

THE BANALITY OF "ETHNIC WAR": YUGOSLAVIA AND RWANDA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of "ethnic war" tends to suggest a Hobbesian war of all against all and neighbor against neighbor. Although neighbors do sometimes enter into the fray, "ethnic war" often can be more nearly a condition in which a mass of essentially mild, ordinary, and quite normal people unwillingly and in considerable bewilderment come under the vicious and arbitrary control of a small group of murderous thugs.

The violence in Yugoslavia was not spawned by the convulsive surging of ancient hatreds or by frenzies created by the manipulations of demagogic politicians and the media: indeed, when finally given a chance to express such supposed passions in government-sanctioned violence, ordinary soldiers deserted en masse. Rather, the destruction was largely carried out by small bands of opportunistic thugs, criminals, and soccer hooligans recruited for the purpose by politicians and security services and operating under their general guidance. In this, nationalism was often more of an ordering or sorting device than a viscerally motivating force, and ethnic hatred more nearly served as an excuse for the violence than as a cause of it.

Similarly, even in the extreme case of Rwanda in 1994, violence was chiefly perpetrated by a groups of rampaging (and, as in Yugoslavia, often drunken) thugs. At most, nine percent of the male Hutu population over the age of 13 participated in the genocide--a very high figure compared to normal times, of course, but hardly a war of all against all.

Thugs exist in all populations, and therefore developments like those in Yugoslavia and Rwanda could come about almost anywhere under appropriate conditions. By the same token, the conflicts were by no means inevitable.

Since the violence was mostly carried out by small, opportunistic, and essentially cowardly bands of thugs and bullies, policing the situation would generally not have been very difficult or costly for almost any organized, disciplined, and sizeable army.

Warfare by thugs and opportunistic predators seems more nearly to be a residual form of war than a rising one.

Teško narodu kad pametni ufute, budale progovore, a fukare se obogate.

It is difficult for the people when the smart keep quiet, fools speak out, and thugs get rich.

--Bosnian expression¹

1. INTRODUCTION

On December 7, 1941, as it is commonly put, "the Japanese" attacked Pearl Harbor. No one, of course, takes this expression literally to suggest that the entire population of Japan, or even a major portion of it, directly participated in the assault. Rather it is understood to mean that some of Japan's military forces, ordered into action by Japan's government and perhaps supported to varying degrees by the Japanese population, launched the attack.

In discussions of ethnic war, by contrast, such distinctions are often missing. When we say "the Serbs" and "the Croats" are engaged in ethnic war, the implication frequently is that those two groups have descended into a sort of Hobbesian war of all against all and neighbor against neighbor.

I assess the violence that took place in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda in the 1990s and argue that the whole concept of "ethnic warfare" may be severely misguided.² Specifically, insofar as it is taken to imply a war of all against all and neighbor against neighbor, a condition in which pretty much everyone in one ethnic group becomes the ardent, dedicated, and murderous enemy of everyone in another group, ethnic war essentially does not exist.

I argue instead that ethnic warfare more closely resembles non-ethnic warfare because it is actually waged by rather small groups of combatants, groups which purport to fight and murder in the name of some larger entity. Often, in fact, "ethnic warfare" is substantially a condition in which a mass of essentially mild, ordinary, and quite normal people can unwillingly and in considerable bewilderment come under the vicious and arbitrary control of small groups of armed and violent thugs.

In this paper I focus particularly on the actual perpetrators of violence in such conflicts, and I consider first, in Section 2, the wars in Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990s.

There have been two common explanations for these wars. One contends that elemental and ancient ethnic hatreds had only temporarily and superficially been kept in check by Communism and that, with its demise, murderous nationalism erupted. This perspective has been developed most famously and influentially by the fashionable travel writer and congenial doomsayer, Robert Kaplan, who portentously and prominently described the Balkans as "a region of pure memory" where "each individual sensation and memory affects the grand movement of clashing peoples" and where the processes of history and memory were "kept on hold" by Communism for 45 years "thereby creating a kind of multiplier effect for violence."³ At times, this approach has been extravagantly expanded to suggest that whole civilizations are clashing (Huntington 1993b, 1993c).

The other explanation holds that the violence was impelled by continuous nationalist propaganda spewed out by politicians and the media, particularly on television, that played on old fears and hatreds. As a Belgrade journalist put it to an American audience, "You must imagine a United States with every little TV station everywhere taking exactly the same editorial line--a line dictated by David Duke. You too would have war in five years."⁴

Tim Judah tries to put these two explanations together (1997, 309):

¹ Cohen 1998, 297.

² The paper is an updated, much expanded, and more developed version of Mueller 2000b.

³ Kaplan 1993b; see also Kaplan 1991 and 1993a, and, for later doomsaying, now focused, with due agility, on Africa, Kaplan 1994. For a devastating critique of the argument, see Malcolm 1993 as well as Gagnon 1994/95, 133-34; Hardin 1995, ch. 6; Sadowski 1998; Hall 1996, 83. For his more recent reflections, see Kaplan 1999.

⁴ Quoted, Malcolm 1994, 252; on this argument, see, for example, Bennett 1995, viii, 10, 242; Zimmermann 1996, 120-22; Cvijf 1993, 82; Snyder and Ballentine 1996, 25-30; Ignatieff 1993, 3; Bakic 1994; Malcolm 1998b; Judah 1997, 285, 309; Maass 1996, 227.

Was the war about 'ancient hatreds' or was it simply the manipulation of whole populations whipped up into a frenzy of nationalism by evil politicians for whom standing your ground was more important than the fate of millions? The answer is that the politicians could not have succeeded if there had been no ember to fan.

In my view, these conflicts were spawned not so much by the convulsive surging of ancient hatreds or by frenzies whipped up by demagogic politicians and the media as by the vicious ministrations of small--sometimes *very* small--bands of opportunistic predators recruited for the purpose by political leaders and operating under their general guidance. Many of these marauders were drawn from street gangs or from bands of soccer hooligans or they were criminals specifically released from prison for the purpose. Their participation was required because the Yugoslav army, despite years of supposedly influential nationalist propaganda and centuries of supposedly pent-up ethnic hatreds, substantially disintegrated early in the war and refused to fight.

A common mechanism seems to have been the following. A group of well-armed thugs and bullies, encouraged by, and working under rough constraints set out by official security services, would arrive or become banded together in a community. Sometimes operating with local authorities, they would take control and would persecute members of other ethnic groups who would quickly flee usually to areas protected by their own ethnic thugs, sometimes to join them to seek revenge. Any co-ethnics opposed to the thugs' behavior would also be persecuted.

Carnivals of often-drunken looting, destruction, and violence would take place, and others--guiltily or not so guiltily--might join in. Gradually, however, many of the people under the predators' arbitrary and chaotic "protection," especially the more moderate ones and young men unwilling to be impressed into military service, would emigrate to safer places. In time, the size of the "protected" group was often substantially reduced--by half or more.

The paper also assesses, in Section 3, the violence that took place in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999. There seem to be quite a few similarities with the earlier Croatian and Bosnian cases.

To explore the possibilities for generalizing from the Yugoslav experience, I assess in Section 4 the extreme case of Rwanda in 1994 when ethnic Hutus engaged in genocidal massacres of ethnic Tutsis. In recent history this is probably the instance in which the Hobbesian all-against-all and neighbor-against-neighbor idea of ethnic warfare is most likely to hold. Nevertheless, even in this case, it seems clear that the main momentum of the killings was carried by a relatively small number of specially-trained Hutu murderers who, allying themselves with often-drunken criminal and hooligan opportunists, went on a murderous rampage that was coordinated and sometimes directed by local officials acting under orders from above. The vast majority of Hutus seem to have stood by in considerable confusion, bewilderment, and, often, indifference.

Section 5 is devoted to some very preliminary comments and speculations about other cases.

In Section 6, I consider that the mechanism of violence in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda was, in important ways, remarkably banal. Rather than reflecting deep, historic passions and hatreds, the violence seems rather to have been the result of a situation in which common, opportunistic, sadistic, and often distinctly non-ideological, marauders were recruited and permitted free rein by political authorities. In this process, ethnic identity was often more of an ordering or sorting device than a viscerally motivating force. I also explore the degree to which conflicts considered ethnic may be more nearly rural-urban in nature, assess the varying degree to which people have a propensity for violence, and discuss what seems to be the limited role hatred played in the conflicts: it often seems to have served more as an excuse for violence than as a cause of it.

In Section 7, I argue that, because thugs are found in ample number in all societies, the events in Yugoslavia and Rwanda are not peculiar to those locales, but could come about almost anywhere under the appropriate conditions. On the other hand, there was nothing particularly inevitable about the violence: with different people in charge and with different policing and accommodation procedures, the savagery could have been avoided.

I consider in Section 8 the prospects for policing such situations. Because the violence in places like

Yugoslavia and Rwanda was chiefly carried out by small, opportunistic, ill-disciplined, and essentially cowardly bands of thugs and bullies, policing the situation would probably have been fairly easy for almost any organized, disciplined, and sizable army. However, a misguided assumption that the conflicts stemmed from immutable ethnic hatreds, and an extreme aversion to casualties made international military intervention essentially impossible until the violence appeared to have run its course.

The paper concludes, in Section 9, with a discussion of trends in warfare. Whereas some see violence by bands of thugs and hooligans as a rising form of warfare, it seems more likely that this form of violence--hardly new--is a residual form of war rather than an emerging one. It is what is left when war contested by organized armies fades.

In the end, the basic operation--and the fundamental banality--of much ethnic violence is neatly summed up in a Bosnian expression: "Teško narodu kad pametni ufuće, budale progovore, a fukare se obogate." That is, "It is difficult for the people when the smart keep quiet, fools speak out, and thugs get rich" (Cohen 1998, 297). The mistaken--even racist--notion that an entire ethnic group is devotedly out to destroy another ethnic group can in such cases shatter any ability to perceive nuance and variety, and it can be taken to suggest that efforts to foster elite accommodation are essentially irrelevant and therefore bound to prove futile. Further, the all-against-all Hobbesian image can discourage policing because it implies that the entire ethnic group, rather than just a small, opportunistic, and often cowardly subgroup, must be directly brought under control.

A caveat about hate and Archie Bunkerism

I am concerned in this paper with ethnic violence and warfare--a condition in which combatants arrayed along ethnic lines seek to kill each other--not simply with ethnic hatreds.

Ethnic and national hatreds are widespread. For example, I have found in Norway that it is remarkably easy to get urbane, well-educated Norwegians to say some really quite nasty things about the Swedes. Even the legendarily tolerant Dutch seem to be entirely capable of delivering racial slurs against Germans: "They're fat, ugly, and eat too much...They're just so full of themselves" (Kinzer 1995a). But that kind of Archie Bunker-like national hatred does not seem likely to lead to armed conflict.

Because such hatreds, or extreme versions of them, helped cause both world wars in Europe, a concern about them is certainly reasonable (see, for example, Mearsheimer 1990, Van Evera 1990/91). But the recent experience in Western Europe suggests that such hatreds do not have to be eradicated for peace and progress to prevail. The French and the Germans today may not have come to love each other, but, shattering the pattern of the century previous to 1945, they no longer even conceive of using war or the threat of war to resolve their disagreements.⁵

Of course, few national differences in Europe are currently expressed in violence, in threats of violence, or in once-fashionable messianic visions about changing the world to reflect a particular national perspective (see Howard 1991, chs. 2, 4). This does not necessarily mean, however, that Europeans are less nationalistic than they were in the 1920s or the 1890s. I doubt that the British (many of whom were distinctly unamused by the prospect of the new Channel tunnel) esteem the French any more or less than in days of yore. And as Gérard Prunier suggests, the French seem to continue to regard "*les Anglais*" as "among the worst enemies the French ever had: they burnt Jeanne d'Arc alive, they stole Canada and India...they exiled Napoleon to a ridiculous little rock...and they sank our battlefleet...in 1940. And to top it all, their women are ugly and their food is terrible, traits which show a basic lack of civilization" (1995, 104).⁶

⁵ For an assessment of such developments, see Mueller 1989 and Mueller 1995, ch. 9.

