical payoff matrixes instead of considering their war objectives.

My argument is not that successful humanitarian intervention is impossible, but that it comes at a higher cost in blood and treasure than its proponents assume, and that poorly planned interventions may have the perverse consequence of increasing ethnic violence rather than stopping it. States or international organizations contemplating such interventions should therefore proceed cautiously, maintain realistic expectations about their ability to promote negotiated settlements, and be prepared to bear the costs of their actions. By examining combatants' actions – and their own – through the lens of prospect theory, interveners may be able to better judge when their strategies have a chance at success, when success is likely to come at a high price, and when intervention is likely to be ineffectual or worse.

Proposed intervention strategies. A body of literature has developed on the military operations that outside powers might employ to intervene in ethnic civil wars.²⁰⁶ If the purpose of intervention is simply to hasten the termination of an ethnic war, then outside powers could either attempt to facilitate a negotiated settlement or intervene directly on behalf of one of the combatants to help that side win a military victory (Byman & Seybolt, 2003). The strategies I review in this section aim at promoting negotiated settlements. The alternative strategy, helping the favored combatant win a military victory, is really an escalation of the conflict through the introduction of a new combatant, and such operations are well-addressed by the copious literature on conventional warfare (Posen, 1996: 78-79).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Economic and diplomatic interventions are also possible, but such strategies are likely to have less coercive power than interventions that also contain a military element. Thus, I choose to focus on military intervention strategies. Since my conclusion is that ethnic combatants will prove more difficult to coerce than rational choice models suggest, examining the most coercive intervention strategies is a strong test of this argument.

²⁰⁷ Furthermore, many advocates of humanitarian intervention are critical of the kingmaker strategy. Mason et al. argue that military intervention on behalf of a combatant tends to prolong rather than shorten civil wars, because it subsidizes the costs of fighting (2005: 6). Byman and Seybolt argue that: "The greatest problem with pick a winner is that victory comes with the agonies of an unjust peace," and that such strategies are therefore unlikely to

Peacemaker. Among those strategies designed to promote negotiated settlements, Byman and Seybolt note that a particular blend of military, economic, and diplomatic tools has risen to prominence within U.S. policy-making circles. They call this particular strategy the “peacemaker” method:

The “peacemaker” military mission involves halting the violence temporarily or providing logistical support, or both. While the military keeps order, diplomats try to create power-sharing arrangements, arrange elections, resettle displaced people, and otherwise restore peace and stability. At the same time, humanitarian organizations try to alleviate the nightmares of displacement, disease, and hunger. (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 43)

Drawing upon the language of the security dilemma models, Byman and Seybolt note the peacemaker strategy’s spotty track record and suggest that it is based upon inherently unsound practices:

A particularly troubling aspect of the “peacemaker” approach is that it often involves operations that are unproductive or lead to further violence. Disarming groups and returning displaced persons almost always are counterproductive tasks in environments characterized by hardened identities, high security sensitivity, little potential for power sharing, and frequent outsider involvement. [...]

Peacemakers who try to force individuals to turn over their arms may encounter violent resistance, which will pose considerable danger to the troops, raise concerns about force protection, and intensify the conflict the intervention is meant to quell.

Such risks might be worthwhile if disarming groups contributed to lasting peace, but in reality disarming groups often makes them more apprehensive about their security. (2003: 45)

Thus, as alternatives to peacemaking, Byman and Seybolt describe two other archetypical intervention strategies: military balancing and population transfers (2003: 49-51).²⁰⁸

Military balancing. For the balancing strategy, intervening states provide military support to one combatant in an ethnic civil war. Such interventions would be calibrated to turn the war into a mutually-hurting stalemate, at which time peace negotiations may have a better chance of success:

The balance strategy seeks to transform conflicts into stalemates by enabling groups to provide for their own security. To accomplish this, a balance mission builds up local police forces and militaries to create a balance of power. U.S. or international forces might also be used temporarily to prevent one side from winning while the new forces train. The approach rests on the theory that a “hurting stalemate” with a “precipice” (an impending deterioration of position) eventually will lead combatants to the peace table. (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 59)

Byman and Seybolt suggest that five conditions are required for the successful implementation of a

be acceptable to humanitarian interveners (2003: 64-68). By contrast, Luttwak (1999) recommends kingmaker strategies over attempts to broker settlements, if humanitarian intervention is to be conducted at all.

²⁰⁸ Byman and Seybolt (2003: 49-51) also describe four other strategies – commissary, quarantine, pick-a-winner, and prophylaxis – which are not directly relevant to this discussion.

balancing strategy: (1) the client combatant must have competent local military forces, (2) the client must have local popular support, (3) terrain should favor the defense, (4) neighboring states and other powers must acquiesce to the intervention and not give reciprocal support to opposing combatants, and (5) opposing combatants should have limited rather than total objectives (2003: 76).

Population transfer. Alternatively, interveners might attempt to partition the territory being contested. Intervening troops or the local combatants' forces would stabilize the military front along a designated partition line, and then facilitate the transfer of civilians so as to create ethnically homogeneous regions on both sides.²⁰⁹ Intervenors would thus engage in a humanitarian form of "ethnic cleansing":

In practice, a transfer policy involves encouraging population displacement so as to create homogeneous geographic areas. The process can be horrific. Members of the international community can make it more humane, however, by providing humanitarian assistance and security for the refugees, by identifying borders that are defensible, and by trying to make the populations as homogeneous as possible. Moreover, the military can guard the refugees against local thugs, organize the flow of refugees, and calm the security fears of the local population. (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 69)

Byman and Seybolt suggest four preconditions for successful population transfers: (1) intervening forces need the consent and support of local populations, (2) the transfer line should run along defensible terrain, (3) the transfer must create demographic separation between the warring groups, and (4) a high degree of coordination between local, international, political, and military actors is required (2003: 70-71).²¹⁰

Level of military force required. If outside powers choose to launch a humanitarian military intervention into an ethnic civil war, what level of force will be required to speed that war's termination? Optimists like Mueller argue that ethnic warfare is the province of thugs and hoodlums rather than trained soldiers, and thus suggest that even a small, professional military deployment should suffice to stop the

²⁰⁹ Posen (1996) describes a related strategy which he calls the safe zone approach. This operation calls for intervening troops to secure a portion of the contested state's territory, creating a large safe zone for the client combatant's population and forces. However, Posen (1996: 94-96) notes that safe zones may become de facto (and perhaps even de jure) partitions, so I include these operations under the larger rubric of population transfers.

²¹⁰ In particular, they emphasize the importance of local support from combatant populations and forces, given that active opposition will create acute military and political difficulties for the intervening force: "It is not realistic for the United States and its Western allies to execute a transfer mission through threats and terror. Squaring the suffering and harsh practices this would require with the need to maintain lukewarm support for humanitarian intervention would be practically impossible" (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 72).

fighting (2000: 44). In his landmark article, Quinlivan (1995) argued that, for military forces engaged in stability operations, the level of required force is proportional to the size of the population to be policed. While local conditions, geography, and the objectives of the combatants and intervening forces will affect the required force size, Posen (1996: 105) uses Quinlivan's data to suggest a ratio of 20 troops per 1,000 of local population as a baseline estimate for peacemaker-type operations. Generally, Posen argues that intervening troops will find themselves in a more dangerous environment than Mueller expects.²¹¹

To coerce successfully, it is generally necessary to demonstrate the capability not merely to hurt, but to defeat the adversary. [...] If a long-term solution is sought, and particularly if locals are to be induced to surrender their arms, then a very high level of local military presence may prove necessary to convince most people that they are safe from one another. And if the local armed forces are competent and committed, the price will be even higher. (1996: 106)

Given that these proposed intervention strategies may require a high level of military force to implement, and may thus place intervening troops – as well as local combatants and civilians – in harm's way, selecting an effective strategy will be critical. In the next sections, I will examine the prescriptive implications of the three rational choice models of ethnic war termination.

