Collective Violence in Bosnia

Anthony Oberschall

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Sociology,
CB#3210, Hamilton Hall, Chapel Hill, NC, 27599-3210, U.S.A.
Email: tonob@gibbs.oit.unc.edu

Explanations for violence in ethnic and communal conflicts have rested on three views about ethnicity. In the "primordial" view, ethnic attachments and identities are a cultural given and a natural affinity, like kinship sentiments. They have an overpowering emotional and non-rational quality. Applied to the former Yugoslavia, the primordialist (e.g. Kaplan, 1993) believes that despite seemingly cooperative relations between nationalities in Yugoslavia, mistrust, enmity, even hatred were just below the surface, as had always been true in the Balkans. Triggered by fierce competition for political power during the breakup of Yugoslavia and driven by the uncertainties over state boundaries and minority status, these enmities and hatreds, fueled by fear and retribution, were activated and turned neighbor against neighbor, and district against district, in an expanding spiral of aggression and reprisals. In this view, the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing and atrocities are ordinary civilians, acting spontaneously, as much as they are the military and militias acting on a plan. Why atrocities? Because in human nature, there is a dark side, a flaw (call it original sin): fueled by fear and hatred in a partisan crowd, unchained and unrestrained, we are stripped of rationality and morality, as LeBon maintained at the turn of the century. Although the primordial account sounds plausible, much evidence on the nationalities in Yugoslavia and on the Bosnian civil war contradicts it.

In the second view, the "instrumentalist" view, ethnic sentiments and loyalties are manipulated by political leaders and intellectuals for political ends, such as state creation (Rosens, 1989). For the former Yugoslavia, the instrumentalist explanation highlights the Serbs' goal of a Greater Serbia (Cigar, 1995). Ethnic cleansing resulted from a historical longing by Serbs for a Greater Serbia, with deep cultural roots. Milosevic and Serb nationalists implemented it when the opportunity arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Greater Serbia required ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs from areas inhabited by a majority of Serbs and the corridors linking Serb population clusters. Although there is evidence that ethnic cleansing was a state policy, not just a spontaneous development, orchestrated by the highest authorities in Serbia and the Bosnian Serb leadership, this explanation ignores that many Bosnian Serbs did not want secession, and that only a minority of men of military age participated in ethnic cleansing and atrocities. As for Serbs in Serbia they refused to serve in large numbers in an army that was realizing the dream of Greater Serbia, and was protecting their brethren from non-Serbs. Manipulation alone did not accomplish the extremists' purpose. They achieved it by coercion and violence against their fellow ethnics and against their ethnic opponents.

There is a third view of ethnicity and ethnic conflict, the "constructionist" view. It was originally formulated by Kuper (1977) after studying collective violence in societies deeply divided on ethnicity, race and/or religion. It does not deny the insights of the primordial and of the instrumentalist views. Religion or ethnicity are very real social facts, but in ordinary times they are only one of several roles and identities that matter. There is a lot of variance in a population on ethnic attachments and identities. In the words of Linz and Stepan (1996: 366) "political

identities are less primordial and fixed than contingent and changing. They are amenable to being constructed or eroded by political institutions and political choices." Ethnic and religious issues can be manipulated by politicians and intellectuals to spread fear and insecurity. Polarization forces people to choose sides for protection. Ethnicity and religion can become as salient and emotional as the primordialists maintain. But communal violence and extremism are created by human agency. The outcome is not inevitable. Extremism wins not by persuasion but by violence: violence against the moderates in one's own ethnic group, and violence against other ethnic groups.

India is no stranger to communal violence. Even before partition, in 1945, bloodshed and violence followed religious meetings, parades and mobilization in Calcutta, East Bengal, Bihar, and the Punjab. India and Pakistan achieved independence in the summer of 1947 amidst huge population movements, rioting, and killing which spread from the Punjab to Bengal. Gandhi walked through East Bengal for peace, but violence persisted. The Punjab was in anarchy as Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs fought each other and minorities on both sides of partition fled to safety. Later, there was separatist terrorism in the Punjab, the army assault on the Golden Temple at Amritsar, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination and anti-Sikh riots has led to collective violence. There has been also instances of Hindu-Muslim riots in India.

As in the former Yugoslavia, the worst communal violence occurs over state formation, as at partition and in the Punjab, due to fear and insecurity of being or becoming a minority. In the more usual situation, the communal riot is ignited over religious symbols and conduct because violations of religious norms are offensive to the beliefs and identities of millions, and because religious processions and observances are frequent and public, and become the occasion for religious insults and disrespect by militants and provocateurs. Religious celebrations are thus a tense time, and ordinary people prepare for communal troubles, based on a long history of religious riots.

Communal violence is not spontaneous, sudden, and unpredictable. Nor is it innocent of instigators. Some politicians organize young men trained in body building and martial arts and indoctrinate them in religious fanaticism. They serve as the strong men in illicit protection rackets and are the shock troops in communal riots (Kakar, 1996). Ideologists spread fear, mistrust, lies and false accusations against other communities, and moderate voices are overwhelmed. Skillful politicians exploit the ignorance of uneducated voters and build following by turning one group against another. India hasn't drowned in communal violence, as Yugoslavia has, though there are some parallels: state formation as the occasion; politicians making a career on extreme nationalism and religious fundamentalism; the militias and paramilitaries organized by extreme nationalists; the long history of cooperation and living side by side punctuated by extreme collective violence. A major difference has been the lack of state breakdown in India.

The dynamics of ethnic conflict and violence follows a polarization-escalation process that ends in a spiral of collective violence. New partisan organizations form and extremist leaders become prominent; moderate leadership and organizations represent a broad spectrum of citizens, lack unity and are crosspressured into inaction; substantive negotiating issues get sidetracked and destruction of the opponent becomes paramount. As conflict becomes more contentious, communication between opponents is impoverished and distorted, opponents are negatively stereotyped, and each side closes ranks and suppresses dissent. After injuries and deaths, retaliation and pre-emptive strikes fuel the violence (Oberschall, 1973: 284-291).