⁶ Closer economic relations among European countries seem principally to suggest that it has finally dawned on those countries that there is benefit in economic cooperation, not that Europeans love each other any more or that they identify themselves more now as Europeans. In the end, German unification was a spectacular (and peaceful) triumph of national desire: if German nationalism had been truly dampened, one might have expected two Germanys to have emerged when the Soviets left, but instead the general conclusion was that an independent East Germany made no sense, and the Germans rushed into each other's arms. On balance, in fact, nationalism could

With the possible exception of attitudes toward Gypsies (or Roma), the various ethnic or national groups in Europe probably get along at least as well as whites and blacks do in the United States.⁷ Indeed, if intermarriage rates are indicative, these groups often get along quite a bit better: by 1993 some 12 percent of American blacks married white partners (Steven Holmes 1996), but around 29 percent of the Serbs in pre-breakup Croatia married Croats (Gagnon 1994, 130-31). And in Sarajevo, as Christopher Bennett notes, "it was almost impossible to find someone without relatives from a different ethnic background" (1995, 192): since 1945, 30 to 40 percent of urban marriages in Bosnia were mixed (Donia and Fine 1994, 9). There was also a fair amount of intermarriage between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda (Des Forges 1999, 33; Ourdan 1998).

Consequently, it is important to distinguish common, knee-jerk, and sometimes hateful ethnic slurs--no matter how unpleasant and politically incorrect their expression may often be--from the kind that is expressed in violence. Indeed, as James Fearon and David Laitin have pointed out, ethnic violence is very rare when one considers how many Archie Bunkers there are in the world and how many opportunities there are for it to occur (Fearon and Laitin 1996, 716-17).⁸

National and ethnic hatreds, then, are not the central issue for the purposes of this paper. It is the comparatively rare--in fact, exceedingly rare--instances in which such hatreds lead to, are part of, or are associated with violence and warfare that are of concern. And the particular focus of the paper is on the perpetrators of the violence--on those who actually carry out the killings and the depredations. For them, the central motivating forces seem more nearly to reflect banal opportunism than cosmic historical patterns or necessities.

CASES

2. CROATIA AND BOSNIA

An examination of the violence that attended the breakup of Yugoslavia establishes the theme and the approach.

The shallowness of militant nationalism in Yugoslavia

well prove to be a constructive force in Europe. It has aided the difficult and painful process of unification in Germany, for example, and it has probably helped strengthen Poland's remarkable political and economic development of the 1990s.

⁷ On the Roma issue, see Barany 1998. The attitude toward Gypsies in Europe often resembles the attitude that once prevailed in the U.S. toward American Indians.

⁸ Some analysts have come to argue that "conflicts among nations and ethnic groups are escalating" (Huntington 1993a, 71), that such conflicts are "now engulfing the world" (Kober 1993, 82), that "there is a virtual epidemic of armed civil or intranational conflict" (Hamburg 1993), and that the "breakdown of restraints" seen in Yugoslavia is part of "a global trend" (Job 1993, 71; see also Moynihan 1993; Huntington 1993b, 1993c; Brzezinski 1993; Van Evera 1994, 36). But such wars and conflicts have not increased in number or intensity in the 1990s (Sadowski 1998, ch. 9; Wilson and Gurr 1999; Fearon and Laitin 1999; Fearon and Laitin 2000). Rather, what is new is that some of these wars and conflicts have taken place in Europe, an area that had previously been essentially free from substantial civil warfare for nearly half a century (Mueller 1995, 16-18; Sadowski 1998, 142). However, militant nationalism--whether violent or not--may well already have had its day in central and eastern Europe. Hypernationalists (and even some that are not so hyper) who sometimes appeared threateningly formidable at the polls in the early 1990s, have been reduced in many places in elections to the point of extinguishment. In Poland, for example, populist, antiestablishment parties that had achieved some 14 percent of the vote in 1990 had been reduced to one percent by 1995. In Russia the Zhirinovskiy presence has faded in significance as has that of Funar in Romania. (For an example of the impassioned gloom once caused by the Zhirinovskiy success, see Shabad 1995.) Ellen Gordon and Luan Troxel note that "Turkey, while being supportive of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, has little interest in inflaming internal ethnic relations in Bulgaria" (1995; see also Ganev 1997). Similarly, as Stephen Holmes observes, Moscow, contrary to fears prominently expressed only a few years ago, "has done absolutely nothing for extraterritorial Russians" (1996, 42). Under the right (or wrong) circumstances trends could alter, of course, but for now militant nationalism seems to be losing appeal in Europe.

It is important to note at the outset that support for militant nationalism in Yugoslavia was not all that deep even at the time of its maximum notice and effect in the early 1990s. The rise of some militant nationalists in elections during that period stemmed less from their wide appeal than from their ability to manipulate the electoral system and from the disarray of their opposition.

In their key victories in 1990, Franjo Tudjman's nationalists in Croatia massively outspent the poorly organized opposition using funds contributed by well-heeled militants in the Croatian diaspora--particularly in North America. And their success was vastly exaggerated by an electoral system, foolishly designed by the outgoing Communists, that handed Tudjman's party 69 percent of the seats with only 42 percent of the vote. In the same election, less than a quarter of the Serbs in Croatia voted for their nationalist party. The same sort of distortions, though to a somewhat lesser degree, took place in the elections in Bosnia.⁹

In early elections in Serbia, Slobodan Milošević controlled the media and essentially bought the vote by illegally using public funds, hardly a sign of enormous public appeal--and an act that was foolhardy as well because it greatly accelerated the breakup of the country. Moreover, like Tudjman's party in Croatia, Milošević's party was comparatively well organized and widely based, and it enjoyed an enormous advantage under the election rules. Although it garnered less than half the vote, it gained 78 percent of the seats. Milošević's fortunes were further enhanced by the fact that Kosovo Albanians boycotted the election allowing his party to win that area.¹⁰

A poll conducted throughout Yugoslavia in the summer and autumn of 1990, even as nationalists were apparently triumphing in elections, may more adequately indicate the state of opinion after centuries of supposed ethnic hatreds and after years of nationalist propaganda (Sekelj 1993, 277):

Do you agree that every (Yugoslav) nation would have a national state of its own?

Completely agree	16%
Agree to some extent	7
Undecided	10
Do not agree in part	6
Do not agree at all	61

At times, particularly in Serbia during the rise of Milošević, militant nationalists have been able to put together huge public demonstrations, and this has often been taken to suggest popular appeal. But in general it is unwise to take large, noisy crowds--which clearly are heavily self-selected--to represent public opinion more generally. Thus, since demonstrators against the Vietnam War in the 1960s were predominantly young, most commentators came to hold that young people were more opposed to the war than older people; yet poll data clearly show the opposite to have been the case (Mueller 1973, 136-40). A vivid example of the disconnection between crowd appeal and general public opinion derives from the experience of Republican orators in the United States in the 1990s. Searching for issues that would turn crowds on, Robert Dole and other Republicans found, in the wake of a peace-keeping disaster in Somalia that they could get a big reaction from faithful Republican crowds when they (unfairly) blamed the United Nations and sternly pledged that U.S. troops would nevermore be put under UN command.¹¹ One might

⁹ Tudjman spending: Woodward 1995, 119, 229; Bennett 1995, 199; Cohen 1995, 95; Cviiif 1996, 206; Tanner 1997, 222; Binder 1998. Tudjman's electoral success: Bennett 1995, 127; Woodward 1995, 117-19; Silber and Little 1997, 90; Cohen 1995, 99-100; Cviiif 1996, 207. Serb vote in Croatia: Gagnon 1994/95, 155; Bennett 1995, 127; somewhat similarly, a large portion of those Serbs in Bosnia who lived outside areas controlled by Serb nationalists voted with the Muslims for independence from Serbia in a 1992 referendum (Gagnon 1994/95, 163). Bosnia: Burg and Shoup 1999, 50-51, 57.

¹⁰ Serbia: Gagnon 1994/95, 154; Bennett 1995, 121; Hall 1994, 48; Woodward 1995, 130, 448-49; Dinkic 1995, 30, 61-66; Thomas 1999, ch. 7; see also Judah 1997, 260. Vote percentage: Cohen 1995, 158. Albanian vote: Woodward 1995, 121.

¹¹ See Dole 1995, 37. The Republicans considerably distorted what happened in Somalia. U.S. troops were under their own command and merely coordinated their actions with the UN--and when they did so, they reported to an American officer at the UN (see Gordon and Friedman 1993).

have concluded from all this clamorous, crowd-pleasing rhetoric that approval of the UN was in notable decline in the United States. Yet poll data show that there was virtually no change in American attitudes toward the organization (Murray, Klarevas, and Hartley 1997; Mueller 1996).¹²

Moreover, much of the crowd behavior in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was substantially manipulated--Milošević's party often rented mobs by supplying free food, transportation, and liquor (Bennett 1995, 98). And if crowd behavior is to be taken as indicative of wider attitudes, it should be pointed out that even the poorly-organized opposition was able to mount massive demonstrations in 1991 and 1992 in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo.¹³

Finally, the casual notion that each ethnic or national group in Yugoslavia (or indeed anywhere) is united by deep bonds of affection is deeply flawed (see also Bowen 1996; Sadowski 1998, 78-80). Serbs in Serbia have often been able to contain their affection for the desperate and often rough rural Serbs who have fled to their country from war-torn Croatia and Bosnia (Spolar 1995; Woodward 1995, 364; Kinzer 1995c). As Roger Cohen points out, "the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia had scant shared culture with the people of Serbia" who "tended to view the Bosnian and Krajina Serbs as hicks, the refugees pouring in as a tide of flotsam from the boondocks" (1998, 296). And Christopher Merrill notes the distaste Croats felt for Croat refugees who they tended to see as "peasants even if they hailed from metropolitan areas." Declared one broad-minded Croat, "I hate them. I hate the refugees. They don't want to work, and they smell" (1999, 126).

Indeed, as Christopher Bennett argues, in profound contrast with Kaplan, after World War II the "great divide within Yugoslav society was increasingly that between rural and urban communities, not that between peoples."¹⁴ This arresting observation will be explored more fully in Section 6.

Armed thugs and the banality of "ethnic warfare" in Yugoslavia

The violence that erupted in Yugoslavia principally derived not from a frenzy of nationalism--whether ancient or newly inspired--but rather from the actions of recently empowered and unpoliced thugs. Politicians may have started the wars, and they may have whipped up a fair amount of hatred. However, the effective murderous core of the wars was composed not of hordes of ordinary citizens ripped loose from their repression or incited into violence against their neighbors. Rather, the politicians found it necessary to recruit fanatics, criminals, and hooligans for the job.

It is a fact of very considerable significance that the Serbian (or Yugoslav) army rather substantially disintegrated early in the hostilities.