Mason and Fett's prescriptive conclusions

Mason and Fett (1996) do not endorse an intervention strategy. They simply conclude that: "The findings presented here indicate that war weariness is more important in determining the outcome of the conflict than divisibility or indivisibility of the stakes" (Mason & Fett, 1996: 563). Thus, by implication, successful interventions will lead the combatants to a negotiated settlement by contributing to their "war weariness," increasing their costs of fighting, and decreasing their perceived chances of victory.

No specific intervention program. Given Mason and Fett's model, either a military balancing or peacemaker strategy could be effective. Interveners could use military balancing to create a mutually-hurting stalemate by providing arms, resources, or troops to the weaker combatant. Alternatively, they

²¹¹ Specifically, Posen argues that interveners are most likely to undertake compellent rather than deterrent operations, and thus will require a higher level of military force to implement their strategies (1996: 80-82). He draws upon Schelling's arguments about credibility and commitment to explain why compellent coercion is more difficult than an equivalent coercive exercise in a deterrent situation. Alternatively, Butts (2006: 15-17) applies prospect theory to the problem of compellent humanitarian interventions, and suggests that compellence is generally more difficult because it requires the target to submit to certain losses, whereas deterrence only requires the target to forego uncertain gains. Schaub (2004) makes a general form of this prospect theory argument.

could use bombing and economic sanctions against the stronger combatant to help level the military balance. If such tactics succeeded in creating a defensive balance between the opposing combatants, they would increase the costs of continued fighting while lowering the combatants' perceived probabilities of military victory, and thus make a negotiated settlement more attractive.

Alternatively, a peacemaker-style mission could either complement or replace the balancing strategy. Intervening troops would impose an "enforced truce" on the warring combatants, creating a kind of pseudo-stalemate that would generate favorable incentives for negotiation (Posen, 1996: 78). Writing in 2005, Mason et al. did not go as far as endorsing the use of peacemaking forces to impose stalemates on ethnic combatants, but did support the dispatch of muscular peacekeeping deployments:

The one form of international intervention that does have a palliative effect on civil war is use of multi-national peacekeeping forces. The introduction of peacekeeping forces tends to shorten the duration of civil wars: the most effective way to bring to an end those conflicts that have settled into a deadly but interminable "mutually hurting stalemate" is for the international community to intervene as a neutral arbitrator, broker a peace agreement and enforce it with peacekeepers. Not surprisingly, the introduction of peacekeeping forces shortens the duration of civil wars and, therefore, reduces their cumulative destructiveness. (7)

They further suggest that such humanitarian interventions will be most effective when peacekeeping troop deployments are substantial, and when troops assist with institution building, demobilizing combatant forces, and building a unified army, in addition to policing the cease-fire (Mason et al., 2005: 7).

Weaknesses of the prescriptive recommendations. While Mason and Fett's model is not tied to a specific intervention strategy, the assumptions of expected utility theory imply that interventions which increase the costs and reduce the benefits of fighting should make settling more attractive by comparison. Either military balancing or peacemaking operations could be employed to that effect. A fundamental weakness of this approach is that it focuses too narrowly on the combatants' perceptions of settling and fighting in terms of net utility, and ignores whether those outcomes are framed as gains or losses. As my psychological model predicts, and as the first-brush case studies seem to indicate, combatants who frame a proposed settlement as a loss will generally keep fighting, even when the costs of fighting outweigh the benefits and the proposed settlement is nominally fair. Combatants are not as quick to compromise over the stakes they are fighting for as Mason and Fett suggest. Using balancing or an enforced truce to reduce

a combatant's chances of victory and increase the costs of fighting may not induce that combatant to accept a negotiated settlement. Instead, combatants in the domain of losses may fight with renewed intensity against their enemies and the intervening forces. Even if combatants prefer settling to fighting, they may be unable to divide the stakes in such a way that does not leave one side with a certain loss, in which case they may choose continued fighting even though settling would offer greater expected utility.

Walter's prescriptive conclusions

Based on her credible commitment theory of civil war termination, Walter argues that "only a certain type of outside intervention offered at a specific time in the peace process will help negotiations succeed" (2002: 166). Domestic anarchy poses the key barrier to the termination of ethnic civil wars (Walter, 1997: 338); strong outside intervention forces can alleviate this anarchy, allowing combatants to negotiate an acceptable settlement. However, neither temporary military balancing nor a temporary enforced truce will suffice to allow combatants to successfully implement the settlement, because they cannot credibly commit to abide by its terms once the intervening troops depart. Additionally, Walter (1997) dismisses solutions involving territorial partition or population transfers, arguing that such compromises are, by their very nature, non-starters for governments:

Once it becomes clear that governments can no longer defend their own sovereign territory, they become attractive targets for any domestic or international foe. No government, therefore, can afford to part with territory even if it would increase the likelihood of ending a long and costly war. In short, although one would expect groups to embrace partition as an easy way out of domestic conflagrations, they simply do not view it as a satisfactory alternative to war. (355)

Instead, Walter argues that the path to peace lies through negotiated power-sharing agreements. The successful implementation of such settlements requires third-party security guarantees and peacekeeping forces. Without third-party promises to enforce the terms of a negotiated settlement, combatants will not implement it, even if its terms are agreeable to them. The use of peacekeeping forces to guarantee those terms lowers the payoffs for continued fighting and defection, raises the payoff for settling and cooperation, and reduces the severity of the sucker's payoff. The credible commitment problem is resolved, and combatants will elect to settle rather than fight. Thus, according to Walter's theory, such humanitarian interventions are a necessary condition for ethnic wars to terminate through

settlements rather than dragging on to a military conclusion (Walter, 1997: 362).

Focus on the implementation phase. Walter describes civil war settlement as a three-step process (2002: 4). First, combatants decide whether to negotiate at all. Second, combatants reach an agreement which they would be willing to accept. Third, combatants implement the agreement and abide by its terms. According to Walter, the implementation phase is “the most difficult to navigate and the reason why so many civil war negotiations have failed” (2002: 34).

Walter’s credible commitment theory is essentially agnostic about the negotiation and agreement phases. However, Walter argues that it is the implementation phase – not the first two – that represents the roadblock to peace, even if casual dynamics and variables may differ across the stages of the process:

Combatants have no chance to settle their wars unless they are willing, first, to meet at the negotiating table and, second, to resolve their underlying grievances and strike a deal. Both of these steps are equally likely to be driven by a variety of factors that come into play long before third parties arrive on the scene. Although the credible commitment theory says almost nothing about these additional conditions for peace, the focus here on enforcement and commitment does serve a purpose. By emphasizing the structural problems of implementation I hope to show that in important ways, issues of post-treaty security are likely to pervade all decisions leading to settlement and play a critical role in the final outcome of civil wars. (2002: 7)

The critical variable during the implementation phase is the presence of a third-party guarantee, and the availability of such guarantees or the perceived likelihood of attracting one casts a specter over the earlier stages of the settlement process (Walter, 2002: 32-33). Thus, humanitarian interventions will succeed in promoting negotiated settlements only if they are targeted at the implementation phase.

The unimportance of stakes. Security concerns, rather than indivisible stakes, are the sticking point in negotiations (Walter, 1999: 129). Walter does state that combatants may be unwilling to deal at a war’s outset, and thus intervention will not succeed until the combatants are willing to compromise:

Guarantees in the face of an ongoing war where the combatants have no desire to negotiate are unlikely to succeed. States wishing to facilitate early solutions to civil wars must wait until the groups themselves desire peace before their promises of enforcement will have any positive effect. (1997: 362)

Walter argues that stalemates, low probabilities of victory, and high costs of fighting bring combatants to the bargaining table. Once there, third-party guarantees are required for negotiations to succeed (Walter, 1997: 358).