Conciliation amidst violence is difficult. On top of substantive issues, there are "derivative" issues - the deaths, injuries, property losses deriving from the conflict itself. Assigning responsibility for these losses and bringing the perpetrators to justice, become contentious matters. The longer the violence persists, the more derivative issues pile up, and the less trust the antagonists have in negotiated agreements (Oberschall, 1993: 99-104).

Issues and outcomes vary on difficulty of resolution. Conflict over principles, in which

participants fight for group interests and ideals and not merely for personal advantage, are difficult. Conflict over symbols, which signify group ideals and identities, are difficult to compromise. Outcomes that are irreversible, uncertain and open-ended, rather than reversible and calculable, are difficult. Ethnic issues in major societal and state crises are over principles, such as self-determination, over symbols, over minority status that threaten to be irreversible with uncertain consequences (Oberschall, 1973: 49-64). Ethnic conflicts are thus high on difficulty for conciliation and resolution.

Applied to Yugoslavia, the conflict process can be summarized as follows:

(1) *Pre-crisis period*: ethno-national relations were cooperative and satisfactory at the grassroots in the former Yugoslavia, except for Kosovo. There was a wide spectrum of interethnic attitudes and conduct, but the moderates were in charge, and the extremists few and marginal.

(2) *Crisis and state breakdown*: the decline of communist party rule and the economic collapse of socialism in the 1980's created uncertainty for politicians and the people about the polity and the economy. One model was the democracy and market economy just then starting in Eastern Europe, in 1989 and 1990. The Yugoslav communist leaders had no experience with either, nor a deep commitment to them. On democracy there were political rivals who were more credible, and on a market economy businessmen had better credentials on how to organize it. Instead, the chief politicians decided on ethnonationalism, which threatened the integrity of the Yugoslav state and raised fears for many of becoming a permanent ethnic minority in one of the successor states. Voters who backed the nationalist successor parties to the various communist parties in the Republics were not however voting to break up the country, and were in the 1990 election not voting for ethnic cleansing and civil war.

(3) *Hate and fear in the mass media*: in these electoral victories, Serb and Croat nationalists gained control of their respective state-owned news media. To advance their program and increase support, the news media engaged in a campaign of stereotyping, vilification, and slander against other nationalities, which raised fears about the World War II collective violence and atrocities (that had targeted civilians in addition to combatants). Some credibility for the media campaign was provided when Serbs and Croats were fired from jobs and harassed in the mixed Serb-Croat districts of Croatia, depending on which group was in power.

(4) *Extremists and militias suppressed the moderates*: as the Yugoslav state and Yugoslav institutions broke up and became paralyzed, extremist leaders formed armed militias, some local, some spanning several districts, a few Republic wide. The militias claimed to protect their own nationals; in fact they also targeted moderates who sought compromise and non-violence in ethno-national relations. The militias were the instrument that suppressed the moderates within their own nationality, both leaders and citizens, who were in the majority at first. The authorities and the armies welcomed (and armed) the militias because there was a shortage of military personnel due to desertions and refusals to serve. The economic crisis fueled the militias, who were recruited from a huge pool of unskilled young men. As the depression worsened with the war's start, a huge criminal economy was created, fed by theft, loot, robbery, ransom of civilians who were captured, detained, ethnically cleansed and expelled, and whose property entered this economy. Extremist politicians and militia leaders create a patronage system and throve in this criminal economy. Many refugees and displaced persons eventually became supporters of extremists because their

homes, livelihood, and jobs depended on the extremists' continued success.

(5) *Militias and paramilitaries committed atrocities against civilians*: militias were not accountable in a military chain of command or to civilian superiors. They had been exposed to the media campaign dehumanizing other nationals; there was peer socialization to unbounded macho-violence; and there was the mission of ethnic cleansing entrusted to them by extremist politicians. Moderates were silenced, killed, or exiled. Militias perpetrated the vast majority of atrocities, with the connivance of the nationalist leaders. Though most atrocities and war crimes were perpetrated by Bosnian Serb and Serb militias, all nationalities have done it.

Some comments on the ethno-national polarization-escalation model are in order. The model is not just another commonplace statement about the center collapsing and the moderates losing to extremists. The model states that in an ethno-national conflict there are two parallel conflicts, one between ethnic groups, which is highly visible, and the other within ethnic groups, between moderates and extremists, which is less noted. Both conflicts together generate the spiral of violence. Also, the moderates are eliminated not in elections, not by persuasion, but by violence. Further, the moderates in state breakdown are not capable of defending themselves against the extremists in their own ethnic group. To stop the spiral of violence, external military force is necessary to prevent extremist militias from forming. Moderates have to be kept in control of police, courts, the machinery of governance, mass communication media. After the moderates have been overthrown, external military intervention, peacekeeping, relief and humanitarian aid do not stop the extremists and their militias, and do not prevent atrocities and war crimes.

Ethno-National Relations in Yugoslavia Before the Civil War

Except for Slovenia, every Republic had large national minorities, or a bimodal and trimodal nationality population. Most commentators characterized ethnic relations as good, or "live and let live," with the notable exception of Albanians in Kosovo (Oberschall, 1996b). In 1981, 8.6 per cent of all husband wife families with children were ethnically mixed, and the trend was for increase. On identity, to be sure, less than 5 per cent chose the "Yugoslav" identity, but I believe the research which forces respondent to chose only one national identity is flawed: most people are quite content to have nested multiple national identities. Rather, the civil war itself forces the citizenry to take sides, to narrow national identity by exclusion. As one reluctant victim of such polarization told David Rieff (1995: 12), echoing the constructionist view on ethnicity, "First I was a Yugoslav, then I was a Bosnian, now I am becoming a Muslim. It is not my choice. I don't even believe in God. But after 200,000 dead what do you want me to do? Everyone has to have a country to which he can belong."