Hatreds there may well have been, and propaganda there surely was, but neither was enough to inspire the kind of determined ethnic violence that was called for.¹⁵ After years of supposedly influential media

¹² Subsequently, the notion that no U.S. forces should work directly under UN command became one of the propositions of the "Contract with America" that the Republicans extolled during their successful 1994 campaign. Although it was taken by Republicans to have been what the 1994 election was all about, the Contract itself does not seem to have arrested the attention of the American people: a month after the election a national poll found that 72 percent of the public claimed never to have heard or read anything about the highly-touted Contract (CBS News/New York Times Poll release, 14 December 1994), and even four months later, after endless publicity over its varying political fortunes, that number had not changed (Toner 1995).

¹³ Zagreb: "Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation," Discovery Channel, 1995. Belgrade: Gagnon 1994/95, 157-58; Silber and Little 1997, ch. 9; Judah 1997, 174; Sudetic 1998, 85. Sarajevo: Judah 1997, 211; Donia and Fine 1994, 1. The demonstrations in Sarajevo and Belgrade were broken up by armed force.

¹⁴ Bennett 1995, 63, 211; see also Woodward 1995, 238, 241; Ignatieff 1993, 4.

¹⁵ In all Communist countries, certainly including Yugoslavia, people were determinedly subject to decades of Communist propaganda in the media; yet, as history has shown, many--probably most--failed in the end to be convinced by it. If media promotion could guarantee lasting impact, all Yugoslavs would today be worshipping Tito and all Americans would be driving Edsels. For a discussion, see Mueller 1994, 129-36. Warren Zimmermann observes, "My most difficult task has been to convey the conviction that all Yugoslavs weren't the bloodthirsty extremists so ubiquitously visible in Western news accounts. Most of the people my wife and I met in six years of

propaganda and centuries of supposedly pent-up ethnic hatreds, ordinary Serb soldiers were finally given an opportunity to express these presumed proclivities, to relieve these presumed ethnic tensions, and/or to act in response to the ingenious televised imprecations in government-sanctioned violence. Overwhelmingly, they reacted to the opportunity by declining to embrace it: professing they did not know why they were fighting, they often mutinied or deserted en masse.¹⁶

This process is vividly illustrated by the experience of General Slavko Lisica who tried to shame Serb conscripts in Croatia into fighting by declaring that all those who were not prepared to "defend the glory of the Serbian nation" should lay down their arms and take off their uniforms. To his astonishment, "they all did, including their commanding officer." Furious, he shouted at them "to remove everything including their underpants, and with the exception of one man they all removed their military issue underpants and marched off completely naked. I was still hoping they would change their mind, but they didn't." Later the recruits managed to commandeer a cannon and used it to shell Lisica's headquarters (Doder and Branson 1999, 97-98).

Meanwhile, back in Serbia itself, young men mainly reacted by determined draft-dodging. Some 150,000 or more quickly emigrated or went underground (Udovicki and Cerovic 1995; Sikavica 1995, 138). In one city, only two of the 2,000-3,000 "volunteers" expected in a call up showed up (Cigar 1993, 315), and in several towns there were virtual mutinies against conscription (Tanner 1997, 270; Judah 1997, 185). Overall, only 50 percent of Serbian reservists and only 15 percent in Belgrade obeyed orders to report for duty (Burg and Shoup 1999, 51; see also Silber and Little 1997, 177; Gagnon 1994/95, 162; Doder and Branson 1999, 98).

Because Serbs from Serbia proper were unwilling to fight outside their own republic, Belgrade had to reshape its approach to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia in major ways (Burg and Shoup 1999, 84). As a Serbian General put it, modification of the military plans was made necessary by "the lack of success in mobilisation and the desertion rate" (Tanner 1997, 269; see also UN Experts 1994, para. 29).

Part of the solution involved arming the locals, particularly in Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia (Burg and Shoup 1999, 130; Judah 1997, 170-72, 192-95). But in general the fighting quality of the militaries, especially initially, was very poor: there was a lack of discipline, ineffective command and control, and, especially in the case of the Serbs, a reluctance to take casualties. Such deficiencies, as Steven Burg and Paul Shoup observe, "led all sides to rely on irregulars and special units" (1999, 137). In all, there were at least 83 of these groups operating in Croatia and Bosnia: 56 Serb, 13 Croat, and 14 Muslim. They comprised 36,000 to 66,000 members (UN Experts 1994, para. 14).

The appearance in the wars of the paramilitaries was caused in part by the collapse of army morale, but their presence may also have helped to aggravate that collapse. An internal Yugoslav army memo from early in the conflict found the paramilitaries to be dangerous to military morale because their "primary motive was not fighting against the enemy but robbery of private property and inhuman treatment of Croatian civilians" (UN Experts 1994, para. 100). Lisica called them "types who would kill a man of ninety for a lamb," and he reports that his men would say to him, "The paramilitaries rob, they rape, they steal. Why are we fighting and what are we fighting for?" (Doder and Branson 1999, 97).

The most dynamic (and murderous) Serbian units were notably composed, then, not of committed nationalists or ideologues, nor of locals out to get their neighbors, nor of ordinary people whipped into a frenzy by demagogues and the media, but of common criminals and hoodlums recruited for the task. Specifically, the politicians urged underworld and hooligan groups to get into the action, and it appears that

living in Yugoslavia were peaceful and decent, without a trace of the hostility on which nationalism feeds. It's true that nationalist leaders were able to turn many normal people toward extremism by playing on their historic fears through the baleful medium of television....What amazed me was how many Yugoslavs resisted the incessant racist propaganda" (1996, xi; also 209-10).

¹⁶ Cigar 1993, 317-19; Woodward 1995, 238; Bennett 1995, 167; Vulliamy 1994, 19; Vasif 1996, 128; Burg and Shoup 1999, 51; Gagnon 1994/95, 162; Silber and Little 1997, 177; Tanner 1997, 269; Judah 1997, 185, 189. Compare the statement by Christopher Browning: "when governments whip up hatreds and authorize mass murders, almost invariably they're carried out" (Shatz 1997, 51).

thousands of prison inmates, promised shortened sentences and enticed by the prospect that they could "take whatever booty you can," were released for the war effort.¹⁷ Thus, to a substantial degree the collapse of the army led to a privatization of the war, and loot comprised the chief form of payment. Vladan Vasilejevic, an expert on organized crime, argues that nationalism was only a pretext for many of the paramilitary groups; instead, they viewed the war as an opportunity for extremely lucrative plunder (Firestone 1993). Many were, in the words of James Ron, "unemployed Serbian males in search of booty and cheap wartime thrills" (2000).

The Serb releasees, together with other criminals and like-minded recruits, generally worked independently, improvising their tactics as they went along. However, there seems to have been a fair amount of coordination in Serb areas mainly by Milošević's secret police, while the army, such as it was, enforced an overall framework of order and sometimes directly participated in the depredations as well.¹⁸

Similarly, the initial fighting forces of Bosnia and of Croatia were also substantially made up of small bands of criminals and violent opportunists recruited or self-recruited from street gangs and organized mobs.¹⁹

Avenues of entry. Some of the hoodlums bolstered what remained of the Yugoslav army. According to Miloš Vasif, a leading Serb journalist, however, "they behaved in a wholly unsoldierly way, wearing all sorts of Serb chauvinist insignia, beards and knives, were often drunk (like many of the regular soldiers, too), looted, and killed or harassed civilians. Officers rarely dared discipline them" (1996, 128; see also Thomas 1999, 99).

Others joined semi-coherent paramilitary groups like Vojislav Šešelj's Chetniks and Arkan's Tigers, organizations already heavily composed of criminals, adventurers, mercenary opportunists, and, in the case of the Tigers, soccer hooligans. Arkan (Željko Ražnjatović) had been the leader of Delije, the official fan club of Belgrade's Red Star soccer team, which, not unlike other soccer clubs, had become a magnet for hoodlums and unemployable young men, and the Tigers were substantially built from that membership (UN Experts 1994, para. 129; Judah 1997, 186; Sudetic 1998, 98; Thomas 1999, 94).²⁰ Arkan's forces even used the Belgrade soccer stadium for military exercises (Doder and Branson 1999, 100). They seem to have functioned essentially as mercenaries: as one Bosnian Serb government spokesman put it, "He is very expensive, but also very efficient" (UN Experts 1994, para. 23, 26).

Still others seem to have gone off on their own, serving as warlords in the areas they came to dominate. These independent or semi-independent paramilitary and warlord units, estimates Vasif, "consisted on average of 80 per cent common criminals and 20 per cent fanatical nationalists. The latter did not usually last long (fanaticism is bad for business)" (1996, 134).

And there were also many "weekend warriors," parttime predators who entered the war from Serbia and elsewhere intermittently and then mainly to rob and pillage, many becoming quite rich in the process

¹⁷ Borger 1997b; Cohen 1998, 192, 410-411; UN Experts 1994, para. 3, 30; Firestone 1993; Thomas 1999, 98; see also Woodward 1995, 238, 249, 265; Vasif 1996, 128; Udovicki and Cerovic 1995; Ignatieff 1997, 132; Doder and Branson 1999, 118; Ron 2000.

¹⁸ Vasif 1996, 134; Borger 1997b; Silber and Little 1997, 177-78; Tanner 1997, 245; Judah 1997, ch. 9; UN Experts 1994, para. 18, 24; Doder and Branson 1999, 101-3, 117-18; Ron 2000.

¹⁹ Particularly in the case of Croatia, as Bennett (1995, 165) notes, many of the most extreme fighters were emigré adventurers from abroad. See also Hall 1994, 11; Rieff 1995, 66. Tony Horwitz met German skinheads in Zagreb who had come "for a bit of graduate training" (1993, 41).

²⁰ The percentage of soccer hooligans who have a criminal record seems to be very high. In Among the Thugs, a lively discussion of English soccer hooligans, Bill Buford observes that just about all of them had been in jail, were facing a criminal charge, or had recently been tried for one (1991, 28). Also associated are racist attitudes; a proclivity for extreme right wing politics; a capacity to imbibe huge amounts of liquor; a strident and vicious boorishness; a deep need for camaraderie and for being accepted by the "lads"; and an affinity for, even a lusting after, the thrill, exhilaration, and euphoria of violence. On the war-anticipating pitched battle between supporters of the Zagreb and Belgrade soccer clubs in 1990, see Tanner 1997, 228; Merrill 1999, 169.

(Sikavica 1995, 137).²¹ For example, there was Ceko Dacevic, who operated from Pljevlja in Serbia and who is characterized by Serb officials as a "criminal, pathological thief" and as "an ignorant, uneducated man who attracted stupid and violent criminals." With his band of "a few dozen unemployed people, riff raff from Pljevlja and from all across Serbia," Ceko would regularly foray into Muslim areas in nearby Bosnia to loot such items as video recorders and refrigerators. When he tried to persecute Muslims within Serbia, however, the authorities, working with Ceko's patron, Šešelj, were able to keep him focused on Bosnia. As James Ron observes, this episode scarcely suggests that Serb violence stemmed chiefly from "deep-seated anti-Muslim sentiment" (Ron forthcoming).