Walter (1997: 337) assumes that combatants who commence peace negotiations, regardless of whether those talks later break down, must prefer peace to war.²¹² Despite her suggestion that some combatants have no desire to negotiate, she argues that, once the payoffs for settlement exceed those for fighting, “none of the current explanations identifies a compelling reason why domestic enemies would forego negotiation in favor of potentially lengthy battlefield contests” (Walter, 1997: 337). Negotiations that fail founder on security dilemma concerns, not because stakes cannot be divided, because there is inadequate bargaining room, or because combatants are unwilling to compromise (Walter, 1997: 356).²¹³

From her statistical analysis, Walter concludes that stakes do not influence the ultimate decisions of combatants to settle or keep fighting (2002: 73). Combatants are more likely to agree to negotiations in wars with high death tolls, long durations, and mutually-hurting stalemates. They are more likely to reach agreement on a potential settlement when third-party guarantees are available, when post-war territorial and political divisions are stipulated in advance, when international mediators are present, and when the war is stalemated. But the only factors which affect the successful adoption and implementation of negotiated settlements are third-party guarantees and political and territorial power-sharing pacts. None of Walter’s variables meant to capture the divisibility of the war’s stakes are relevant, and only the security dilemma variables affect a combatant’s final choice between settling and continuing to fight.²¹⁴

Thus, Walter treats settling a civil war as a two-level game. At the first level, she argues that stakes and objectives could (but don’t) influence combatants’ ability to strike bargains; at the second level, security and credibility concerns can (and do) determine combatants’ ultimate decisions:

²¹² Walter defines formal, good-faith negotiations by these three conditions: (1) leaders or representatives of the combatants must meet face-to-face, (2) the sides must discuss both military ceasefires and political solutions, and (3) combatants must have the ability to keep fighting even should the talks break down (2002: 51).

²¹³ The assumption that combatants who agree to negotiations do so because they want peace seems to discount those cases where combatants join peace talks for strategic reasons, such as to mollify the international community or to stall for time while their forces regroup. Also, the fact that many such negotiations break down could be a sign that talks revealed that there was insufficient bargaining room between the combatants, and that combatants are not interested in peace under the terms their opponents are willing to offer. Thus, this assumption may conceal instances where stakes loomed larger than security concerns in combatants’ decision processes.

²¹⁴ Walter does observe that combatants in wars with non-territorial stakes are more likely to reach agreement on potential settlements than combatants fighting over her definition of territorial stakes (2002: 73). She calls this result “quite startling,” and takes it as a further sign that indivisible stakes are not a barrier to negotiated settlements, since she assumes that territorial stakes are more divisible than non-territorial stakes (2002: 82).

In most cases the government and the rebels will recognize the overwhelming risks involved with compliance, and they will refuse to sign any treaty even if all the underlying issues have been resolved and even if both sides sincerely want peace. If they do sign, this fear and insecurity will become so overwhelming that even satisfactory settlements will slowly unravel. (1997: 339)

For humanitarian interventions to be successful, they must address this second level rather than the first.

Power-sharing and settlement design. The appeal of power-sharing is the intuition that “[e]thnic groups with a voice in government are often able to resolve their differences peacefully through the political system rather than resort to war” (Byman, 2002: 125). Thus, power-sharing is suggested as both a palliative for ongoing ethnic wars and a kind of settlement that is likely to prevent the recurrence of war.

Walter advocates consociational power-sharing rather than more democratic forms of government because she argues they help to reduce the security dilemma that combatants face when they form a unity government. Democratic institutions may create instability in the aftermath of an ethnic war because each combatant fears that, should its enemy win the first election, the other side may form a one-party state and permanently exclude them from power (Walter, 1999: 138-139). Thus, Walter argues that effective negotiated settlements will allow combatants “to retain as much independent strength as possible – in the form of political representation, veto powers, and a military balance in the national forces” (1997: 351).

In particular, Walter suggests three qualities of effective power-sharing settlements: (1) all combatants must be guaranteed some substantial form of involvement in the new government, regardless of electoral results; (2) combatants should be allowed to keep some independent military power through visibly retained weapons or proportional quotas in the new national military; and (3) combatants should be allowed to maintain administrative control over some of the regions that their forces occupied during the war, providing them with a rear power base should the fledgling political system fail (1999: 141-142).

Third-party guarantees. Power-sharing is a difficult solution to sell to ethnic war combatants, since the group which controls the government must be persuaded to relinquish its hegemony, and the rebel groups must be persuaded to accept a minority role in governance (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 41-42). Both sides will likely have to relinquish some of their war aims to accept the power-sharing compromise. Thus, while power-sharing can follow a truce and the establishment of a secure environment, it is unlikely

to precede or create either (Byman, 2002: 149).

This is one of the central tenets of Walter's credible commitment theory. Because of the security dilemma, and because of the dangers inherent in complying with power-sharing agreements which require them to disarm and submit to the rule of an immature government, combatants cannot credibly commit to abide by such agreements. The incentive to cheat is too strong, as is the fear of the sucker's payoff. Thus, the negotiated settlement of ethnic civil wars is not possible without outside intervention.

Third-party guarantors perform several functions. They may supervise and verify disarming and demobilization, they may ensure the fair implementation of political power-sharing, and they may expose and punish cheaters while protecting vulnerable parties (Walter, 1999: 135; 2002: 42-43). Stronger third-party guarantees will be needed when the costs of fighting are low, or when power-sharing arrangements are weak or poorly specified, if combatants are to implement settlements (Walter, 1997: 351). To some extent, stronger provisions for power-sharing can compensate for weaker third-party commitments, but outside enforcement is still required for even the best peace plan to succeed (Walter, 2002: 97). The stronger the third-party intervention and enforcement guarantee, the better.²¹⁵

Once in theater, third-party forces should remain long enough to facilitate the construction of new governmental institutions and the integration of the former combatant forces into a single military. As for the size of the intervening force, Walter argues that a few hundred soldiers – or even none at all – may be enough if the power-sharing provisions in the negotiated settlement are particularly strong, but suggests that a force of at least 10,000 combat troops sends “an unambiguous and indisputable demonstration of intent” to enforce a peace agreement (Walter, 1997: 347).

Weaknesses of the prescriptive implications. Walter draws six general prescriptive implications for intervention into ethnic wars (1997: 361-362): (1) traditional peacekeeping missions must be backed by the ability and willingness to use force; (2) single states are more likely to offer credible third-party

²¹⁵ The best third-party guarantees are highly credible because the outside power has some self-interested reason to uphold its commitment, brings sufficient forces to the theater with a demonstrated willingness to employ them, and undertakes costly demonstrations of resolve – such as deploying security forces prior to the completion of the negotiated agreement (Walter, 1997: 340-341).

guarantees than organizations, since there is less risk of internal dissension harming the enforcement effort; (3) guarantors should be willing to keep their forces in theater not just through the demobilization phase, but through the establishment of a functional new government and army; (4) neutrality is not necessary on the part of the intervening party; (5) combatants should be allowed to maintain a small quantity of observable weapons to reduce their feelings of vulnerability; and (6) fewer intervening troops will be needed when the combatants can agree to extensive power-sharing provisions.²¹⁶

Walter's recommendations are all geared towards reshaping combatants' payoffs by lowering the payoff for fighting, raising the payoff for settling, reducing incentives to cheat, and ameliorating fears of the sucker's payoff. She offers no clues as to how the stakes in the war may be divided, or whether combatants will even entertain the possibility of settling in the first place. Walter's recommendations take for granted that, once wars become long and costly, combatants will head to the bargaining table; once at the bargaining table, they will be able to resolve their disputes. Obstacles will stem from the security dilemma, not indivisible stakes. War-weary combatants will find a way to compromise.

But prospect theory predicts, and the case studies demonstrate, that these assumptions do not accurately describe the behavior of ethnic war combatants. If the stakes in a conflict lead the combatants to adopt incompatible reference points, then assuming that there will always be bargains to be struck assumes too much. Claiming that stakes are irrelevant to ethnic war termination runs afoul of the common sense notion that, if the issues in question were so amenable to compromise, then combatants would not have needed a war to sort them out. Furthermore, why should combatants be so quick to bargain away at the negotiating table that which they were willing to risk life and limb for?