The journalist Misha Glenny visited Knin, a hotbed of extremist militia activity, and writes:

> "Before May 1991 Croats and Serbs lived together [in Knin] in relative contentment... nobody in their wildest fantasy would have predicted that within 12 months...Croat soldiers would massacre innocent Serbs while Serb fighters would mutilate innocent Croats" (Glenny, 1992: 19-20).

Indeed, most ordinary people were stunned by the violence that descended upon them, unexpectedly. Jeri Laber (1993), the human rights activist, talks to refugees in a camp: "How was it before the war?" A young man whose wife was raped before his very eyes by a Serb he knew replies "Yesterday we were friends...I shake when I think of it. I can't believe it happened...overnight we became enemies; I don't know why." Another refugee says, "Before the war it was super...my neighbors were Muslims, Croats. We celebrated our holidays together. A few months before war broke out, people started separating. It was after Bosnia's independence was recognized. Our neighbors avoided us."

Mazowiecki (1993: §24), the former Polish prime minister and human rights violations rapporteur for the UN in the former Yugoslavia interviews a Muslim refugee from Prijedor: "In Prijedor, there were no conflicts between

nationalities. We didn't make the distinction. My colleague at work was an Orthodox Serb, we worked together. When we were children we went to the Orthodox church or the mosque together. I don't understand. Before there were never any problems between us. We lived together. My sister is married to a Serb and a brother of my wife is married to a Croat."

For those who are not satisfied with anecdotal evidence, there is survey research on ethnic relations from mid-1990 when the constitutional crisis was already in full swing. Of a national sample of 4232 Yugoslavs, only 7 per cent believed that the country would break up into separate states, and 62 per cent reported that the "Yugoslav" affiliation was very or quite important for them (Cohen, 1993: 173). On ethnonational relations, in workplaces, 36 per cent characterized them as "good," 28 per cent as "satisfactory," and only 6 per cent said "bad" and "very bad." For ethnonational relations in neighborhoods, 57 per cent answered "good," 28 per cent "satisfactory," and only 12 per cent chose "bad" and "very bad." Although rating interpersonal relations positively, respondents were apprehensive about deteriorating relations in their republic and the federal level, i.e. in politics and public affairs (Yugoslav Survey, 1990: 25-26).

Crisis: Nationalists Win the 1990 Elections

The Yugoslav crisis was triggered by the international crisis of communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There was the steady decline of the socialist economies and the disintegration of communist parties. As in other communist states, the Yugoslav communist leaders wanted to remain in power but had no experience with, credibility on, and commitment to democracy and a market economy. Instead they appealed to and ran on ethnicity and nationality. As happened elsewhere in Central Europe, there was a proliferation of political parties, 17 in Slovenia, 33 in Croatia, 41 in Bosnia. The voters lacked information; the news media was inexperienced about multiparty elections; political parties and leaders had limited time and resources to organize and campaign. According to Woodward, campaigns centered on "symbols and personalities":

In a world of competing symbols and personalities, at a point of political transition, nationalism has a particular advantage. The message is simple, relies on the familiar, takes little resources, does not have to develop a new political language and explain the complexities of democratic institutions and market economy...nationalist appeals thus provide the easiest route to politics for politicians without established constituencies and party organization (Woodward, 1995: 124).

Even so, the most nationalist parties did not win a majority of the vote. In Croatia, the HDZ won 41.5 per cent of the popular vote, but that translated into 58 per cent of seats in the legislature. In Serbia, Milosevic and the SPS got 47 per cent of the eligible voters, 65 per cent of those voting, and 78 per cent of the seats. A vote for a nationalist politician and party was not necessarily a vote for an independent state and secession from Yugoslavia. In Bosnia, public opinion polls in 1990 and 1991 showed huge majorities against separation from Yugoslavia (Woodward, 1995: 119,121,225,228).

The outcome of the 1990 elections and the actions of nationalist leaders unleashed apprehension, uncertainty and fear about the future form of the Yugoslav state, the boundaries of successor state, and the security of ethnic minorities (Oberschall, 1996b). Lake and Rothchild (1996: 41-43) have written that "intense ethnic conflict is most often caused by collective fears of the future," and "when central authority declines, groups become fearful of their survival...state weakness...is a precondition for violent ethnic conflict to erupt." Strong states in intense ethnic conflict, the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland, the Republic of South Africa, the state of Israel, experience ethnic riots, small insurgencies, terrorism, but they manage to stop the escalation of collective violence. In Yugoslavia, the state's authority broke down.

State Breakdown and the Army

In the two years preceding the outbreak of civil war, there was state breakdown in Yugoslavia in the ethnically mixed contested areas. Federal and Republic institutions were no longer

working, and the authority of the new states in the process of formation was rejected by ethnic minorities. This was especially true for the military, the JPA (also known as the JNA). Although it was one of the largest armies in Europe and its top leaders committed to a single Yugoslav state even after the politicians had settled on division, it became paralyzed and divided, partial to the local Serbs, unable or unwilling to disarm the militias that were terrorizing civilians and fighting each other. In many places, it blew up its bases and supplies before they would fall into the combatants hands; in other instances, local commanders passed weapons to extremists, especially the Serb militias and the Bosnian Serb army being organized.

By 1990-91, the JPA was short of manpower. There was massive desertion, refusals to be drafted by going into exile or abroad, near mutinies of soldiers who refused to get out of armored troop carriers to fight and be shot at. Glenny (1992: 131) writes: "In Belgrade when a mass mobilization of reservists was ordered, only 10 per cent of those liable reported." At the front in eastern Slavonia there was chaos in the army. A Macedonian reserve officer who had deserted described it:

Most of the JNA soldiers just wanted to go home alive, while the reservists who came from Vojvodina, Hungarians and Serbs, rebelled in whole units, running away and mutinied. Croats were excused on the front line although I suspect this was because commanders were afraid of treachery...Fighting with the JNA were Chetniks and Arkanovci [two notorious militias]. There was tremendous tension between the JNA, the reservists, the non-Serbs in the JNA and the Serbs, the locals, the Arkanovci, and the Chetniks (quoted in Glenny, 1992: 131).