Leaders. Arkan began as a juvenile delinquent and later developed into a skilled bank robber, plying his trade mostly in northern Europe (dashing, he often left the tellers bouquets of roses). He also became a prison breakout artist, escaping from jails in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Returning to Belgrade, the fugitive became a respected member of the criminal underground, enjoyed a special relationship with the police and with Serbia's internal affairs ministry, and ran a successful ice cream and pastry shop (UN Experts 1994, para. 125-128; see also Sudetic 1998, 97-98; Doder and Branson 1999, 100-1; Thomas 1999, 94; Ron 2000). (Arkan was assassinated gangland-style in Belgrade in January 2000.) One of the most fanatical of Serb nationalists is more of an intellectual: the pot-bellied political scientist Šešelj, who spent a year teaching at the University of Michigan in his younger years, and who later seems to have become mentally unbalanced as the result of the torture and beatings he endured while in prison in Yugoslavia for counterrevolutionary activities. One academic colleague described him as "disturbed, totally lost and out of his mind" (UN Experts 1994, para. 107, 108; see also Judah 1997, 187). Another Serb paramilitary leader, who called himself "Captain Dragan," had reportedly been a pimp in the Sydney underworld (working in the Knin area, his men were known as "Knindjas" after the cartoon characters).²²

For their part, the Muslims were protected by , elo, a convicted rapist (Cohen 1998, 280; Block 1993, 9) and by Juka, a former mob boss, racketeer, and underworld thug (UN Experts 1994, para. 74; Maass 1996, 31; Block 1993, 9). And the Croats had Tuta, a former protection racketeer, the mere mention of whose name could "cause an entire village to panic" (Block 1993, 9).²³

Processes of warfare. As Warren Zimmermann observes, "the dregs of society--embezzlers, thugs, even professional killers--rose from the slime to become freedom fighters and national heroes" (1996, 152). Robert Block notes that "Gangsters, outlaws, and criminals have had a special place in the war in the former Yugoslavia. Their skills in organizing people and their ruthlessness made them natural choices for Balkan rabble-rousers looking for men to defend cities or serve as nationalist shock troops" (1993, 9). And David Rieff points out that "One of the earliest, deepest, and most pervasive effects of the fighting" was "to turn the social pyramid on its head....Simple boys from the countryside and tough kids from the towns found that their guns made them the ones who could start amassing the Deutschmarks and the privileges, sexual and otherwise" (1995, 130).

There was also Rambo-like affectation: each dressed as if "he had been cast as a thug by a movie director," observes Block (1993). The degree to which these men styled themselves on characters they had seen in films like Rambo and Road Warrior led a Sarajevan theatre director ironically to call for a war crimes trial for Sylvester Stallone: "He's responsible for a lot that has gone on here!" (Rieff 1995, 130; see also Husarska 1995). Indeed, one Serbian paramilitary unit actually called itself "The Rambos" and went around in webbed masks and black gloves with black ribbons fetchingly tied around their foreheads (UN

²¹ There was one paramilitary group specifically identified as "The Weekenders." It ventured from Bijeljina to Br..ko each weekend over a three year period to plunder and vandalize (UN Experts 1994, para. 317).

²² UN Experts 1994, para. 206; Tanner 1997, 245. There was also a group identified as the "Knindža Turtles," but it is not clear whether this is the same band as the one led by Captain Dragan (UN Experts 1994, note 493). For completeness, it should be reported that a paramilitary unit in Bosnia was led by a man calling himself "Commander Turtle" (UN Experts 1994, para. 311).

²³ On these issues, see also Husarska 1995; Tanner 1997, 245; Rieff 1995, 131-32; Vulliamy 1994, 314-16; Ignatieff 1997, 131; Burg and Shoup 1999, 137-39; Sadowski 1998, 163.

Experts 1994, para. 291; Cohen 1998, 126).²⁴ Tuta's gangsters are distinguished not only by their designer sunglasses, but by their shaved heads (Hedges 1996b). Naser Orić, a muscular and charismatic former bodyguard who became the Muslim warlord of Srebrenica, and, until 1995, its protector, often liked to wear leather jackets, designer sunglasses, and thick gold chains. And Juka's troops, called the "Wolves," reportedly variously sported crew cuts, black jump suits, sunglasses, basketball shoes, and masks (UN Experts 1994, para. 76). The Muslim paramilitary group, the "Black Swans," which sometimes served as the bodyguard for Bosnia's president when he ventured outside Sarajevo (Burg and Shoup 1999, 137), wore a round patch depicting a black swan having intercourse with a supine woman (UN Experts 1994, at para. 142).

Reportage by Peter Maass is peppered by such phrases as "drunken hillbillies," "death and thuggery," "they don't wear normal uniforms, they don't have many teeth," "the trigger fingers belonged to drunks," "the Bosnians might be the underdogs, but most of their frontline soldiers were crooks," "bullies," "a massive oaf," "a foul-smelling warlord," "mouthing the words, 'Bang, you're dead,' through rotten teeth," "an unshaven soldier would point his gun at a desired item and grunt," "only drunks and bandits ventured outside," "goons with guns," "Serb soldiers or thugs--and the difference is hard to tell" (1996, 6, 7, 16, 30, 42, 48, 61, 69, 77, 79, 80, 85). Reporter Ed Vulliamy describes the warriors as "boozy at their best, wild and sadistic at their worst" or as "toothless goons" with "inflammable breath" (1993, 19, 46). Rohde observes that some people in the Muslim refuge of Srebrenica regarded Naser Orić and his Muslim gang, their protectors, as "dangerous primitives" (1997, 109).

Vulliamy quotes Reuters reporter Andrej Gustinović: "Gangs of gun-toting Serbs rule Foča, turning the once quiet town into a nightmare landscape of burning streets and houses. The motley assortment of fierce-looking bearded men carry Kalashnikovs and bandoliers or have hand guns tucked into their belts. Some are members of paramilitary groups from Serbia, self-proclaimed crusaders against Islam and defenders of the Serbian nation, others are wild-eyed local men, hostile towards strangers and happy to have driven out their Muslim neighbours. No one seems to be in command, and ill-disciplined and bad-tempered gunmen stop and detain people at will" (1993, 90-91). Many of the "wild-eyed local men," according to another report, were local criminals who "donned uniforms and took part enthusiastically in the subsequent looting" (Borger 1997a). Similarly, the town of Bosanski Novi was ruled by five roaming Serbian armed groups, the most brutal of which was a well-known local mafia known as the "Spare Ribs" that had donned uniforms (Judah 1997, 227).

In all this, combat was, as J. P. Mackley observes, "mostly spontaneous, more resembling heavily armed anarchy than organized warfare" (1993). Or, as Susan Woodward notes, "paramilitary gangs, foreign mercenaries, and convicted criminals roamed the territory under ever less civil control" (1995, 254, also 356, 485; see also Glenny 1993, 185; Sudetic 1992; Benard 1993; Vulliamy 1993, 307-16; Stewart 1994, 318-19). And "war crimes," observes Norman Cigar, were their "primary military mission" (1993, 323; see also Rieff 1995, 83). Michael Ignatieff points out that many of the worst atrocities and war crimes "were carried out by paramilitary bands under the command of Serbian warlords and criminal operators with connections in politics, business and the Belgrade underworld" (1997, 131; see also Sikavica 1995, 138). Vasilijević says that most of the well-documented atrocities in Bosnia were committed by men with long criminal records (Firestone 1993). And a United Nations commission notes a "strong correlation" between paramilitary activity and reports of killing of civilians, rape, torture, destruction of property, looting, detention facilities, and mass graves (UN Experts 1994, para. 21). In all, as one reporter put it, Yugoslavia became "a land where former football hooligans and neofascist ganglords run riot with assault rifles and mortar bombs instead of boots and bottles" (quoted, Ron 2000).²⁵

The stages of war and ethnic cleansing

What passed for "ethnic warfare" in Bosnia and Croatia seems then to have been something far

²⁴ Maass also applies the "Rambo" image: 1996, 111, 155.

²⁵ In many respects the war in Bosnia ended as it began as gangs of Serbs roamed the suburbs of Sarajevo to force Serbs to leave, only then to be replaced by Muslim thugs who beat and robbed those few Serbs who still remained (Wilkinson 1996a, 1996b).

more banal: the creation of communities of criminal violence and predation. In the end, the wars resembled the movie images of the American Wild West or of gangland Chicago, and they often had less to do with nationalism than with criminal opportunism and sadistic cruelty, often enhanced with liquor--liquid courage. There seem to have been four stages to the process: takeover, carnival, revenge, and occupation and desertion.

1. Takeover. Recruited and encouraged by leading politicians and operating under a general framework of order provided by the army, a group of well-armed thugs would emerge in an area where the former civil order had ceased to exist or where the police actually or effectively were in alliance with them. As the only group willing--indeed, sometimes quite eager--to use force, they would quickly take control. Members of other ethnic groups would be subject to violent intimidation at best, atrocities at worst, and they would leave the area in despair. As one Muslim put it, "You know, the majority of Serbs who have lived here for years are completely polite and we are used to living together. But they cannot help us. There is really only one answer. We must leave. If we don't we will die" (Maass 1996, 76). Because there was no coherent or unbiased police force to protect them, their best recourse was to flee, and it would not take much persuasion to get them to do so--indeed, rumors or implied threats could often be sufficient.²⁶ Once the forces of Arkan and Šešelj had established their murderous reputations, for example, the mere warning that they were on their way was often enough to empty a village of its non-Serb residents (UN Experts 1994, para. 104).²⁷

Any co-ethnics who might oppose the predators' behavior would be subject to even more focused violence and intimidation and would either be forced out, killed, or cowed into subservience. One unusually candid Croatian ex-militiaman recalled that his unit had mostly killed Serb civilians but also went after unsympathetic Croats (Hedges 1997b), and a UN report notes, "In places where the local Serb population was initially fairly friendly, once Arkan's thugs arrived the situation changed, and they were intimidated into ostracizing the Muslims and behaving toward them with hostility."²⁸

In many cases, the dominating forces could be remarkably small. The Bosnian town of Višegrad on the Drina River, for example, was substantially controlled for years by a returned hometown boy, Milan Lukif, and some 15 well-armed companions including his brother, cousin, and a local waiter who often went barefoot. Using violent and often sadistic intimidation (Peter Maass refers to Lukif as a "psychopathic killer"), this tiny band forced the town's 14,500 Muslims to leave and suppressed any expressions of dissent from local Serbs--many of whom took advantage of the situation to profit from the Muslim exodus.²⁹ Then there is the town of Teslic, controlled, it is estimated, by "five or six men, well placed and willing to use violence" (O'Connor 1996b; see also Glenn 1993, 169-70; Bennett 1995, 249). The violence that in 1992 tore apart Srebrenica, a town of 37,000 people, was perpetrated by no more than thirty Serb and Muslim extremists. Oriif, the Muslim warlord who controlled Srebrenica for several years (and who was mysteriously absent with his gang when Serb forces overran the town in 1995), led an armed band with a nucleus of only fifteen men (Rohde 1997, xiv, 60, 354, 355). Arkan's much-feared forces consisted of a core of some 200 men (Vasif 1996, 134), and perhaps totalled 500-1000 overall (UN Experts 1994, para.

²⁶ A Hungarian from the Vojvodina area in Serbia tells the story of a Vojvodinan Croat who, although he loathed the regime of Tudjman, finally moved to Croatia when he got word that local Serb thugs were threatening--perhaps only idly--to harm his children.

²⁷ A somewhat similar phenomenon took place in the first Arab-Israeli war. On April 9, 1948 Israeli paramilitary and terrorist forces captured the strategically-located village of Deir Yassin, slew more than 200 Arab men, women, and children, and then mutilated the bodies and threw them into a well. Although this atrocity was immediately repudiated by the Israeli leadership, descriptions of it, sometimes exaggerated, were avidly spread by Arab leaders with the strategically important result that entire Arab communities--hundreds of thousands of people--were sent into panicky flight even before Jewish forces arrived. Sacher 1976, 333-34.

²⁸ Quoted, Husarska 1995, 16; see also Bennett 1995, 191; O'Connor 1996a; Rieff 1995, 110; Judah 1997, 195; Maass 1992.

²⁹ Hedges 1996a; Vulliamy 1996a; Maass 1996, 12-14, 157; UN Experts 1994, para. 246-250, 540-556; Sudetic 1998, 120-25.