Prospect theory underscores these objections and suggests that the security dilemma is not the only barrier to negotiated settlements. Combatants balk at accepting or implementing compromises not because the fear of defection paralyzes them, but because such settlements would force them to make concessions that represent sure losses compared to their reference points. Settlements are losses to be

²¹⁶ I am struck by the similarities between Walter's recommendations and the U.S. military strategy in Iraq, where more than 100,000 troops from a third-party clearly committed to enforcing the peace have nevertheless totally failed to allay security concerns or get the combatants to negotiate in good faith.

avoided, not gains to be protected from cheating and defection.

While Walter's theory certainly captures some of the dynamics that affect combatants in her implementation phase, she is wrong to assign no casual significance to the negotiation and agreement phases. If overlapping reference points limit the available bargaining room, settlement efforts will be waylaid before they ever reach the implementation phase.²¹⁷ Even within the implementation phase, combatants in the domain of losses may gamble by defecting from power-sharing provisions – even ones backed by third-party guarantees. The problem is not with the settlement provisions themselves, or with the enforcement mechanism, but stems from risk-seeking in the domain of losses (Berejikian, 2002: 772).

Thus, Walter's prescriptions for humanitarian intervention will not remove all the obstacles to the successful settlement of ethnic wars, and may instead run headlong into them.

Kaufmann's prescriptive conclusions

Kaufmann's demographic separation theory leads him to recommend a specific kind of intervention, but Kaufmann's proposed remedy is not the same as Walter's. Indeed, Kaufmann describes Walter's suggestions for power-sharing and third-party enforcement as impractical and impossible.²¹⁸

Once ethnic groups are mobilized for war, the war cannot end until the populations are separated into defensible, mostly homogeneous regions. Even if an international force or an imperial conqueror were to impose peace, the conflict would resume as soon as it left. Even if a national government were somehow re-created despite mutual suspicions, neither group could safely entrust its security to it. (1996b: 150)

Neither the reconstruction of ethnic identities nor international efforts at state-building can bring peace (Kaufmann, 1996b: 152-161). Thus, Kaufmann argues that:

Solutions that aim at restoring multi-ethnic civil politics and at avoiding population transfers – such as power-sharing, state re-building, or identity reconstruction – cannot work because they do nothing to dampen the security dilemma, and because ethnic fears and hatreds hardened by war

²¹⁷ Combatants may not even negotiate under such circumstances, since, as the Ethiopian-Eritrean case studied in chapter four demonstrates, “[r]ival factions frequently will use the mild concessions that all negotiations necessarily entail as a pretext for turning against moderates” (Byman & Seybolt, 2003: 42).

²¹⁸ Kaufmann (1996b: 156) rests his argument against power-sharing on the inability of ethnic combatants to make meaningful political concessions: “The indispensable component of any power-sharing deal is a plausible minority veto, one which the strongest side will accept and which the weaker side believes that the stronger will respect. [...] The core reason why power-sharing cannot resolve ethnic civil wars is that it is inherently voluntaristic; it requires conscious decisions by elites to cooperate to avoid ethnic strife. Under conditions of hypernationalist mobilization and real security threats, group leaders are unlikely to be receptive to compromise, and even if they are, they cannot act without being discredited and replaced by harder-line rivals.”

are extremely resistant to change. (1996b: 137)

Attempts to reconstruct multiethnic societies through power-sharing are therefore the “one way to turn an outside intervention in an ethnic civil war into a hopeless quagmire” (Kaufmann, 1996a: 88).²¹⁹

The argument for population transfers. Kaufmann acknowledges that, “[e]ven when carried out safely, population transfers inflict enormous suffering, including loss of homes and livelihoods and disruption of social, religious, and cultural ties” (Kaufmann, 1998: 121). However, he argues that the “international community should endorse separation as a remedy for at least some communal conflicts; otherwise, the processes of war will separate the populations anyway, at much higher human cost” (Kaufmann, 1998: 122-123). Because of the immutable interethnic security dilemma that is triggered by ethnic hardening and mixed demography, population separation must occur for the security dilemma to be resolved and for the war to terminate. Despite what humanitarians may prefer, population transfers will occur; the question left to the interveners is under what conditions they will occur:

This means that to save lives threatened by genocide, the international community must abandon attempts to restore war-torn multi-ethnic states. Instead, it must facilitate and protect population movements to create true national homelands. [...] Once massacres have taken place, ethnic cleansing will occur. The alternative is to let the *interahamwe* and the Chetniks “cleanse” their enemies in their own way. (Kaufmann, 1996b: 137)

Population transfer and partition (either de facto or de jure) do not guarantee that ethnic wars will never restart, but Kaufmann argues they offer the best hope for long-term peace because they remove motives for preemptive attack, replacing them with a situation in which defense has the advantage:

Thus the conflict changes from one of mutual pre-emptive ethnic cleansing to something approaching conventional interstate war in which normal deterrence dynamics apply. Mutual deterrence does not guarantee that there will be no further violence, but it reduces the probability of outbreaks, as well as the likely aims and intensity of those that do occur. (1996b: 150)

Recommended procedure for military intervention. While he argues that ethnic civil wars are one kind of conflict where “outside aid can be decisive” (1996a: 87), Kaufmann suggests that direct military involvement will be advisable or required in cases of full-scale ethnic war:

²¹⁹ Additionally, rights like free speech and free assembly – which democratic power-sharing settlements are supposed to promote – are the same rights that facilitate ethnic mobilization and thus exacerbate the inter-ethnic security dilemma (Byman, 2002: 129).

International interventions that seek to ensure lasting safety for populations endangered by ethnic war [...] must be guided by two principles. First, settlements must aim at physically separating the warring communities and establishing a balance of relative strength that makes it unprofitable for either side to attempt to revise the territorial settlement. Second, although economic or military assistance may suffice in some cases, direct military intervention will be necessary when aid to the weaker side would create a window of opportunity for the stronger, or when there is an immediate need to stop ongoing genocide. (1996b: 162)

Intervention will be the simplest when populations have already been separated and the combatants' forces are fighting along a well-defined front. Otherwise, a robust intervention will be required:

If there is an existing stalemate along defensible lines, the international community should simply recognize and strengthen it, providing transportation, protection, and resettlement assistance for refugees. However, where one side has the capacity to go on the offensive against the other, intervention will be necessary. [...]

If the client is too weak to achieve a viable separation with material aid alone, or if either or both sides cannot be trusted to abide by promises of non-retribution against enemy civilians, the international community must designate a separation line and deploy an intervention force to take physical control of the territory on the client's side of the line. We might call this approach "conquer and divide." (Kaufmann, 1996b: 166)

Kaufmann's proposed intervention occurs in five steps (1996a: 91-92). First, interveners choose which combatant they will support. Second, they decide which territory will be occupied by the client following the war. Third, the intervening troops seize control of the chosen territory. Fourth, populations are exchanged across the separation line to create homogeneous areas on each side. Fifth, the separation line is formalized through international agreements.²²⁰ Intervention would thus proceed along these lines:

The separation campaign is waged as a conventional military operation. The larger the forces committed the better, both to minimize interveners' casualties and to shorten the campaign by threatening the opponent with overwhelming defeat. [...]

On the ground, the interveners would begin at one end of the target region and gradually advance to capture the entire target territory, maintaining a continuous front the entire time. It is not necessary to conquer the whole country; indeed, friendly ground forces need never cross the designated line. After enemy forces are driven out of each locality, civilians of the enemy ethnic group who remain behind are interned, to be exchanged after the war. [...]

The final concern is possible massacres of civilians of the client group in territory not yet captured or beyond the planned separation line. Some of this must be expected, since ongoing atrocities are the most likely impetus for outside intervention. [...] A major advantage of a powerful ground presence is that opponent behavior can be coerced by threatening to advance the separation line in retaliation for any atrocities.

Once the military campaign is complete and refugees have been resettled, further reconstruction and military aid may be needed to help the client achieve a viable economy and

²²⁰ Kaufman cites the 1974 Turkish intervention in Cyprus, which partitioned the island and created an ethnically Turkish (and more easily defensible) region in the North by promoting population exchanges, as an example of an effective intervention (1996a: 89-90).

self-defense capability before the interveners can depart. (Kaufmann, 1996b: 166)

Interveners can maintain their leverage over the client combatant by threatening to adversely adjust the partition line should local client forces commit atrocities: “For each ten murders, say, one village could be struck from the list of those to be included” (Kaufmann, 1996a: 96).