On the Croats they were fighting the officer reports "if we ever took a Croat position, there was always much evidence of drug taking." The fighters committed atrocities. "In K. the Croats slaughtered a large group of aged Serbs while...the Chetniks threw a grenade into a bomb shelter where fifteen Croat civilians had taken refuge." He concluded: "Searching for the one who started it is a waste of time. Once it had started the massacres were unstoppable... this is not war, this is extermination." (Glenny, 1992:124-5). But far worse was yet to come in

Bosnia the following year.

In this chaotic military, one understands how commanders would welcome, arm and rely on militias who would actually fight the enemy, fanatic volunteers that they were. The military reservists, called the Territorial Defense Forces (TDF), were under local commanders and not trained and organized for other than local operations. According to Glenny (1992: 135), local commanders often acted like independent war lords: "Military operations...carried out [by them] were often beyond the control of their superiors." The TDF later became the nucleus for the Bosnian army, and contributed to the Bosnian Serb army as well. As the JPA lost control on maintaining peace and security, or openly sided with the Serbs, and the nationalist politicians and extremist leaders sought to establish sovereignty in their new country and control of a district, all including the JPA used militias for their purposes.

The most destructive battle in the Croat-Serb war, the long siege of Vukovar which ended with its total destruction, was primarily a battle between Croat and Serb militias or paramilitaries, though the JPA did the artillery bombardment (Woodward, 1995: 266). On the Croat side were Ustasha bands called the Zebras and renegade groups from the Croat National Guard, such as the "Wolves of Vukovar"; on the Serb side, Chetniks under Seselj. At the end of the siege, both sides agreed to evacuate civilians and 700 wounded under Red Cross and EC monitors. Yet in a move that was to foreshadow the Bosnian massacres, the JPA separated the men from the women and children, and the men were not handed over. Instead they were marched into detention camps, beaten, tortured, and some who never were seen again killed and buried in mass graves. Weeks later the surviving men were released to Croat authorities (Silber and Little, 1995: 195ff). Although the EC monitors and Red Cross officials were there, they were not a deterrent nor did the Serbs get sanctioned.

Hatred and Propaganda Through the Mass Media

After the elections of 1990 and 1991 in the Republics the nationalist parties who won gained control of the news media, and especially

television, which used to be under communist party control. This control intensified what had already become a massive campaign of ethno-national mobilization based on negative ethnic stereotyping, falsification of history and lying about current events, and hate mongering. According to Helsinki Watch,

By the end of the 1980s, political debate at the federal level had declined to merely a politics of resentment between the various national groups...history has been used as either an opportunity to merely express resentment toward other ethnic groups or to excuse mistreatment. The constant invocation of history to bolster ethnic nationalism has impeded the search for lasting and equitable political solutions to ethnic strife in Yugoslavia (Helsinki Watch 1992: 82).

As Woodward noted (1995: 232), much of this propaganda was meant to persuade of the impossibility of nations living together. Cigar (1995) thoroughly examined and documented the stream of negative stereotypes of Muslims in Serbia put out by intellectuals, parties and leaders, academies, orientalists and historians, church leaders whose purpose and consequence was to "dehumanize" the Muslims, always a necessary step before the unleashing of genocidal violence, according to studies by Fein (1979) and Kuper (1977). Mark Thompson in *Forging War: the Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia- Hercegovina* (1994) and the UN in a special report on the media during the civil war all concur on essential points. As for the print media, privatization of state property and state licensing "provided a means and a cover for dismissing editorial boards, closing journals and newspapers, and imposing state control...as well as to squelch opposition" (Woodward, 1995: 231).The Serb movement for media freedom mobilized hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in Belgrade in the Spring and Summer of 1991, but was suppressed by force. The Milosevic nationalists established a media monopoly in Serbia (Oberschall, 1996b).

Propaganda poisoned ethnic relations. Glenny reports conversations with people of all sorts, who pick up the phrases and arguments and stereotypes from the media and dish it up for him, sometimes as the "undisputed truth" and sometimes more polemically. Especially tell-ing is how the moderates in Knin a year later have vanished, in part under the influence of the local radio station:

Without a doubt one of the most important actors on the Knin stage which transformed the consciousness of this dozy town was...Serbia Radio Knin...the people of Knin were extremely dependent on this radio station...Radio Knin is an accomplice in the dissemination of falsehood and the perpetuation of divisive myth which has turned one hapless narod [people] against another equally innocent one (Glenny, 1992).

The model does not assume that 100 per cent or even a majority of the people are transformed by propaganda; 10 to 20 per cent will do, as long as they are armed, organized and there is no superior armed force to stop them.

Militias Take Over

State breakdown and the falling apart of the Yugoslav army enabled warlords and militias to fill the power vacuum. There were many militias, also called paramilitaries, in the Bosnian civil war, and in Croatia. A militia is a volunteer quasi-military group, but not under a military chain of command and not accountable to a military or civilian authority. They are often supplied with weapons and uniforms from the military, trained by the military, and coordinate their operations with the military (as had been the case in Vukovar); they may be paid some, but that is a small part of the members' take from criminal actions. In Serbia, militia members were sometimes weekend volunteers who made attacks on Bosnian targets, and worked in regular jobs on weekdays. A UN report (Bassiouni, 1994) lists some 83 known paramilitaries in Bosnia alone, 53 for Serbs with an estimated total of 20-40,000 members; thirteen Croat militias, with 12-20,000 members; and 14 Bosniac, with four to six thousand participants, operating between June 1991 and late 1993, at which time many were absorbed into the regular armies or had disbanded. There were also foreign volunteers and mercenaries, in unknown numbers, who made up this body of irregular military. In the Krajina part of Croatia, there was an estimated twelve thousand paramilitaries, the

largest militia was Milan Martic's "Marticevci" who not only terrorized Croats but silenced the Serb moderates.