92, 138).³⁰

The most common emotion among ordinary people caught up in this cyclone of violence and pillage seems to have been bewilderment rather than rage. Working with Muslim refugees early in the Bosnia war, Cheryl Benard found them "to be totally at a loss to explain how the hostility of the Serbs was possible. All of them, without exception, say they lived and worked with and were close friends with Serbs. They claimed never to have felt any discrimination, exclusion, or tension, and were articulate in their shock and sense of betrayal. Many found excuses for their Serb neighbors..." Halina Grzymala-Moszczyńska, a Polish sociologist working with Muslim refugees in Poland, reports that the refugees she has interviewed never refer to their persecutors as "Serbs," but always as "criminals" (personal conversation). Far from seeing the violence as the delayed eruption of ancient hatreds and as evidence of the strength of ethnic ties, Benard suggests that "one could argue that Bosnia shows how weak and how fluid political identity really is" (1993, 24; see also Malcolm 1998b).

2. Carnival. Lord Acton's famous observation that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" can be embellished with one by Plato: "No human nature invested with supreme power is able to order human affairs and not overflow with insolence and wrong."³¹ The predators often exercised absolute or supreme power in their small fiefdoms and lorded it over their new subjects. Carnivals of looting and destruction would take place, as would orgies of rape, arbitrary violence and murder, and roaring drunkenness--pay often came in the form of alcohol and cigarettes (Woodward 1995, 249).

Sadists may make up a small percentage in any population, but in these circumstances, they rose to the occasion and reveled in it. In a number of places, notes Tim Judah, "real psychopaths were rampaging across the countryside indulging in cruel, bizarre, and sadistic killings" (1997, 233). Maass reports "an odd enthusiasm on the part of the torturers, who laughed, sang and got drunk while inflicting their crimes. They weren't just doing a job, they were doing something they enjoyed" and "There were plenty of Serbs who enjoyed killing civilians and eagerly sought the opportunity to do so....These killers never had so much fun" (1996, 52, 111; see also Borger 1997c).

In this unrestrained new world run, in the words of a UN official, by "gunslingers, thugs, and essentially criminals" (Sudetic 1992), others might opportunistically join the carnivals and orgies.³² After all, if the property of a local Muslim is going to be looted and set afire (like the store of a local Korean during the Los Angeles riots of 1992), it may come to seem sensible--even rational--to join the thieves: no high-minded moral restraint about such vulture-like behavior will do the departed owner any good. Additionally, various adventurers, mercenaries, and revenge-seekers--sometimes belonging to the police--might join. And so might some of those (particularly teen-agers) who find excitement, comradeship, clarity, and theatricality--not to mention material profit--in war and in its terrifying, awesome destructiveness (Woodward 1995, 249).³³ In the process, many ordinary residents might become compromised, sometimes willingly: for example, one Bosnian Serb policeman used his position, Schindler-like, to save the lives of several Muslims, but under the extraordinary conditions of the time he also probably raped two or more of them--in at least one instance after proposing marriage (Borger 1997a).

3. Revenge. Some among the brutalized might wish to fight--and to seek revenge--against their persecutors. In general, they found that they were best advised not to try to improvise local resistance, but rather to flee with their fellow ethnics and then to join like-minded armed bands in more hospitable parts of the country. Thus the special unit, Black Swans, was supposedly made up of volunteers aged 20-22 who

³⁰ One paramilitary "group" consisted of a single man appropriately called "Adolf" who reportedly lined up 150 unarmed Muslim and Croat civilians in Br..ko and then killed them individually with an automatic pistol fitted with a silencer (UN Experts 1994, para. 196). According to a priest who lives there, a slum in Kingston, Jamaica, populated by 8,000 people is totally dominated by 30 mobsters. 60 Minutes, CBS Television, 14 May 2000.

³¹ Acton 1948, 364; Plato, Laws, 4.713.

³² In the town of Br..ko it was reported that a new group would be in charge every two weeks (UN Experts 1994, note 167).

³³ On this phenomenon, see Mueller 1995, ch. 8. See also Gray 1959; Broyles 1984; Grossman 1995; Keen 1998; Banfield 1970, ch. 9.

had been orphaned by the war. And the Muslims' "elite" Seventeenth Krajina brigade was labeled "the angry army of the dispossessed," though questions have been raised about how adequately it actually fought (Burg and Shoup 1999, 137).

Members of each group would quickly find, sometimes to their helpless disgust, that their thugs at least were willing to fight to protect them from the murderous thugs on the other side. Often the choice was essentially one of being dominated by vicious bigots of one's own ethnic group or by vicious bigots of another ethnic group. Given that range of alternatives, the choice was easy.

4. Occupation and desertion. Life under such conditions could become pretty miserable as the masters argued among themselves and looked for further prey among those remaining, whatever their ethnic background.³⁴ For example, the "Yellow Wasps," a band of some 66 men who assembled in Zvornik in Bosnia to "defend the Serbian people" spent most of their time looting and extorting, behavior they soon reportedly extended to include well-to-do Serbs (Ron 2000; see also Judah 1997, 242). A Croat priest, still living after the war in an area dominated by Croat thugs, observed, "The war let primitive people gain power everywhere in Bosnia. Before the war they were poor and primitive, now they are rich, they have complete power, but are still primitive" (O'Connor 1997).

As Rieff observes, "the involvement of gangsters on all sides meant not only that the fighting took on a more and more lawless, brutal character, but also that the political aims of the war became hopelessly intertwined on a day-to-day level with profiteering and black market activities" (1995, 132). Corruption and nepotism in the Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia, including the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale, were so endemic that the war effort was substantially harmed (Judah 1997, 221-23, 252-55). Judah notes that "local industrial and agricultural assets that would have helped sustain Serb-held areas both during and after the war were simply stripped and sold off" (1997, 254).

Meanwhile, in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, men loyal to Oriđ controlled the few jobs in town, lived in the larger homes, and had more food than others. They prospered by exaggerating the population size to get excess humanitarian aid, and then hoarding it to drive up prices before selling it on the black market at a killing. When three opponents to this feudal arrangement arose, they were ambushed and at least one of them was killed (Rohde 1997, 107-9; Sudetic 1998, 223). Because the refugees were essentially being used as human shields to protect the property and income of Oriđ and his men, Muslims were not allowed to leave, yet little effort was made to improve the lives of the people, especially the refugees, unless it brought personal profit to the ruling gang (Sudetic 1998, 223, 244). Oriđ himself was rumored to be profiting greatly on the black market and to be running a prostitution business (pimping, it's usually called). But he denied that, claiming to be "just a small businessman" who somehow managed to clear enough to be able to tear around the fuel-starved enclave in an Audi or a Mercedes or a Volkswagen and to find enough diesel oil to run his private electricity generator during the war and to open a floating restaurant after it was over (Rohde 1997, 63, 354-5, 381; Pomfret 1994).

In war-torn Sarajevo, Juka's men, who had defended the city from the Serbs in 1992, soon began plaguing the defended without regard to ethnicity. They stole automobiles; extorted money and valuables; abducted, abused, and raped civilians; and looted the city's warehouses and shops, making off with 20,000 pairs of shoes in one venture (UN Experts 1994, para. 84, 86). In addition, they monopolized the black market that made up the city's only trade, earning fortunes in a city where many people spent their days scavenging for water and bread (Burns 1993a). Criminal gangs run by people who went under the names of "„elo" and "Caco," that had also helped defend the city in 1992, now "requisitioned" private vehicles, kidnapped men to dig trenches at the front, and murdered, raped, and robbed with impunity. When six children were killed by a Serb shell, they murdered ten local Serbs and dumped their bodies in a pit above

³⁴ Some of this behavior surfaced early--in the fighting in Croatia in 1991. As one Serb from the area recalled, "I don't deny that I myself did some shooting, but the worst crimes were committed by the irregulars who came in from Serbia. First they looted the homes of Croats. When they came back a second time they started looting Serb houses, because the Croat houses had already been robbed clean." Another Serb from the same village reports that after defending their homes for six months (and never seeing a single regular army officer or soldier), they were ordered, together with some of their Croat neighbors who had joined them in home defense, to evacuate for resettlement in Bosnia. On the way, they were all robbed by the Serbian forces of Šešelj (Šitkovic 1995, 160).

the city. They also assaulted foreign journalists, stole from aid agencies, hijacked vehicles from the United Nations protective force, and engaged in extensive black market activities, growing rich and arrogant in the process (Merrill 1999, 285). As Maass notes, they "weren't the kind of soldiers who snapped to attention for the commander of the U.N. forces, and they broke their promises quite easily, like the bones of their prisoners" (1996, 31).

Gradually, many of the people under the thugs' arbitrary and chaotic "protection," especially the more moderate ones and young men unwilling to be impressed into military service, would manage to emigrate to a safer place (Vasif 1996, 133). And in time the size of the "protected" group would be substantially reduced--by half or more.³⁵ The remnants ever more disproportionately consisted of fanatics, economic marauders, militant radicals, common criminals, opportunistic sycophants, embittered revenge-seekers, and murderous drunks.³⁶

Something similar often happened to active combatants as the thrill wore stale and as boredom took over. Tony Horwitz chronicles such a detachment essentially living on liquor, cigarettes, bad coffee, and well-worn pornographic magazines (1993). "Front-line soldiers were the most dangerous of all," notes Maass, "because they were tired, angry, poor and, often in this war, drunk. They hated everyone, not just the enemy but their commanders and even the civilians they were protecting, because all those people were living so much better and taking fewer risks" (1996, 120).

One reason for this discontent, observes Judah, "was that it was extremely difficult for ordinary soldiers, who lacked political protection, to make much money trading with the enemy." However, those in the right positions quickly discovered a lucrative opportunity to engage in such trade and "hundreds of millions of Deutschemarks' worth of weaponry, ammunition, fuel and goods were traded across the front lines" (1997, 242, 252). The Serbs in Bosnia, after all, enjoyed a major military advantage in that, because of the deft manipulations of Milošević and crew early in the war, they inherited masses of weaponry from the Yugoslav national army. Once the war settled down a bit, many of the Serb leaders in Bosnia went looking for buyers and found them nearby: the Croats and the Muslims were eager for weapons with which to attack the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia (and, for a time, each other). There were opportunities in the other direction as well, and the speaker of the Bosnian Serb assembly made millions buying fuel from

³⁵ Woodward 1995, 246; Boyd 1995, 29; Malcolm 1995, 9; Judah 1997, 223, 237, 296; Sudetic 1994; Maass 1992; Merrill 1999, 282. The once thoroughly integrated city of Mostar was contested by Muslims and Croats during the war and devolved into two ethnically-cleansed areas. In the process, its population declined from 130,000 to 60,000 (Hedges 1996b). Similarly, the population of Sarajevo declined during the war from 450,000 to something like 280,000, including some 100,000 refugees from ethnically cleansed areas of the country (Hedges 1995). By September 1992, only nine months after their brief war for independence had ended, the number of Serbs from the Krajina section of Croatia who had moved to Serbia was reaching "disastrous proportions," according to a Belgrade daily, a situation it blamed on the endemic corruption of Krajina officials (Tanner 1997, 283). On this process in Algeria, see Klarevas 1999a, 26.