The end result does not need to be a formal partition, so long as the combatants’ populations are separated and each side maintains enough self-defense capability that abrogating its autonomy would be prohibitively costly.²²¹ Demographic separation, not political sovereignty, is the key objective of partition (Kaufmann, 1998: 123). To create a defensive balance between ethnic regions, Kaufmann suggests that “[s]uccessor state arsenals should be encouraged, by aid to the weaker or sanctions on the stronger, to focus on defensive armaments such as towed artillery and antiaircraft missiles” (1996b: 163).

While not sanguine about the challenges inherent in a population transfer operation, Kaufmann (1996a) argues that the chances of success are high because conquering territory tends to be among the strengths of intervening militaries. Also, if interveners commit sufficient forces (a level he does not specify) towards establishing control over a defensible and fair partition line, Kaufmann is optimistic about the intervener’s chance to speed ethnic war termination:

Provided that the intervention force enjoys a great superiority of force, the war is likely to be shortened by successful coercion, although how much will be difficult to predict in advance. Once convinced that the intervention force cannot be stopped and will not be deterred, the opposing side has no incentive to lose additional lives, both soldiers and civilians, fighting for territory that will be lost anyway. (Kaufmann, 1996a: 95)

Rather than fight a losing battle, Kaufmann suggests that opposing combatants will cooperate – at least grudgingly – with the intervention, since the costs of resistance are high and the benefits are low, whereas compliance with population transfers eliminates the security dilemma and the fear of enemy mobilization.

Partitioning the territory. Before intervening, outside powers must determine how to partition the

²²¹ Specifically, Kaufmann argues that: “Inter-ethnic security dilemmas can be nearly or wholly eliminated without partition if three conditions are met: First, there must be enough demographic separation that ethnic regions do not themselves contain militarily significant minorities. Second, there must be enough regional self-defense capability that abrogating the autonomy of any region would be more costly than any possible motive for doing so. Third, local autonomy must be so complete that minority groups can protect their key interests even lacking any influence at the national level” (1996b: 163).

territory in question. Kaufmann suggests that this be done in consultation with the client combatant, and states that no intervention should be undertaken if the client is unwilling to sign-off on the proposed territorial division beforehand (1996a: 94). He lists three criteria for territorial divisions:

First, the division must seem to the interveners to be fair, be militarily feasible, manageable in terms of population transfers, and ultimately defensible. Second, it must be acceptable to the prospective client. Third and most important, setting a fixed line guarantees specific territory to each side, lessening the security dilemma in the conflict since neither need fear political or physical elimination. (Kaufmann, 1996a: 93)

While Kaufmann makes passing references to fairness, he stresses that the primary consideration in drawing the partition line should be the defensibility of the successor entities it will create:

The safest pattern is a well-defined demographic front that separates nearly homogeneous regions. Such a front can be defended by organized military forces, so populations are not at risk unless defenses are breached. At the same time the strongest motive for attack disappears, since there are few or no endangered co-ethnics behind enemy lines. [...]

Where possible, inter-group boundaries should be drawn along the best defensive terrain, such as rivers and mountain ranges. Lines should also be as short as possible, to allow the heaviest possible manning of defensive fronts. [...] Access to the sea or to a friendly neighbor is also important, both for trade and for possible military assistance. (Kaufmann, 1996b: 149, 163)

Furthermore, partitions that do not unmix the warring ethnic populations must be avoided at all costs, as they are likely to increase rather than decrease violence during ethnic civil wars (Kaufmann, 1998: 155). If necessary, combatants may be required to swap pieces of territory under their control in order to create a more defensible inter-group boundary.²²² Presumably, such swaps would require the approval of the client combatant before an intervention would be undertaken.

Weaknesses of the prescriptive implications. Kaufmann's proposals are dependent on the ability of interveners to strike a territorial division that will be acceptable to both sides. Interventions are not supposed to be undertaken unless the client combatant agrees with the share of the territory it is slated to receive, and for coercion to be successful the division must not be so unpalatable to the opposing combatants that they will fight to the end rather than accept it. However, while Kaufmann does suggest

²²² For example, Kaufmann argues that the Dayton Peace Accords could have been strengthened if Bosnian Muslims and Serbs had swapped territory in order to widen the Gorazde corridor: "More worrisome is the fact that the corridor to Gorazde will be only four kilometers wide, leaving the city once again vulnerable after the IFOR departs. A wider corridor here, perhaps in exchange for territory elsewhere, would have been better, even if it meant that more civilians would have to move now" (Kaufmann, 1996b: 168).

that a territorial division should be fair, he asserts that partition lines should be drawn to maximize the military and economic viability of the resultant entities. These concerns take precedence, not the claims to particular pieces of territory that combatants may have. To make a partition work, combatants are also expected to make concessions, giving up some of the territory they control in exchange for bits and pieces elsewhere, so long as doing so shores-up defensive lines or facilitates population transfers.

Kaufmann focuses on the strategic importance of territory but neglects the historical and cultural values that territorial stakes may hold for combatants. Territory cannot simply be passed around, like so many trading cards, in the name of creating defensible boundaries. Territory may be important regardless of its economic value or defensibility. As Toft writes:

As a physical object, territory may be divided and later redivided. [...] Borders and boundaries can be redrawn, place-names changed, and people moved from here to there.

Yet in many places in the world, borders and boundaries seem fixed in time and in the imagination. The name of the land has remained the same for generations, and the people inhabiting that land would rather die than lose the hope or right of return. In this context territory takes on a meaning that far exceeds its material and objective description. It becomes not an object to be exchanged but an indivisible component of a group's identity. (2003: 1)

Combatants are unlikely to agree to, or submit peacefully to, territorial concessions that represent sure losses because the territory in question is part of their reference point. Even if the territory they might receive in exchange is strategically or economically valuable, or if the territory they are asked to concede is nominally worthless, loss aversion and the endowment effect suggest that the gains will not compensate for the losses.²²³ Placed in such a situation, risk-seeking combatants may actively oppose the population transfer intervention, which Kaufmann suggests cannot be completed without their acquiescence.²²⁴

If the combatants' territorial objectives, as determined by their reference points, overlap in any significant way, the situation will be especially thorny, because no partition line can then be drawn that will not require one or both to accept certain – and, if Kaufmann's suggestion that the partition be ratified

²²³ This may help account for Toft's observation that, in defiance of rational choice assumptions, combatants in civil wars have demonstrated just as much willingness to fight over resource-poor territory as resource rich territory, provided that they view the territory as their homeland (2003: 43). Presumably, a combatant's homeland is almost always incorporated into its reference point.

²²⁴ In fact, any enemy-controlled territory which is included in a combatant's reference point and which would remain in enemy hands after the partition will also count as a sure loss, and will lead combatants to oppose any settlement which makes that loss irreversible.

internationally is carried out, permanent – losses. In that situation, attempting to craft a fair and defensible territorial division will either alienate the client group, whose support Kaufmann maintains is a prerequisite for successful intervention, or the opposing combatant, who then will not capitulate as quickly or easily as Kaufmann presumes. The intervening force may even find itself sandwiched between two hostile combatants, in which case an outside power's ability to conduct an orderly, humanitarian population transfer seems limited at best.

Drawing prescriptive conclusions from prospect theory

My psychological theory of ethnic war termination leads to a key conclusion which seems to validate common sense reasoning, but which runs against the conclusions of the rational choice models discussed in this thesis. Namely, the stakes in a war matter, as do the objectives of the combatants. My prospect theory model implies that what the combatants are fighting for – and the degree of intersection between their opposing objectives – will have a significant influence on their ability to conclude a negotiated settlement. By extension, stakes and objectives will influence and limit the ability of third-party interveners to hasten ethnic war termination by promoting settlements.