Militias or paramilitaries originated in multiple ways. Before the breakup of Yugoslavia, political parties newly formed in the contest to succeed the communists created militias, much as had been the case in post World War I Europe when parties had their brown shirts and black shirts and green shirts, to intimidate rivals, attack their headquarters, protect their supporters and the like. In fact it was standard operating procedure for the communists to have a citizen militia based in workplaces to back up the police and security forces when necessary. During state breakdown local militias formed behind extremist leaders and were supplied with weapons from Serb nationalist and government sources. Seselj, commander of the largest Serb militia, was head of the Serbian Radical Party, had run for president and come in fourth, and had originally formed volunteers to defend Serbs in the Krajina in 1990. Serb activists from Serbia sponsored by the Serb government infiltrated Serb communities in Bosnia and Croatia and organized armed militias; the largest such operation was called RAM, started in 1990 with the complicity of the JPA, when convoys of trucks loaded with weapons and ammunition were shipped to militant Serbs in Bosnia and were used to create militias. RAM was uncovered when taped conversations between Milosevic and Karadzic were leaked by a political foe (Glenny, 1992: 152). Militants in the Croat HDZ similarly distributed weapons and organized Croat militias in the Serb majority areas of Croatia (Glenny, 1992: 77).

Recruitment into the militias drew from a huge reservoir of unemployed young men, many from rural and mountain districts, who would act out their macho-military fantasies with uniforms and weapons, fiercely loyal to a commander, praised by propaganda as the saviors and heroes of their ethnic group, exempt from the draft, under limited supervision and not accountable to higher authority, and with unlimited possibility for enrichment through loot and robbery of civilians, from autos to stereos, furniture, appliances, VCRs, jewelry, money (Deutsche Marks). As the civil war progressed, more schools and industry shut down, and more young men entered the pool; as well, as production declined, the goods and money looted and extorted from the growing number of refugees, ethnically cleansed or fleeing ahead of disaster, which grew to two million, constituted a huge part of the criminal-blackmarket-war profiteer economy that replaced the regular economy. One observer characterizes the typical militia-criminality link as follows:

> Most of these men started out in small bands and were allowed to train quite openly on their national territory. They developed a rhetoric of strident patriotism...[they] had no qualms about robbing, murdering, massacring and raping. A large number became rich from the war, filling their trucks with the entire furnishings from homes and apartments and selling their booty on a soon flourishing black market. Many of these volunteers returned home to invest their profits in legal and illegal businesses (Udovicki and Ridgeway, 1995: 137).

With the breakdown of discipline in the JPA, some military operations became huge looting expeditions. When Serb and Montenegrin reservists advanced on Dubrovnik, "they plundered and burned every single house" over the Croat border. In Montenegro marketplaces, "the going price of a brand new VCR was between 50-75 DMs." A reservist who looted the duty free shop at Dubrovnik airport tells Glenny (1992: 133): "We began the party of a lifetime. It lasted two days and two nights. We had... all the whiskey, vodka, gin and cognac we liked."

Many militias had names like gangs: "Tigers", "Eagles", "Wolves"; others were called after their leaders name, "Seseljovci"; or after World War II partisan groups, "Chetniks". Many militias were local, under a local commander, small in number, perhaps not even wearing a uniform or badge, just armed men; others had several hundred members, uniformed, heavily armed, coordinating with each other and the regular military.

However they originated, whether spontaneously or from outside the local district, the larger militias were working hand in hand with government for military operations, weapons training, ethnic cleansing. "Arkan", head of one of the largest and most active and destructive

militias, the Serbian Volunteer Guard a.k.a. "Tigers", with up to one thousand men, had tanks, mortars, AK-47s and Scorpion machine guns. He had a criminal record starting as a juvenile, and was wanted for armed robbery in several European countries. His Tigers participated in huge ethnic cleansing operations, as in Zvornik in April-June 1992, supported by JPA artillery. One eyewitness, a UNHCR official, saw thousands fleeing the city on foot, many wounded, and five truckloads of bodies, of civilians, being removed to be dumped into mass graves (Silber and Little, 1995: 223). Arkan's men were indoctrinated to kill civilians. According to a Russian mercenary who trained at Arkan's Erdut militia camp Erdutin Serbia, he was startled by the "brutality drummed into the heads of the fighters: 'a Serbian patriot is merciless towards the enemy; he does not have the right to spare the latter's children, women, or aged" (Cigar, 1995: 64). Arkan was also involved in huge black market and smuggling to break the sanction against Serbia. For a time he was elected to the Serb parliament.

The Bassiouni report (UN 1994) and Human Rights Watch (1992) detail atrocities committed by the militias as well as others. Robert Block (1993) managed to interview a Bosnian Croat killer from Tuta Naletalic's notorious militia which provides an insight into the mentality of war criminals. They had perpetrated a massacre of Muslims at Ahmici, a village without a military target, when fleeing villagers were ambushed after shelling and executed at close range. The others were blown up when hand grenades were tossed into houses. A total of 190 civilians, including women and children were butchered in a few minutes. Tuta's men call themselves a death squad or special punishment unit. The men "look as if they had been cast as thugs by a movie director." One of them admits they attacked a village and had come across 12 civilians hiding in a house: "We killed them. There was no other way. There was no one behind us who could take prisoners...very often they shoot you in the back. Even the old people." He also says: "I really don't hate Muslims...but because of the situation I want to kill them all." When asked to explain why such militias kill civilians, Mate Boban, leader of the Bosnian Croats merely says, "The Muslims did it to themselves."

When all is said and done, how could these militiamen , some regular army, and some civilians commit atrocities?