³⁶ For a portrait of the clearly deranged Branko Gruić, a Serb who reigned as the mayor of Zvornik after the Muslim majority had been driven from the city, see Cohen 1998, 296-98. In 1993, Michael Ignatieff visited the war-ruined city of Vukovar that had been wrested from the hastily-armed Croat defenders by the Serbs two years earlier. He found it run by people he describes as "large, long-haired, snub-nosed men--part warrior, part thug." They threatened his translator, a local journalist, with death if he told "lies" and later fired warning shots at Ignatieff's car (1997, 132). In one Serb area in Croatia, it was reported that only 8 percent of the population of 430,000 was employed, less than half the arable land was being cultivated, livestock had almost completely been destroyed, business activity and industrial production had essentially ceased, and, none too surprisingly, tourism had become nonexistent (Udovič and Ridgeway 1995, 230). In Serb areas of Bosnia, industry worked at 10 percent of capacity (Judah 1997, 222). The payroll of the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, which was the scene of the 1995 talks on Bosnia, had a payroll that was larger than Bosnia's entire output by that time (R. Cohen 1995). And many areas remained severely depressed after the war. The once prosperous, architectural significant, and ethnically mixed city of Vukovar which was returned to Croatia in January 1998 had an unemployment rate of 90 percent over a year later and nearly every young person with a marketable skill had left. Of the 80,000 Croats who fled the city during the war, only 15,000 had returned, mostly old people without children (Harden 1999b).

Croatia and then selling it to Croatia's Serb enemies in Bosnia. One senior Serbian commander in Bosnia sold a Muslim village some heavy artillery and then retired with his family to Serbia. Croats could sometimes rent tanks from the Serbs at a going rate of DM1,000 per day (Judah 1997, 242-52; Vulliamy 1996b; see also Burg and Shoup 1999, 138; Sudetic 1998, 90). Whether they had to pay extra for insurance is not recorded.³⁷

The relationship of such banal behavior to "nationalism" and to "ethnic hatred," ancient or otherwise, is less than clear as is its bearing on the notion of "clashing civilizations." Its relation to common criminality, however, is quite evident.

3. KOSOVO

There are at least three aspects of the situation in Kosovo that are notably different from those attending the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. First, Serb hostility toward Albanians has been considerably greater than that toward Croats or Muslims. There has traditionally been far less intermarriage, and as Brian Hall has observed, there seems generally to have been a "unanimity of Serbs' opinions about the Albanians, from drunks to bartenders to journalists to university professors" such that "even people who managed to be rational about the Croats could not speak of the Albanians without sounding as though their skin was crawling" (1994, 268; see also Hedges 1999a, 41). Second, Kosovo has an almost religious significance to many Serbs. In part because of a battle fought there in 1389 that has become legendary, Kosovo is often considered to be the historical heartland of the Serb people and something of a shrine. And third, the NATO bombing of 1999 had an impelling or triggering effect on Serb fighting morale, greatly inspiring or heightening a rage directed against a local ethnic group.

Nevertheless, what happened in Kosovo often resembles the process seen earlier in Croatia and Bosnia, except that, in part because of these three special circumstances, it may have taken place at an even higher and more focused degree of brutality.

Forcing the choosing of sides

The ruling Serbs substantially created the problem, especially after 1989, by officially discriminating against the Albanians (Malcolm 1998a, ch. 17). Then, when some Albanians resorted to anti-Serb terrorism in 1998, the Serbs foolishly moved against them with excessive violence that included massacres and the creation of masses of refugees, especially in rural areas. Although the terrorists of the Kosovo Liberation Army did not enjoy great support among the Albanians, especially in the cities, the Serb depredations, carried out mainly by special paramilitary units under the direction of the ministry of the interior in Belgrade, greatly increased the support for the terrorists by essentially forcing Albanians to make a Bosnia-like

³⁷ Serbia itself was also substantially criminalized during the war period. Observes Judah, "The unprecedented breakdown of law and order and the fantastic business opportunities provided by sanctions-busting meant that many Yugoslav gangsters who had hitherto operated in the richer pastures of Germany and Switzerland returned to reap the profits of war. Some became involved with Serbian paramilitaries, which under cover of patriotism became rapacious looting machines. After they had stolen all the cars and other goods from the frontline towns, they turned their attention to the home front" (1997, 255-56; see also Kinzer 1993; Firestone 1993; Sudetic 1998, 128). And the condition continued after the war. In post-war Belgrade a very prominent "criminal class, many of whom made their fortunes by plundering the possessions of ethnic Croats and Muslim who were expelled from their homes or killed in Bosnia during the war there, deal in stolen clothes from Italy, stolen cars, drugs, protection rackets, prostitution, and duty-free cigarettes" (Hedges 1998a; see also Judah 1997, 256-58; Harden 1999a; Dinkic 1995). Arkan made millions of dollars selling loot and smuggling oil, and operated not only an ice cream parlor in Belgrade, but also gas stations, a shopping center, a savings bank, a protection racket, and a private prison used in kidnapping for ransom (UN Experts 1994, para. 131). He did not do nearly as well in politics, however. He formed a political party in 1993 and spent over three million dollars campaigning for elections that year. Despite such lavish spending and despite the apparent support of Milošević, his party failed to gain a single seat (UN Experts 1994, para. 136). All this has been accompanied by a disastrous brain drain (Judah 1997, 276-78). Meanwhile, in the Serb section of Bosnia, the leaders expropriated the largest houses, drove luxury sedans, and were guarded by bodyguards with shaved heads and sunglasses, while gangs of armed car thieves roamed the streets (Hedges 1997b; see also Borger 1997c). Armed gangsters continued to reign in the Croatian section of Mostar as well (Hedges 1996b; Pomfret 1995).

decision: they had to choose between rule by brutish racist thugs from their own ethnic group or rule by brutish racist thugs from the other ethnic group (Hedges 1998b; O'Connor 1998b; Finn 1999; Judah 1999). The KLA, which numbered no more than 150 before the massacres, quickly increased to an estimated 12,000 (Steele 1998; Hedges 1999a, 34-36).³⁸

The process of ethnic cleansing

Before the 1999 war the province was being ethnically cleansed of Serbs by the actions of Albanians. In reaction to Serb oppression, the majority Albanians often adopted a position of considerable hostility to local Serbs and this, enhanced by the still rather minor violence committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army, was easily enough to drive many Serbs from the area even though they enjoyed the protection of the Serb-dominated police force of 20,000 (Steele 1998). Comparatively few of them actually suffered great hardship, but most were made to feel unsafe, and, for many, this was fully enough (Hedges 1998b; Hedges 1998c; O'Connor 1998d; Erlanger 1999a; Hedges 1999a, 38). As the experience in Bosnia and Croatia had previously indicated, it does not take much to get people to flee.

Serb unwillingness to fight

As noted, Kosovo is much closer to Serbia's core interests, or, at any rate, sentiments, than Bosnia or Croatia, and Serbs had been dutifully weaving fanciful myths and legends about the region for a good 600 years. These myths and legends are prominent among those that have so impressed Robert Kaplan and others, and ones that, they have repeatedly assured us, are profoundly motivating to the history-mired Serbs, mesmerized and romanticized as they were by such ancient, if vaporous, mysteries.

Nonetheless, following the earlier pattern found in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, an amazingly large percentage of Serbian youth was entirely able to contain its enthusiasm for actually *fighting* for dear old Kosovo. As one Serb journalist put it, "you won't find anyone prepared to send their children into the battlefield" (Nougayrède 1999). Indeed, one Serb writer went so far as to call Kosovo "dead history," a place containing a lot of beautiful old monasteries which are, however, hardly worth spilling blood over, and others simply saw it as a "lost cause" or concluded, in the words of a Belgrade truck driver, "Now we would be fighting for Milosevic's throne. I wouldn't give one hair for Kosovo or for Milosevic" (Perlez 1998). Belgrade's newspapers cited despairing letters from army conscripts on this issue, and some policemen were dismissed for refusing assignment to Kosovo (O'Connor 1998d). Many of the Serb policeman who did go were sent as a demotion or as punishment for misbehavior (Hedges 1999a, 32).

The use of criminals and opportunistic thugs

In a doomeager willingness to repeat the mistake of 1998, Milošević allowed himself to believe assurances that a really substantial offensive could wipe out the KLA in five to seven days (Perlez 1999; Dinmore 1999). Since he needed dedicated fighters for this, he found many of them in the same place as before: criminals were released from prison to join and to form paramilitary forces (Gordon 1999; Ingrao 1999). Some of the victims specifically refer to their persecutors as criminals. "Those people are from prisons, are out from prison now, criminals and gypsies with big weapons, with black masks," screamed one Albanian refugee (NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, PBS, 1 April 1999). "They were not policemen. They were criminals Milosevic let out of jail," recounted another (Kifner 1999a).

An orgy of thug-dominated predation

In the meantime, NATO was threatening to bomb if the offensive took place. Concerned about this, those running the Serb offensive appear to have tried to keep it under some degree of control. Given the quality of the personnel principally carrying it out, the offensive would likely be brutal (and ultimately counterproductive) like the offensive of the year before, but efforts were made to keep it localized and focused mainly on KLA stronghold areas.

Accordingly, observed a senior Western official, the Serbs at first seemed more interested in "channeling and moving people" rather than in "destroying and killing." For the rest, Serbian "special

³⁸ As in Bosnia and Croatia, the Serbs committed atrocities, and as in those instances, the stories of the atrocities were often even worse than the reality: see O'Connor 1998c.

police," presumably in an effort to deter, pointedly announced to western journalists that they "would kill every Albanian in sight" if NATO bombed (Ingrao 1999). Ethnic Albanians and others in Kosovo expressed the fear that this was not an idle threat (Gall 1999a; Gall 1999b; Erlanger 1999e; Erlanger 1999g; see also the warnings in Kuperman 1998).

Dismissing such threats as "foolish Serbian bravado," NATO launched airstrikes in March 1999 under the assumption, as Clinton admitted later, that after "a couple of days" of bombing the Serbs would halt their offensive (Whitney and Schmitt 1999; Broder 1999).³⁹ It was also hoped the bombing would "stop Albanians and Serbs from killing each other," as U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke put it (Rieff 1999).⁴⁰ Instead, the bombing had a sort of Pearl Harbor effect on the Serbs: like Americans in 1941, they were sent into a state of outraged fury.⁴¹ Virtually all vocal opposition to Milošević vanished, and, in a major shift, draft and mobilization orders were now frequently obeyed (Erlanger 1999c; Harden 1999a).

The Serbs couldn't take their fury out directly on Brussels, London, or Washington, but they did have an enemy conveniently close at hand: the Albanians of Kosovo. After the bombing began, control, such as it was, collapsed, and the frenzy began: it was "a breakdown in already poor discipline," as one observer put it (Stanley 1999). Serb forces in Kosovo went into an orgy of vengeful violence and destruction that lasted for several weeks and seems to have been intended to carry out the goal, apparently previously considered unrealistic, of driving the majority Albanians from Kosovo.⁴²

However, the violence seems to have been almost entirely committed by marauding, if sometimes uniformed, thugs rather than by conscripts in the army. As in Bosnia and Croatia, the army did provide a sort of generalized support for the rampage, it participated directly in some areas, and it hardly escapes blame for the results in any case. But, as one report puts it, "in hundreds of interviews," Kosovo Albanians "have said that nearly all the killings of civilians were committed by Serbian paramilitary forces and not by the regular army" (Harden 1999c). The overall pattern was quite similar to that in Bosnia: "The army held the ground; special police and paramilitary units, sometimes with long hair, beards and bandannas, cleared the villages, often killing those who resisted leaving; the civilians were channeled toward buses or the border; bodies were often cleared out by other police units. Then the army checked the village again"

³⁹ On this issue, see K. Mueller 1999.