The key link in this causal chain, and the key difference between my model and the rational choice models, is the reference point. When combatants are evaluating the choice to fight or settle, they do not simply compare the possible outcomes in terms of net costs and benefits. Instead, they frame them as gains or losses compared to a reference point. Also, combatants usually do not use the status quo as their reference point. Rather, they judge outcomes against aspiration levels or historical comparisons. Thus, the merit of a settlement is not evaluated in terms of net utility, or by comparing it to the facts on the ground; it is judged against combatants' war aims and the stakes they are fighting for. This provides a theoretical hook upon which to rest the common sense notion that combatants' ability to compromise depends on what they are fighting for, and that those stakes for which ethnic combatants have laid down their lives will not be so easily abandoned at the bargaining table simply because the price is right.

Coding the stakes. One of the reasons that the statistical analyses marshaled to support rational choice models consistently find that stakes have no explanatory or predictive importance is the over-

generalized way in which these analyses code the divisibility variable. Authors tend to code divisibility by dividing wars into categories based on the kind of stakes being fought over. Mason and Fett (1996), for example, divide wars between ethnic and non-ethnic, and separatist and revolutionary. Walter (1997, 1999, 2002) proxies divisibility by splitting cases into categories for separatist and non-separatist wars; ethnic and non-ethnic wars; and wars over territory that is easy or hard to divide.²²⁵ Assumptions and hypotheses about divisibility or indivisibility are generalized at the category level; for example, one common assumption is that territorial stakes are more easily divisible than political stakes.

But the divisibility of the stakes will vary widely within categories, depending on the specific war aims and reference points of the combatants. The stakes in a separatist war could be very divisible if the land the separatists claim is of no importance to the government, or they could be wholly indivisible if both combatants lay claim to the same piece of territory. Similarly, political stakes could be divisible if combatants were simply fighting for a voice in government, but they would be indivisible if both sides wanted total control of the state. Thus, conflict categories are not meaningful proxies for the divisibility of stakes. Also, accurately judging the divisibility of stakes in a given conflict requires determining the specific objectives of the combatants and how much overlap there is between them. Presumably the objectives will not be wholly disjoint, otherwise no war would be waged in the first place. But the degree of intersection between the rival combatants' objectives will be the most accurate and meaningful measurement of the divisibility of stakes in a given conflict.

Likely, quantitative analyses like those reviewed in this paper (Mason & Fett, 1996; Walter, 1997, 1999, 2002) have not used such individualized measurements of stakes and divisibility because they would be more difficult to code and trickier to analyze than simple categories.²²⁶ Walter also offers a theoretical rationale for using general categories rather than specific objectives:

²²⁵ Walter (1997: 348) codes this last variable based on how concentrated ethnic populations and resources are. Territory with intermixed ethnic groups and concentrated resources is hard to divide. Territory with concentrated ethnic groups and concentrated resources is moderately hard to divide. Territory with concentrated ethnic groups and evenly dispersed resources is easy to divide.

²²⁶ This more detailed level of analysis may require more detailed and more subjective work, but it seems necessary to produce meaningful conclusions about divisibility hypotheses.

Measuring “divisibility” using the goals of the belligerents, however, could be problematic. Separatist groups often have unrealistic demands that the government cannot satisfy without hurting the state’s survival as a political entity. Secessionists might demand portions of territory that include most if not all of the valuable resources within the original state or demand self-determination in an already tenuous multiethnic state. Compromise under these conditions might be viewed as self-destructive by the government and therefore unacceptable at any cost – not necessarily the best indicator of a government’s desire to compromise in general. (1997: 348)

But this explanation is puzzling, given that governments are not asked to “compromise in general” – they are asked to compromise on a specific set of demands made by their rebel opponents. It is difficult to see how a combatant’s general willingness to compromise has more explanatory or predictive relevance than their willingness to compromise on the specific demands that have been put before them.

Thus, using categories of conflict as a proxy for stakes and divisibility seems unlikely to capture the actual dynamics of combatant decision making. A fruitful approach would require the examination of opposing combatants’ specific objectives, the interaction between them, and the resultant amount of bargaining room available for crafting a negotiated settlement. Prospect theory provides the basis for applying this approach to questions about ethnic war termination and humanitarian military intervention.

Reference points and bargaining range. As described in chapter three, an individual combatant’s propensity to settle or fight can be predicted by the interaction between that combatant’s reference point and risk orientation. Combatants will be risk-seeking in the domain of losses and risk-averse in the domain of gains. Thus, they elect to settle or fight based on whether those options are framed as gains or losses relative to the reference point and the relative riskiness of their two choices.

For an ethnic civil war to terminate in a negotiated settlement, both combatants must elect to settle.²²⁷ Prospect theory suggests that the degree of overlap between the opposing combatants’ reference points will determine the extent of the bargaining range available to them, and thus the availability of a settlement that all sides can agree to without being asked to accept certain losses. Generally speaking, given loss aversion and risk-seeking in the domain of losses, combatants are unlikely to agree to settlements that force them to incur certain losses. Thus, comparing the reference points employed by opposing combatants may yield explanatory and predictive tools for judging when combatants can agree

²²⁷ This excludes those cases where outside forces overwhelm the combatants’ ability to resist.

to settle their differences, and when one or both sides will prefer to fight it out even in the face of high costs and long odds for victory.²²⁸

Consider a hypothetical example in which two combatants, the Wolverines and the Buckeyes, are fighting a war over the political control of their country, Michio. In the first instance, consider that the Wolverines, who are presently excluded from the government but constitute a majority of the state's population, use as their reference point the aspiration level of holding seats in the legislature proportional to their population level. The Buckeyes, who are an ethnic minority but hold all important posts in the government, use hegemonic control of the government (which is both their aspiration level and the status quo) as their reference point. In this situation, the combatants' reference points exhibit a high degree of overlap – it is not possible to craft a negotiated settlement that gives both sides all or most of what they want simultaneously. Thus, my model predicts that their conflict will not be resolved through negotiation; both sides will keep fighting rather than agree to power-sharing that leaves them with certain losses.

Next, consider what happens if the Wolverines adopt a reference point based on the lower aspiration level of simply gaining some participation in government. Now the degree of overlap between the reference points is reduced, although some still exists, since it is unclear what level of meaningful participation the Wolverines could hold while the Buckeyes maintained a hegemonic grip on power. Thus, although a settlement still seems unlikely, there may now be some bargaining room depending on how both sides frame the compromises contained in any given settlement proposal.²²⁹

Finally, assume that the Wolverines are using participation in government as their reference point when the Buckeyes renormalize their reference point downward, shifting their objective to maintaining majority control over the government. Now the overlap between the reference points is largely eliminated, and bargaining room is available for the creation of a negotiated settlement that may be acceptable to both sides. For example, a power-sharing deal might create a consociational government where the Wolverines

²²⁸ Toft (2003: 29-33) proposes a similar bargaining model, based on the divisibility or indivisibility of territorial stakes, to explain ethnic war onset, although she does not incorporate prospect theory into her model.

²²⁹ Also, while the Buckeyes might reject power-sharing deals that granted the Wolverines a strong minority role in government, the Wolverines might be willing to accept deals along those same lines which they would have gambled with continued fighting to avoid under the previous instance.

were guaranteed 40 percent of the seats in the legislature. Given their reference points, both sides could frame this settlement as a gain and adopt risk-averse orientations which would lead them to settle rather than gamble by seeking greater but uncertain gains through fighting. In this instance, my prospect theory model predicts that terminating this war through a negotiated settlement is possible, although not guaranteed.²³⁰ Here is when the payoffs and security fears from the rational choice models may enter most prominently into the decisions of combatants, affecting their framing and assessment of particular settlement offers. But it is bargaining room, as derived from the mechanics of prospect theory, which explains why a negotiated settlement has become an acceptable outcome in the first place.