In any conflict there are moderates, usually the majority at the start, who condemn and oppose the violence of extremists, and who stand for norms of civility, for compromise, for boundaries in conflict. But in the former Yugoslavia the moderates were intimidated, threatened, expelled and killed. Few remained to stand for moderation, and the extremists captured power and public opinion. They seized the news media already before the war's start, and for two years spewed forth a massive stream of suspicion, fear, hatred, and falsehood against other nationalities that was not countered or contested. Several normative principles and beliefs were drummed into the hearts and minds of the people, especially the Serbs and Bosnian Serbs, which lower inhibitions against killing civilians, dehumanize other nationalities, and in fact mandate violence against them all.

a. *Collective guilt* — "they" act in unison; children grow into adults; women give birth to future warriors; even old people stab you from behind; "they" will never change.

b. *Revenge and retaliation* — "they" massacred "us" in the past, and are about to do it again, in fact they have already started. A settling of scores is justified; an eye for an eye.

c. *Deterrence/first strike* — disable them before they strike, which is what they are about to do, despite appearances, because they are secretive and treacherous.

d. *Danger/survival* — these are extraordinary times, one's entire nationality is threatened. and extreme measures are justified.

e. *Legitimacy* — ordinary people and militias are justified in taking extreme measures because the constituted authorities have not come to the defense of our people.

These then are the rationalizations and the justifying norms of unrestrained collective violence. These beliefs and normative principles become an article of faith among the militias and some of the population. Thus on top of the economic gain, the peer pressure, and lack of accountability, there is in the hearts and minds of the perpetrators of atrocities a license to commit them. Not all of the combatants in the

Bosnian civil war fought outside the bounds of the accepted rules of war. The armies had periodic exchanges of prisoners of war; presumably POWs were properly housed and fed, unlike civilian detainees in camps. There were exchanges of civilians across the nationality divide, especially Muslim-Croat, complicated by finding suitably matched housing. Some of this occurred under the surveillance of international observers, peacekeepers and relief agencies, but then, some of the worst atrocities, as at Srebrenica, took place right under the noses of peacekeepers as well. The difference between the war on civilians and the war between the armies was that armies would retaliate, tit for tat, but civilians could not.

In accounting for the motivations and actions of the militias, it should be remembered that they are a small though not negligeable part of the population. No one is indicting an entire people. In the 1991 census, there are 1.4 million Serbs in Bosnia. If half are women, that leaves seven hundred thousand men, and an estimate of 200,000 men between ages 15 to 35. The UN estimated 20-40,000 Bosnian Serb militiamen. If we assume that every militia was involved in some atrocities, that is 10-20 per cent of the males in the prime military service years. Many others were in the military, but many of these were serving because it was a war and they were defending their own kind or because they were trapped with nowhere to go when called up (Udovicki and Ridgeway, 1995: 136-7). Unfortunately ten percent of adult males in militias is more than enough for death and destruction on a massive scale.

The Extremists Eliminate the Moderates

The overthrow of moderates by extremists or radicals is well-known in the great revolutions: Girondins were overthrown by the Jacobins in the French revolution and all groups were overthrown by the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution. The means of seizing power are similar. The radicals create parallel governance to the state and come to exercise de facto authority in many institutions, and armed militias and/or defecting troops stage a *coup d'etat*. Then the remaining moderates are purged and killed in the Terror (Brinton, 1957).The overthrow

of moderates by extremists has also been observed in ethno-national conflicts. It happened in Rwanda before the genocide when Hutu extremists targeted and attacked Hutu moderates (Prunier, 1995). Similarly in the Palestinian intifada after 1987 there were few Israeli casualties compared to many Palestinian moderates assaulted by the insurgents — typically merchants' stores were arsoned when they refused to join a strike and "collaborators" were condemned in secret tribunals run by Hamas fundamentalists (Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990). Kuper (1977) provides examples from other ethno-national conflicts. In Bosnia, and the mixed ethnic districts of Croatia, the same thing happened.

Although the moderates and the extremists are nationalists, the moderates favor negotiations and compromise to attain goals, whereas the extremists resort to threats, coercion, and violence. Though the moderates are in the majority, the extremists prevail for the same reasons they win in the great revolutions. When there is state breakdown, to govern is a disadvantage. Extremists create ethnic incidents, yet the moderates are not capable of protecting the life and property of the citizenry. The economic crisis feeds unemployment, but the moderates lack the resources for a recovery program. The extremists are united and willing to use force; the moderates are tolerant and democratic and lack unity. The extremists train and arm militias; the moderates count on negotiations and on international diplomacy.

Knin is a good example of how moderates were purged by the extremists. Ethnic relations between Croats and Serbs were good. But as Croatia was moving towards independence, the Krajina Serbs became apprehensive. A local dentist, Babic, became a political leader, backed by a militia under a local police inspector, Martic. According to Glenny (1992: 19-21), these two and their men went around town intimidating the moderate Serbs in Knin who believed Babic was driving them towards a senseless war, and pressuring them to enlist for volunteer duty in the militia, A similar fate befell Glina, another initially moderate city in the Krajina:

> Babic had been sending emissaries from Knin in an attempt to undermine the social-democratic forces in Glina in favor of the militant nationalist line. The Serbs

in Glina resisted Babic's bloody entreaties until June [1990], but by then they felt that they had no longer a choice — it was Croats or Serbs, and they were Serbs (Glenny, 1992: 93).

In a Bosnian example reported by Mazowiecki (1992: §8-11), "According to a witness [from Bosanska Dubica], the elected authorities who were moderates or who tried to prevent acts of violence were dismissed or replaced by Serbian extremists." And then ethnic cleansing got started in the city.