⁴⁰ The Central Intelligence Agency estimated that there was a 50/50 chance Yugoslavia would back down if bombed, and a 50/50 chance they wouldn't. A State Department official, yearning for certainty rather than a reasoned assessment of probabilities, denounced this estimate by "those bastards" for "having it both ways" (McManus 1999). No planning or provision was made for the possibility that the CIA's second possible outcome would transpire and that masses of refugees would be forced out of Kosovo.

Planning for the bombing seems to have been based on the fact that Milošević had essentially backed down in 1998 when threatened with bombing and on an overestimate of the effectiveness of bombing in Bosnia in 1995. Although the 1995 bombing (which, however, took far longer than two days) probably helped to concentrate the Serb mind, it may not have been necessary to obtain the resulting Dayton agreement which ended the war. Before the bombing even began the Serb military position was falling apart to Croatian ground attacks--the importance of which, Holbrooke notes, was not appreciated by policy planners at the time (1998, 73). Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs had agreed to let Milošević negotiate for them, giving him virtually total control over their fate. Since he had been repeatedly urging them for more than two years to accept various peace plans offered by the West, this appointment was close to an admission of defeat. Milošević's gracious, warm-hearted evaluation of his Bosnian co-negotiators is indicated by his angry assertions to Holbrooke: "They are not my friends. They are not my colleagues. It is awful just to be in the same room with them for so long. They are shit" (1998, 105-6). Also relevant is the fact that the Dayton agreement involved substantial concessions on the part of the *Bosnian* government (Burg and Shoup 1999, 356).

⁴¹ As Gordon Prange observes of the reaction to Pearl Harbor, "The American people reeled with a mind-staggering mixture of surprise, awe, mystification, grief, humiliation, and, above, all cataclysmic fury" (1981, 582). For the argument that this reaction inspired a misguided policy, see Mueller 1995, 103-110.

⁴² This rampage was partly facilitated by the fact that it could, in a sense, proceed unseen: in order to preclude the possibility that they could be taken hostage, international monitors who might have been able to observe and document Serb behavior had been withdrawn in anticipation of the bombing campaign (Kifner 1999b; Erlanger 1999g).

(Erlanger 1999i).

The Kosovo capital of Priština had been mostly immune to violence previously, but after the bombing began, "radical Serbs with guns, masked members of paramilitary units and at least some policemen rampaged through the city, burning and looting and ordering Albanians to leave," according to a New York Times report.⁴³ Eventually, the army and the police were able to bring the violence under control there, arresting 350 for crimes against civilians, and clearing off the paramilitary forces, "most of whom are radical Serbs who learned their trade in Bosnia and applied it here." Elsewhere, it was even worse: "a lot of vile and angry people, maddened, who were out of control," a Serb official put it. Asked if patriotic Serbs would later feel any shame for what was done in their name in Kosovo, he answered, "a lot" (Erlanger 1999d). But a draftee who does feel shame also remembers the exhilaration of the experience and notes that some people liked the killing: "You find out a lot about people in 24 hours of war" (Erlanger 1999i).

Moreover, if the marauders, as in Bosnia and Croatia, were in some sense brutally (and ultimately counterproductively) carrying out nationalist goals, they, like their predecessors, also seem to have borne rather less noble aspirations more frontally on their minds: pure sadism, mindless violence, debauched boozing, and, mainly, focused, if opportunistic, looting. Thus, while killing and other brutalities were common, the true name of the game seems to have become personal enrichment. For example, the Serb paramilitaries in many cases made special efforts to concentrate their activities on the homes of wealthy Albanians (Rohde 1999). A true ideologue would scarcely have been so picky.

Although there were plenty of murders, Albanian lives were routinely spared by the payment of cash. One child remembers that "three people with black masks and big guns" threatened to kill his mother unless he gave them money, and the 550 Deutsche marks hidden in his sock saved her (Kifner 1999a). Another victim reports that the paramilitaries yelled, "Give us money or we'll kill you." Then they took the wedding ring from her finger and heirloom earrings from her ears, ransacked the apartment ostensibly in search of weapons, and stole her washing machine and an old television set (Erlanger 1999f). Serb reservists report that "everywhere in Kosovo they were surrounded by Serbs in uniform carrying stolen televisions, satellite dishes and other electronic equipment." The experience generated what a soldier called "one of the best jokes of the war": a "Rambo," asked why he had quit the war, responds, "I couldn't carry a gun and a television set at the same time" (Harden 1999c).

Ethnic cleansing continues

With the military collapse, the situation became even less safe for the local Serbs, and ethnic cleansing of them by the now-vengeful Albanians resumed at a heightened pace. The Serbs have continued to leave, and the region is becoming almost entirely Albanian in a process similar to the one in Bosnia where Serbs, Croats, and Muslims continue, out of simple, understandable fear, to avoid an integrated existence after the war.

The persistence of the neighbor-against-neighbor image

Presumably because it is attractive, simple, and convenient, and perhaps because it comfortably suggests to outsiders that there is nothing to be done, the neighbor-against-neighbor image remains a popular one. For example, in an article about the conflict, a reporter very experienced in the area found that, while some Albanians claimed that their Serb neighbors aided or joined the marauders during the Serb rampages, he could find no Albanians who were actually able to name a local Serb who had been involved, and he reports instead the animated insistence of local Serbs that masked paramilitaries were to blame. Despite this, his article was given the headline, "Where Neighbors Attacked Neighbors, Justice Is Far From Easy," by his New York Times editors (Rohde 1999).

Local Serbs were armed for the job, like their counterparts in Bosnia and Croatia, and some doubtless did join the rampage. But there are also accounts of Serb neighbors looking after an elderly Albanian man, bringing him bread and yogurt (Erlanger 1999f), and instances of returning Albanians finding

⁴³ Although indications that the marauders sported sunglasses are less common than in Bosnia and Croatia, there are more reports that they hid behind masks, particularly ski masks.

their apartments intact because of the intervention of Serbian neighbors (Erlanger 1999h).

4. RWANDA

I have stressed the importance of vicious and opportunistic, but often substantially nonideological, criminals and criminal-like elements in the development of the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. This approach seems sounder than ones that seek to explain the wars as conflicts in which murderous communal or civilizational rage, exploding either from pent-up ancient hatreds or from the cynical manipulation of malevolent, shortsighted politicians, induces a Hobbesian conflict of all against all and neighbor against neighbor.

There are doubtless instances, however, in which the Hobbesian vision comes closer to being realized. The 1994 genocide inflicted by ethnic Hutus against Tutsis in Rwanda could be a case in point. Closer examination, however, suggests a number of similarities with the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

Much of the writing about the genocide, in which some 500,000 to 800,000 perished in a matter of weeks--mostly by being hacked to death with machetes or hoes--gives the impression that the conflict was one of all against all, friends against friends, neighbors against neighbors, even Cain against Abel. Friends and neighbors (and even brothers perhaps) did kill each other, but it seems that by far the greatest damage, as in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, stemmed from the rampages of murderous thugs.

The killers

Far from a spontaneous eruption, the basic elements of the genocidal process had been planned for years by Hutu extremists who were substantially in charge of the ruling party, the government bureaucracy, the army, and the police (Prunier 1995, 169; African Rights 1995, 51-52).⁴⁴ A civil war between Hutu military forces and the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) was going badly for the Hutus, and a power sharing agreement was worked out. Rather than let this agreement take effect, the fanatics, seizing an opportunity provided when a plane carrying the country's president was shot down, ordered the murder of all Tutsis in the country. With this, the RPF, which had ceased to engage in hostilities because of the power-sharing agreement, remobilized and launched an offensive.

Initially, killings were mainly of rather carefully selected Tutsis who were known to be in opposition to the Hutu extremists as well as of unreliable Hutus (Des Forges 1999, 9). But the process quickly expanded as Hutu party and government leaders and local administrators responded to orders to carry out the genocide throughout the country. They urged--or ordered--Hutus and Hutu police everywhere to engage in the killing, and many responded enthusiastically. Joining them was the Presidential Guard, and it probably engaged in the most focused and systematic of the killings (Prunier 1995, 242-43; African Rights 1995, 49, 65).

Also contributing was the Hutu army, the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), characterized by Scott Feil as "a minimally capable force" (1998, 37). Most of its member had been hastily recruited in the previous few years from landless peasants, the urban unemployed, and foreign drifters who had not signed up chiefly for ideological reasons, but rather for the guaranteed food and drink (each man was entitled to two bottles of beer a day, a luxury by Rwandan standards) and for the opportunity to loot since pay was low and irregular (Prunier 1995, 113). Since the RPF was in the process of advancing during the genocide, the FAR was also devoted to fighting that threat. Although its complicity in the genocide was comparatively incidental, it seems to have participated in all the largest massacres, and it was frequently called in when other génocidaires met determined resistance (Prunier 1995, 246, 254; African Rights, 48, 1050).

Finally, there was the interahamwe, militia bands that had been created and trained by Hutu extremists. As Philip Gourevitch points out, the interahamwe had its genesis in soccer fan clubs, and it recruited jobless young men who were "wasting in idleness and its attendant resentments." Extremist youth

⁴⁴ It was by no account a case of ancient hatreds since there is no record of systematic political violence between Hutus and Tutsis anywhere before 1959. This fact did not, however, keep the New York Times from sagely reporting on "the age-old animosity between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups" in October 1997 (Gourevitch 1998, 59).

leaders sped around on motorbikes and sported "pop hairstyles, dark glasses, and flamboyantly colored pajama suits and robes, preached ethnic solidarity and civil defense" at interahamwe rallies "where alcohol usually flowed freely....and paramilitary drills were conducted like the latest hot dance moves." The interahamwe tended to see the genocide as a "carnival romp" (Gourevitch 1998, 93). Moreover, their ranks were expanded by hordes of opportunists once the genocide began. Gérard Prunier stresses that a "social aspect of the killings has often been overlooked": As soon as the killing groups "went into action, they drew around them a cloud of even poorer people, a *lumpenproletariat* of street boys, rag-pickers, car-washers and homeless unemployed. For these people the genocide was the best thing that could ever happen to them. They had the blessings of a form of authority to take revenge on socially powerful people as long as these were on the wrong side of the political fence. They could steal, they could kill with minimum justification, they could rape and they could get drunk for free. This was wonderful. The political aims pursued by the masters of this dark carnival were quite beyond their scope. They just went along" (1995, 231-32; Des Forges 1999, 11, 261). "Drunken militia bands," notes Gourevitch, "fortified with assorted drugs from ransacked pharmacies, were bused from massacre to massacre" (1998, 115).

As in Yugoslavia, criminals were released from jail to participate in the destruction (Gourevitch 1998, 242), and the prospect for enrichment by looting was vastly escalated during the genocide and was used as a specific incentive by the leaders--many of whom were happy to take booty as well (African Rights 1995, 1003-6). Rape and sadism were also common. Not surprisingly, discipline among the rampaging killing bands was poor, particularly among the new recruits who "tended to be street boys who were drunk most of the time." And "the militias crumbled into armed banditry in the later course of the war as the administrative structure which had recruited and supported them fell apart" (Prunier 1995, 243-44; see also Des Forges 1999, 13).

The ideology of the genocide was specifically devoted to expanding the numbers of the murderers. The ideal, in fact, held that the entire Hutu population should take part, an arrangement, as Gourevitch notes, that "eliminated any questions of accountability that might arise. If everybody is implicated, then implication becomes meaningless" (Gourevitch 1995, 96). Thus, the killers were fully willing to murder fellow Hutus suspected of not being loyal to the cause, and they often forced them, on pain of instant death, to join the killings: as one such "innocent murderer" or "victim-killer" put it, "either you took place in the massacre or you were massacred yourself" (1995, 247; African Rights 1995, ch. 14; Gourevitch 1998, 307, 309). Others participated by manning roadblocks or by pointing out--"betraying" or "denouncing" in Prunier's characterization (1995, 253-54)--local Tutsis to the menacing and marauding *génocidaires*. "I didn't have a choice," one cooperating priest pointed out, "It was necessary to appear pro-militia. If I had had a different attitude, we would all have disappeared" (Gourevitch 1998, 136; see also Jones 1999, 127).