To relate this hypothetical example to a real war, the first instance is similar to the Ethiopian-Eritrean case. The Eritrean rebels' reference point was territorial sovereignty and self-determination for Eritrea. The Ethiopian government's reference point was complete political and territorial control over all of greater Ethiopia, including Eritrea. Thus, their reference points overlapped so completely that there was essentially zero bargaining room between the combatants, which is consistent with the fact that few genuine settlement offers were made, and none were ever considered seriously by the other side.

Thus, the general proposition that can be drawn from my prospect theory model of ethnic war termination is this: *The likelihood of an ethnic war ending in a negotiated settlement is directly proportional to the available bargaining range, which is inversely proportional to the degree of overlap between the combatants' reference points.*

Prescriptive implications of bargaining range. This nexus between reference points, bargaining range, and negotiated agreements has prescriptive implications for interventions meant to facilitate the termination of ethnic wars through settlements. Namely, so long as overlapping reference points leave the combatants with no bargaining range, no settlement is likely and no outside intervention short of massive,

²³⁰ After all, the two sides must still negotiate and agree to a mutually-acceptable settlement, which should not be taken as a given. Furthermore, the specific terms of the settlement and the facts on the ground may affect whether the combatants are in the domain of gains or losses, or how they view the certainty of the gains that accepting a settlement would bring. Security dilemma considerations, like those highlighted by Walter and Kaufmann, may be particularly relevant on this final point – combatants who fear their opponents will defect from the settlement are unlikely to view the potential gains from a settlement as certain, and may even fear that the settlement will cause them to suffer losses. Thus, rational choice models may be most relevant when there is little overlap between combatants' reference points.

overwhelming use of force is likely to get the ethnic combatants to abandon their war in favor of a negotiated peace.²³¹ Interventions undertaken in these cases cannot help but threaten one or more combatants with the specter of certain losses, and thus are likely to be met with violent resistance rather than open arms. Outside powers that feel compelled to intervene anyway should not do so complacently, and should act only after having considered that the costs of their operations, in both blood and treasure, may be higher than proponents would suggest, while the chances for success may be lower.

Intervention will have the greatest chance of success and will come at the least cost when there is little or no overlap between the combatants' reference points. Under those circumstances, international mediation may be helpful in bringing combatants to the bargaining table, and may help them to draft a settlement agreement that falls within the available bargaining range and is thus palatable to both parties. Having a thorough understanding of each side's objectives and making the best possible estimate of their reference points would aid mediators in this task. Within that bargaining range, international sticks and carrots may make settling more attractive and fighting less so, and international enforcement of population transfers or power-sharing may make the potential gains from settling more certain, thus inducing risk-averse combatants to settle.²³²

The most interesting and difficult cases will come when reference points overlap just slightly. Then there is little bargaining range, and thus little hope of a negotiated settlement. However, if outside powers could intervene to create bargaining range by affecting a shift in one of the combatants' reference points, then agreements could emerge where none were possible before.

Interventions targeting reference points. Thus, except in those cases where bargaining room exists and negotiated settlement is therefore already a possibility, humanitarian interventions will not make settlements more likely unless they can induce combatants to change their reference points or frame their choices differently. In particular, interveners may attempt to get combatants to renormalize their

²³¹ The ongoing U.S. effort to stabilize the civil war in Iraq shows that even a truly massive intervention force may not be able to persuade or, failing that, force ethnic combatants to negotiate or implement peace deals in good faith when those combatants do not consider the proposed compromises acceptable.

²³² Prospect theory is agnostic about which type of military intervention is appropriate, beyond pointing out which aspects of those proposed interventions are most likely to induce opposition by promoting a losses frame.

reference points to accommodate the status quo, or to lower their aspiration levels.²³³ The wider the bargaining range can be stretched, the more room there will be for settlements that combatants can frame as gains, the more likely combatants will be to adopt a risk-averse orientation, and consequently the more likely they will be to prefer the certainty of settling over the risks of fighting. And, as Levy notes, coercion is easier when the target is being asked to forego a gain rather than being forced to accept a loss (1996: 191). Interveners' coercive strategies will be more effective when there is more bargaining room.

Scholars of prospect theory have suggested some ways that manipulating of frames and reference points might be attempted which could be relevant to international intervention and ethnic war. First, promising client combatants that intervention will help them reverse losses they have suffered will be counterproductive. Interveners should go out of their way to stress that the cavalry is not coming to rescue the client and deliver its war aims.²³⁴ Instead, interveners should attempt to convince their clients that, if they are willing to abandon their aspiration levels and accept the status quo as their reference point, then their patrons will assist them by helping them to obtain the best possible settlement at the bargaining table. Combatant propaganda which legitimizes and perpetuates incompatible reference points should be discouraged, and outside powers should refrain from making statements about the justness of a particular combatant's causes which could have the same effect.

Second, Berejikian suggests that attempts to influence a combatant's payoffs may also affect how that combatant frames its choices (2002: 769-770). Namely, Berejikian argues that using excessive threats

²³³ To see why this would increase bargaining range, consider the following example. The Wolverines and Buckeyes are fighting for control of Michio, a country that has five regions: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. The Wolverines are the rulers of the country, and their reference point is to control all five regions. The Buckeyes, who are rebelling, have an aspiration level of controlling the Erie region, which is their homeland. During early fighting, the Buckeyes seize Erie and drive out Wolverine forces, but the two sides continue to fight. In this situation, there is no bargaining room because both the Wolverines and the Buckeyes include control of Erie within their reference points. But, consider what happens if the Wolverines renormalized their reference point to the status quo. Since their new reference point does not include possession of Erie, a settlement which allowed Erie to remain in Buckeye hands would no longer represent a loss for the Wolverines, and thus a partition deal becomes feasible.

²³⁴ Outside aid to combatants before a settlement has been reached should also be discouraged, since such aid may make it easier for combatants to retain their high, initial aspiration levels by underwriting their costs of fighting, inflating their perceived chances of victory, and leading them to hope that more decisive aid may be forthcoming. Byman and Seybolt (2003: 62) note that combatants who receive outside aid tend to become more intransigent and less willing to compromise; if such aid disinclines combatants from renormalizing their reference points, then prospect theory helps to explain this pattern.

to coerce combatants may lead them to adopt a losses frame and a risk-seeking orientation. Conversely, employing positive incentives may promote the use of a gains frame. If Berejikian is correct, interveners may be successful if they rely more heavily on carrots than on sticks. When interveners must rely on threats to get combatants to adopt desired behaviors, the penalties for non-compliance must be made as clear and as certain as possible. Uncertain or unclear sanctions for defying interveners will only make it more likely for risk-seeking combatants to do so, and thus irresolute threats – such as the early threats leveled against the Serbs in the Bosnian case – may be worse than no threats at all.²³⁵

Third, McDermott draws upon analogous research on framing and medical decisions to suggest that peace deals may seem more attractive if negotiators argue that settlements prevent future losses, rather than framing settlements as gains to be had (2004b: 299). Given loss aversion, the prospect of avoiding losses will resonate more strongly with ethnic combatants than the possibility of attaining gains.

Caveat emptor. While prospect theory suggests that, by inducing combatants to reframe their choices or to renormalize their reference points, outside parties might increase the bargaining room in an ethnic war and thus broaden the scope for successful humanitarian intervention, both psychological theories and experimental evidence provide reasons to be pessimistic about the success of such tactics (Butts, 2006). Such coercive reframing is likely to be difficult for several reasons.

First and foremost is the fact, discussed in chapter three, that prospect theory lacks an internal theory of framing. Thus, prospect theory can provide few, if any, reliable clues as to how frames and reference points can be manipulated; interveners who attempt to do so will have to rely on ad hoc approaches, and relying on ad hoc methods during such a high-stakes situation is a risk that should at least cause advocates of such intervention to think twice before proceeding.