In an other instance in Croatia, villagers in Miokovici, Croats and Serbs together, defended themselves successfully for several months against all comers, Croat militia and Serb militia. Eventually they were forced to evacuate and resettle in Bosnia. Once there, they were dispossessed of their weapons and robbed by a Serb militia and separated. Such an example of ethnic cooperation could not be tolerated by the extremists (Udovicki and Ridgeway, 1995: 160). An even worse fate befell Serbs in Teslic on June 2, 1992 when they refused to cooperate with the JPA and Serb militia in persecuting Muslims and Croats there. They were executed by their fellow Serbs. In Bratunac, a Serb family accused of hiding Muslims and the Serb police commander who opposed killing local Muslims were both executed (Mazowiecki, 1993). Vulliamy (1994) writes how in Mostar extremists of all groups, Croat, Muslim, and Serb, hunted down moderates — called "collaborators" — in their own ethnic territory. The moderates in Banja Luka were overthrown by Arkan's militia while UN peacekeepers were stationed in the city. The UN commander explained that he lacked a mandate to intervene (Human Rights Watch, 1992).

Other methods were aimed at killing moderate leaders, such as the murder of Josip Rheil-Kir, the regional Croat police chief of the Slavonian part of Croatia, a moderate who had negotiated cease fires between villages and towns, between Serbs and Croats, and who was gunned down by an HDZ (Croat) extremist.

The overthrow of the moderates by the extremists need occur only in one ethnic group for the polarization and spiral of violent conflict to get started, though it will be more rapid and intense if it occurs in both or all ethnic groups. Restraint by one ethnic group is not enough to check the violence, and restraint will weaken as casualties mount. The overthrow of the moderates is not a single event but takes place in many cities, towns and villages over a period of time. In some localities there are no extremists; in others, the moderates hold them in check, at least for a time. But extremists fan out from centers of strength with organizers and militias to gain control everywhere. Help for extremists comes from outside the country: weapons, volunteers, expatriates, mercenaries. The overthrow of the moderates results from the diffusion of extremism against opposition.

Ethnic Cleansing and Atrocities

The UN's "Bassiouni Report" defines ethnic cleansing as "...rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force of intimidation..." It is carried out by "murder, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention, extrajudicial executions, rape and sexual assault...displacement and deportation of civilian populations, deliberate military attacks and threats of attacks on civilians and civilian areas." All of these occurred in Bosnia. The Report concluded that ethnic cleansing there was not sporadic but deliberate, under "superior direction." (UN 1994, § 123, 129, 142).

Cigar, who examined the record thoroughly, concurs:

> Ethnic cleansing seems to have followed a premeditated strategy...what occurs forms a pattern which suggests adherence to general top-down policy guidance... and a degree of coordination... with unofficial and government circles in Belgrade...Serbia based roving militias sponsored by Serbia's ruling Socialist Party, as well as forces organized by such Serb politicians as Seselj, Arkan, Draskovic — were often the key implementers of ethnic cleansing...More heavily armed conventional forces, however, also played an important role (Cigar, 1995: 47,54).

To many, the whole point of the Bosnian war was ethnic cleansing, to carve out a "pure Serb" chunk of Bosnian territory. The destruction of mosques, cemeteries, schools, libraries, monuments after the Muslims had been expulsed was to ensure the survivors would

never want to come back after the destruction of their cultural, religious and social infrastructure (Ali and Lifschulz, 1994: 368). The selective execution of Muslim leaders, professionals and intelligentsia was meant to disorganize Muslim refugees, render them incapable of collective action, and make them dependent on their captors and on international relief agencies. The brutal, public rapes of Muslim women were also meant to deter return. Atrocities were so brutal and meaningless that for some time they were not believed. At Sokolina, in 1992, Muslims were herded into a bus for an alleged "prisoner exchange." Instead they were blown up with anti-tank rockets and dumped into a mass grave. A wounded survivor buried under bodies managed to escape at night to tell.

The magnitude of ethnic cleansing was enormous. More than a million Bosnian Muslims were forced out or fled from their homes after Serb rule was established in their districts. The total number of refugees and displaced persons of all nationalities was closer to two million, out of a population of 4.3 million in 1991.

Good relations between local Serbs and Muslims did not save a city from ethnic cleansing (Udovicki and Ridgeway, 1995: 183). Trebinje in Eastern Hercegovina enjoyed cooperative ethnic relations until the end of 1992. In January 1993, the order went out to all Muslims to leave town in the next few days. A delegation of Muslims were told by the town council they had nothing to do with the order. Out of town extremists — militias — broke into Muslim homes unhindered, arsoned some, burned the mosque. After these attacks the Muslims decided to leave, paying huge fees to local bus owners. Their homes and possessions became the booty of militia members. Some houses were used to resettle Serb refugees from elsewhere.

The Bassiouni Report and Mazowiecki's periodic reports describe many instances of help and rescue across ethnic groups by ordinary citizens. Some of these good Samaritans paid a heavy price for their actions. It is sad to report that these rescuers scarcely made a dent on the overall ethnic cleansing and atrocities. As with the rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe, what mattered for the Jewish survival rate was not one-on-one but organized rescue by an underground, the resistance, church groups (Fein,

1979; Oberschall, 1996a). In Serb-held Bosnia, organized rescue and organized opposition was not possible. Even UN peacekeepers failed to stop many atrocities.

Prevention

International intervention in recent ethnonational conflict has failed to prevent mass death and destruction. Horowitz is surely right when he observes that "what stands out is how ineffective the international community has been in imposing a modicum of civility on even small states...it was in a position to coerce: Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Bosnia..." (quoted in Sisk, 1996). The polarization-escalation model can explain why such intervention has been ineffective.

After the extremists have organized powerful, well armed, indoctrinated militias, and have seized power — a period that has taken from six months to two years in known genocides — it is too late to prevent self-sustaining, spiraling collective violence with atrocities and possibly genocide. Intervention has to come before the moderates on all sides have been silenced and eliminated.

There exists a window of opportunity for effective intervention before escalation. As one observer put it," the time to intervene in the former Yugoslavia was in 1989 and 1990" and not in 1992 after the war's start (Sisk, 1996). Intervention is not enough; it is the character of the intervention that matters. Human Rights Watch (1992: 15) puts it bluntly: "Efforts by the international community to bring peace to Bosnia-Hercegovina generally have failed. The United Nations, the European Community, and the United States have focused attention on negotiations and maintaining ceasefires." These measures will not do.