Second, frames tend to be “sticky” – once a frame has been adopted, it resists change even if the facts on the ground change (McDermott, 1998: 22). Frames and reference points with strong historical roots are apt to be especially sticky. It is well and good to suggest that interveners should convince

²³⁵ This may have ramifications for coalition politics, suggesting that single-party interveners will be more effective than coalitions so long as there is a significant risk that the coalition cannot speak with one voice or may fail to act on its coercive promises or threats.

combatants to abandon their aspiration levels and renormalize to the status quo, but just how an outside party might be able to convince an ethnic combatant, for example, to abandon its demand to control the land that its people have called home for generations in favor of adopting what that group perceives as an unjust status quo as their basis for judgment, is a question without a simple answer. For interveners to prompt such reframing may be possible if the reference points are accepted only by a small group of leaders, but if such reference points are seen as legitimate by whole ethnic groups, it is difficult to see how the intervener's suggestions will carry more weight than history, tradition, and emotion.

Finally, while actors do have some control over which reference point they adopt when framing gains and losses, many situations strongly suggest their own reference points and frames. For example, the EPLF could hardly have framed the invasion of Ethiopian and Soviet combat troops into what it perceived to be its sovereign homeland as anything other than a loss, and it is hard to believe that any rhetorical manipulation would have brought the Eritreans to view the situation much differently.

Main takeaways. Thus, prospect theory and my psychological model of ethnic war termination generally suggest that, when combatants are in the domain of losses or when overlapping reference points leave them without bargaining room, humanitarian interventions meant to promote negotiated settlements will be resisted, often violently, and may even have the perverse consequence of leading combatants to escalate their fighting rather than submit to a settlement that would make their losses permanent. This may provide some theoretical insight into the shaky track record of such interventions in the past.

Prospect theory is useful for explaining the behaviors of ethnic combatants during humanitarian interventions into ethnic wars. More importantly, prospect theory highlights a number of obstacles that may make the intervention strategies proposed by rational choice theories more difficult than their advocates assume. As the Bosnian case demonstrates, once war erupts, killing starts, and territory changes hands, it will take more than a normatively "fair" peace plan to get combatants to settle. Problems of enforcement and defection are not the only barrier to peace deals. Stakes and objectives matter. Even robust settlements may be rejected by actors in the domain of losses, and such settlements will be scarce anyway so long as overlapping reference points leave the combatants without bargaining room. The level

of coercion needed to overcome loss aversion, concession aversion, and endowment effects will be high.

Thus, resistance to intervening troops may be greater than expected. This discredits arguments that intervention may be done on-the-cheap, since only minimal force will be required to halt ethnic violence.²³⁶ Prospect theory predicts that combatants will resist interventions that threaten them with losses, and will often do so ferociously and at great risk to themselves. As such, it will take more than the proverbial bop-on-the-nose to stop ethnic combat. Substantial troop deployments, significant use of force, and a willingness to endure high costs in blood and treasure may be required from intervening powers.

Prospect theory does not suggest that ethnic conflict is unstoppable, or that humanitarian interventions will never succeed. It does suggest, however, that the prospects for success are lower than rational choice theories assume. Policy makers should remember this when considering intervention, and should remain alert for the problems anticipated by prospect theory. At least, by trying to understand combatants' reference points and risk orientations, interveners may be able to judge when interventions are most likely to meet with violent opposition and who is most likely to oppose them because they are threatened with losses, or when interventions may be fruitful because substantial bargaining range exists.

Canadian Major General Lewis MacKenzie, a former head of the UNPROFOR mission in Sarajevo, later stated that: "The last thing a peacekeeper wants to know is the history of the region he is going into. It complicates the task of mediation" (quoted in Off, 2000: 123). Prospect theory suggests that MacKenzie is dead wrong. Thus, my prospect theory model of ethnic war termination emphasizes the need for scholars, policy makers, and military leaders to perform careful, case-by-case analyses of ethnic combatants and their objectives before intervening in their wars, rather than relying on magic-bullet intervention strategies derived from rational choice assumptions about ethnic civil war termination.

²³⁶ Take, for example, the oft-repeated claim that a small deployment of troops could have halted the Rwandan genocide. See: Solarz and O'Hanlon (1997: 11) and Mueller (2000: 44).

CONCLUSION

Writing in 1997, Levy commented on the increasingly divergent attitudes towards the rational choice paradigm in the psychological and political science communities:

It is ironic that just as rational choice has become the most influential paradigm in international relations and political science over the last decade, expected-utility theory has come under increasing attack by experimental and empirical evidence of systematic violations of the expected-utility principle in individual-choice behavior. (87)

Nearly a decade later, Kaufmann, commenting on the emergence of rational choice as a key paradigm for the study of ethnic civil war, wrote that: “The progressiveness of a research program may be assessed by its ability to generate new knowledge and by its ability to cope with anomalies” (2005: 181). On both those counts, applying prospect theory to ethnic war provides scholars and policy makers with added value over relying on the rational choice paradigm.

Rational choice models of civil war termination, like the three discussed in this thesis, have risen to prominence within academic and policy circles. Such models are important not only because they guide our theoretical understanding of ethnic war, but because they come with policy prescriptions for decision makers interested in reducing the human and economic cost of such wars by reducing their duration. However, in this thesis I raised theoretical and empirical questions about the ability of widely-cited expected utility and security dilemma models to explain and predict the decisions of ethnic combatants who must choose between resolving their differences at the bargaining table or on the battlefield.

As McDermott puts it, with recent advances in psychological research, “[t]he former black box of decision-making [has] burst open to reveal a whirlwind of cognitive processes” (2004a: 157). Prospect theory represents one of the most important advances in this area, and potentially one of the most useful for political science. Using the principles of prospect theory, I constructed a psychological model of ethnic war termination to account for the decisions of ethnic combatants that rational choice models cannot, and to provide added value when trying to explain why combatants choose to fight or settle. Then, using the Ethiopian-Eritrean civil war and the Bosnian civil war as case studies, I performed a first-brush test of my psychological model against the rational choice models. I believe the results of this test are

encouraging – they seem to support my hypotheses and indicate that prospect theory may provide a promising tool for answering my research questions.

However, this thesis has also highlighted several tasks that remain to be done, and has hopefully identified some useful lines for future research. First, more cases studies are needed to further build and refine my psychological model. Second, more close attention must be paid to developing reliable and testable methods for identifying the reference points employed by ethnic combatants and their perceptions about the relative risk levels associated with fighting versus settling. I have employed case-by-case research methods which I believe are adequate for answering these questions, but the development of more general principles would make my model easier to apply, permit analysts to draw more reliable conclusions, and facilitate large-scale testing of a psychological model. Third, the assumption that ethnic combatants are unified actors is a problematic foundation of both the rational choice models and my new model, and the case studies illustrate how internal politics can influence the actions of combatants. An effort must be made to incorporate internal divisions and group decision-making into models of ethnic war termination, rather than trying to deal with such phenomena on an ad-hoc basis.

Nevertheless, I believe this thesis indicates that prospect theory provides real added value over the rational choice paradigm for studying ethnic war termination, and this should provide the impetus for further research along these lines. At best, prospect theory may provide a more nuanced, adaptable, and descriptively-accurate picture of the decision-making behavior of ethnic war combatants. Ethnic combatants do not always behave as the axioms of rational choice theory predict they should. Prospect theory, which concerns itself with how decision makers *do* behave rather than how they *should* behave, may thus be a more fruitful source of insight about the choices of ethnic combatants. Additionally, for policy makers concerned about what may be done to reduce ethnic violence or end ethnic wars, knowing what combatants will do is more strategically useful than knowing what they should do (Mercer, 2005: 16). At the very least, a psychological model for ethnic war termination will have heuristic value if it causes policy makers and scholars to examine ethnic war in a new light, and to pay attention to such important issues as framing and risk orientation that are neglected within the rational choice paradigm.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Robert D. Butts graduated from Dartmouth College as valedictorian of the Class of 2006, earning his A.B. with a major in Government and a minor in Psychological and Brain Sciences. While at Dartmouth, he received numerous honors and awards, including the Chase Peace Prize from the John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding, the Edson Memorial Prize from the Department of Government, and the title of Class of 2006 Scholar from the Coed, Fraternity, and Sorority Community. He is a member of Alpha Theta Coeducational Fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa (Alpha of New Hampshire), and Order of Omega (Lambda Rho Chapter).

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