Moderates have to be protected. They have to continue in governance, control police and administer justice, and be responsible for and capable of protecting the life and property of the people. In short, the moderates have to be protected from armed extremists, at least until they become strong enough to do so on their own. There are only two ways of ensuring that. Either an external military force — and my preference would be for a permanent, volunteer UN

intervention force suggested some years ago by Brian Urquhar — disarms the extremist militias and guarantees security until political stability is established, or moderates have to be armed for defending themselves and for staying in power, which will also take some external help in the form of training and weapons.

The reasons for intervention early on during the window of opportunity are several:

a. The size of the military intervention force will be a lot smaller than the size of the "peacekeepers" later in the conflict.

b. In early intervention, outsiders will work with moderates; in later interventions, the moderates will have been eliminated, and outsiders have to negotiate with extremists. Moderates are easier to work with for conflict resolution, and ethnic moderates are more likely to compromise with each other than ethnic extremists.

c. The longer one waits, the fewer moderates there remain on all sides. Moderates flee, they are killed and silenced, and some become extremists during the violence.

d. Military intervention does not rule out concurrent diplomacy; in fact it will make diplomacy more credible.

e. Many later extremists could have been prevented from becoming extremists. Most of the young and adult men who join militias could have been inducted into disciplined, paid, organized military units under the command of moderate officers and political authorities. They could enforce law and order, peace and cooperation under moderates instead of committing atrocities under the extremists.

The purpose of military intervention is to stop impending collective violence, especially against civilians, and to stem refugee flows; to disarm extremists; to protect moderates; to create a military force under moderate command; to keep moderates in power; and to withdraw when these goals have been accomplished. My study does not cover the legal, diplomatic, military and logistic dimensions of external military intervention, topics that have received a great

deal of study in international relations, by governments, by international agencies, by foundations, and by foreign policy and military think tanks. If the conflict dynamic I have outlined is valid, only external military intervention will stop escalation to massive violence, and the opportunity to intervene is before the moderates have been overthrown. The effectiveness of late military intervention is very much in doubt (Lake and Rothchild, 1996: 66). Regardless of early and late intervention and the mix of diplomacy with military force, a long term solution for ethnic conflict based on power sharing and institutional reform will have to be negotiated by ethnic groups (Sisk, 1996). With early intervention, the negotiators are more likely to be moderates and pragmatists than extremists, there will be no burden of refugees, and the economy will not be destroyed by war and civil strife.

Intervention requires early warning on impending polarization-escalation dynamics and the danger of collective violence (Fein, 1994). If the model is valid, the most obvious indicator is the formation of militias and the inability or unwillingness of the constituted authorities to protect the lives and property of all the people. The second signal is the ethnic hate and fear campaign in the news media, the falsification of history, the dehumanization of future targets, the fabrication of lies, ethnic incidents and provocations. The third signal is threats, intimidation, beatings, assassinations of moderates and their ouster from jobs and state positions. The fourth indicator, when the window of opportunity is closing, is when atrocities are not stopped and go unpunished, as happened in Vukovar in the fall of 1991.

Conclusion

There are three approaches to ethnic conflict and violence in deeply divided societies, the primordialist, the instrumentalist, and the constructionist. In the first two, ethnic groups are homogeneous and bent on destroying one another, either from deep hatreds and fears or from design. In the constructionist view, an ethnic group includes moderates and extremists. The moderates favor negotiation and non-violent conflict resolution with other ethnics, whereas the extremists resort to force and

violence. The relative numbers of moderates and extremists and the distribution of power between them depends on the dynamic of a conflict process I call the *polarization-escalation model*. Unless stopped, the process ends in a spiral of collective violence.

The ethnic conflict is triggered by major crises in the economy and the polity which, in a multinational state such as Yugoslavia, created uncertainty and fear about the form of the state, its boundaries, and the minority status of various groups. Amid state breakdown, a double, parallel conflict unfolds. Within an ethnic group, extremists challenge the moderates, and there is contention and conflict between ethnic groups. Though they are a majority, as in the great revolutions the moderates are overthrown by the extremists. The means for accomplishing the seizure of power are militias trained and indoctrinated by the extremists. When they have seized power in their own ethnic group, the extremists attack other ethnic groups and the conflict spirals out of control. As outrages and casualties mount, moderates become extremists, and polarization is complete.

Collective violence is not perpetrated by ordinary citizens against their neighbors and townspeople of a different ethnicity. Without accountability, egged on by ethnic hate and fear propaganda, attracted by the opportunity to loot and rob, it is the militias organized by extremist leaders that perpetrate most of the violence and atrocities.

After the extremists have seized power, external intervention is not likely to be effective in stopping collective violence. While the moderates are in power, a window of opportunity exists for intervention, but remains open for a limited time only because the conflict dynamic is rapid. The intervention has to be a military force capable of containing or disarming the extremist militias and keep them from overthrowing the moderates. The earlier such intervention, the smaller the force required. The failure of intervention, or of timely intervention, is due not only to the well-known difficulties of getting international organizations or complex alliances to act, nor to persuading domestic public opinion and legislatures to approve risky foreign policy initiatives. It is also due to a deficiency in the frames and the cognitive models statesmen and policy analysts utilize to comprehend ethnic conflicts in these deeply divided societies and a failure to understand the dynamic process of ethnic conflict itself.

My data bears on Bosnia and Croatia only, and on the years 1989-1992 principally. Bosnia and Croatia are hardly unique for the conflict process I analyzed. Kuper (1977, 1985) and Fein (1993, 1994) highlight similar processes in major ethnic conflicts and genocide: state breakdown in a major crisis; extremists form militias; ethnic fear and hate propaganda in the media, the moderates are overthrown by force; the spiral of violence spins out of control; ineffective, late, external intervention.

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