Estimating the percentage who killed

Many Hutus, however, did hide and protect Tutsi neighbors and sometimes strangers despite the pressure and despite the fact that the punishment for such behavior could be instant, brutal death (African Rights 1995, 1017-22). The number who did so probably was as high as the number who, under pressure from the often-drunken and always-murderous *génocidaires*, indicated where some Tutsis might reside or be hiding (Prunier 1995, 253; Des Forges 1999, 11, 260-62). Most of the others, it appears, simply withdrew whether in approval or disapproval of the cataclysm surrounding them: "We closed the door and tried not to hear," said one (Des Forges 1999, 262).

David Rieff contends that the proportion among the Hutus who killed was "very high," or that it was "only a minority" which, however, was able to get the rest of the population to "go along" (1999). A prominent Nigerian playwright suggests that "nearly the entirety" or "a majority" of the Hutu population engaged in this "orgy of self-mutilation" (Soyinka 1998). It might be useful to try to calculate what percentage of the Hutu population actually took part in the killings.

An extensive study by Human Rights Watch ventures no direct estimates (Des Forges 1999, 16). However, it does suggest at various points that the killers numbered in the "tens of thousands" (Des Forges 1999, 2, 260, 262). A year after defeating the genocidal regime, Tutsi forces had 33,000 people incarcerated under suspicion of participating in the genocide--a figure that later rose to at least 125,000 (Gourevitch 1998, 242).

A study by African Rights in London amasses a detailed listing of those in the Hutu elite who directed the genocide and comes up with 600 or 700 names. The Presidential Guard comprised some 700 to 1,500 men (Prunier 1995, 242-43; African Rights 1995, 49), and the police, initially numbered about 1,200, and had recently been expanded to between 4,000 and 6,000 (Feil 1998, 37-38). The formal organization of the army has been estimated at around 5,200 personnel by Western sources, and was reported at the time of the power sharing agreement to be 20,000 (Feil 1998, 37-38). Some sources put its strength as high as 50,000 (Prunier 1995, 113).

There were about 1700 "professional interahamwe" who received training and uniforms, and thousands or tens of thousands joined up (sometimes under coercion) after the genocide began (African Rights 1995, 55, 61-62, 114). The interahamwe, described by one witness as "terrifying, bloodthirsty, drunk" (Gourevitch 1998, 134), therefore may have totalled 20,000 to 30,000 (Feil 1998, 38), or as many as 50,000 (Prunier 1995, 243).

It seems reasonable to suggest from all this that there might have been some 50,000 hard-core killers. This would easily be enough to have accomplished the genocide: if each of these people killed one person a week for the course of the 100 day holocaust, more than 700,000 would have perished.

This number would represent some 2 percent of the male Hutu population older than 13.⁴⁵ That is, nearly 98 percent of the male Hutu population over 13 was not in this group.

It is conceivable that 200,000 participated in the massacres, but this would almost certainly be a rather high figure that would include people who, under pressure from the hard-core génocidaires, did nothing more than point out where local Tutsi lived or simply manned roadblocks under orders. Even this higher figure would represent about 9 percent of the Hutu male population over the age of 13. Though by all accounts very much outnumbered by men and boys, women and girls did join in the genocide. In addition, boys younger than 13 often did participate (Keller 1994). If these groups are added to the base, the percentages would, of course, be much lower.

In some sense, these are very high--astoundingly high--figures, and they demonstrate how extraordinary the event was. In a normal year, by comparison, the proportion of males over 13 who committed murder in Rwanda was probably something like 1 in 2000. Nonetheless, a situation in which more than 90 percent of the over-13 male Hutu population did not participate in killings hardly seems to justify the notion that the situation was one of all against all or neighbor against neighbor. In this extreme case, as in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the chief dynamic of the depredations seems to have been furnished by marauding bands of violent, opportunistic, and often drunken thugs.

5. OTHER CASES

How broadly this analysis can be transferred to the dozens of "ethnic wars" taking place in any given year remains to be seen. But ideas developed in an analysis of the wars in the former Yugoslavia do have some notable bearing on the extreme, genocidal conflict in Rwanda. This suggests that an approach that applies as a crucial mechanism the rampages of opportunistic and often drunken predators may, in many cases, more adequately explain what passes for "ethnic war" than one that envisions such conflicts as Hobbesian all-against-all upheavals stemming from previously-suppressed ancient ethnic hatreds or from media- or politician-induced mass frenzies.

More generally, a quick perusal of a few other cases does suggest how easily a society can become corrupted, debased, and polarized by the unpoliced or underpoliced predations of relatively small numbers of people who purport to represent one group or another, and how these people can force others, whose main concern usually is simple personal safety, into ethnic or other identifications that may or may not come naturally to them.

In Sri Lanka, for example, there are various varieties of Tamils, depending on their origin of emigration or on the region of the country in which they live. But gangs of Sinhalese, reacting to incidents of Tamil terrorism, rioted against Tamils in Colombo and elsewhere in 1983, looting, killing, and setting fires

⁴⁵ Population data for Rwanda are given in Prunier 1995, 79n, 264; Feil 1998, 32-34.

in what Stanley Tambiah characterizes as an "orgy of violence," while the police mainly stood by in effective, and sometimes actual, complicity. In the process, the rioters defined for Tamils what being a Tamil meant, playing into the hands of Tamil extremists and terrorists who were committing violence exactly to heighten that identity. The resulting ethnic cleansing, in which Tamils of all varieties fled to safer areas, tended to concentrate them in one potentially secessionist area of the country.

Commenting, Tambiah makes an observation that could apply as well to Bosnia: he points to "the awful existential fact" that a "minority of activists, populists, and terrorists on both sides" can hold "the entire society as its hostage" while the many people in between "are inexorably seduced and forced into taking sides as the spilling of blood on both sides heightens the emotions and sentiments cohering around such primordial themes as kinship, people, religion, language, and 'race'" (1986, 21, 120; see also Tambiah 1996, ch. 4).

A similar development, focused on Armenians, took place in 1988 when mobs of Azerbaijanis rioted and looted over the issue of the secession of Karabagh, a local area heavily populated by Armenians. Even though many Armenians were saved from the marauders by their Azerbaijani neighbors, the conflict, and the polarization, was dramatically accelerated. Aiding in the process was the complicity--or, at best the studied incompetence--of the police, the bumbling and ultimately counterproductive efforts of Soviet authorities to deal with the situation, and the facilitating machinations of some local officials (Kaufman forthcoming, ch. 3).

Small groups of Irish Republican Army terrorists, many of them criminals, have created mayhem in Northern Ireland claiming that they represent, and are fighting for, Catholic sensibilities there and in the Republic of Ireland.⁴⁶ At times their efforts have been facilitated by inept reactions by the British police. Yet when a referendum was conducted in Ireland in 1998 on the key traditional IRA demand that the north should be united with the south, fully 95 percent voted against the idea--a percentage scarcely ever achieved in a fully democratic process. Who did these warriors represent?

And many other wars often taken to be "ethnic" in nature seem mainly to involve criminal predation. There is the pervasive role of banditry in Chechnya, for example, or rampages by drugged and often very young soldiers in the service of warlords questing after mercenary gain in Africa.⁴⁷

In some respects, the warfare over the last couple of decades in Afghanistan forms at first an important exception to this pattern, and then an example of it. Reacting to the Soviet invasion of 1979, Afghan warriors, Mujaheddin, fought tenaciously and with considerable discipline against the well-armed, but often ill-led and incompetent invaders, eventually forcing them to withdraw in 1989. In the aftermath of that victory, however, the former freedom fighters disintegrated into dozens of squabbling and corrupt warlord and bandit gangs, plundering the population they had once defended. According to Ahmed Rashid, they "abused the population at will, kidnapping young girls and boys for their sexual pleasure, robbing merchants in the bazaars and fighting and brawling in the streets." They "seized homes and farms, threw out their occupants and handed them over to their supporters" and they "sold off everything to Pakistani traders to make money, stripping down telephone wires and poles, cutting trees, selling off factories, machinery and even road rollers to scrap merchants" (2000, 21).

CONCLUSIONS AND EXTRAPOLATIONS

6. THE BANALITY OF "ETHNIC WAR"

Far from a Hobbesian war of all against all, what passes for "ethnic war" can be something far more banal: a desperate condition where life becomes debased by the predations of often remarkably small groups

⁴⁶ On the connection between crime and the Irish Republican Army and on the addictive quality of the war effort, see Grant 1998, George 1996.

⁴⁷ On banditry in Chechnya, see Lieven 1998; Lieven 1999. On the role of criminals, alcohol, drugs, and armed children in war in Mozambique, see Keller 1994; in Liberia, see French 1995; in Sierra Leone, see Miller 1999, Ourdan 1999, Brittain 2000, Lizza 2000; in Cambodia, see Morris 1998. On the role of criminals in Algeria, see Kalyvas 1999a, 268. On this process more generally, particularly in Africa, see Keen 1998.

of violent marauders who purport to operate in the name of some imagined community. It is less a clash of civilizations than a clash of thugs in which ethnicity or nationalism becomes something of an ordering or sorting device that allows people to determine which thugs are more or less on their side and which ones are out to get them.

This section discusses these issues. It also assesses the degree to which natural propensities to violence, rather than deep-seated hatreds, are central to the process. And it explores the urban-rural nature of some conflicts that are usually held to be ethnic in nature.

The Hobbesian image

Michael Ignatieff (1993) compares the conditions that prevailed in the former Yugoslavia to a Hobbesian state of nature. But the experience there and in Rwanda suggests Hobbes was wrong--perhaps profoundly wrong--in some important respects about the state of nature.

Hobbes was obsessed by the chaos and calamity of the English Civil War that took place during his lifetime, and his important book, *Leviathan*, was, he notes, "occasioned by the disorders of the present time" (1909, 556). Actually, he never really experienced those traumatic disorders first hand since he judiciously fled to France when he saw war coming (Rogow 1986, ch. 6). However, he could still theorize of course, and he viewed the English Civil War as essentially one of competing ideas--in that case religious ideas, rather than nationalist or ethnic ones as in Yugoslavia or Rwanda. And, like Ignatieff on Yugoslavia, he envisioned the conditions as a descent into a base state of nature where, without "a common power to keep them all in awe," people live in a perpetual state of war of "every man against every man," where "there is no place for industry because the fruit thereof is uncertain," where there is "continual fear and danger of violent death," and where life, as he famously put it, becomes "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (1909, 96-97, 105).

Robert Kraynak's analysis is particularly useful because he attempts to keep Hobbes' thought in historical perspective. Kraynak argues that in Hobbes' vision of human history people did once manage to lift themselves out of a barbaric, if somewhat innocent, state of nature into a form of ordered civilization. This progressive development proved fragile, however, because scholars, priests, and lawyers developed competing and incompatible religious doctrines based on authority rather than on objective science, and then convinced their various co-religionists to engage in destructive and vicious doctrinal wars. In particular, notes Kraynak, in Hobbes' opinion the English Civil War emerged when "various intellectual authorities, driven by a desire for honor and glory, competed among themselves to corrupt and seduce the credulous people." For Hobbes, "the tragedy and folly of doctrinal politics" is that eventually "intellectual elites mobilize the masses against their rivals and foment rebellion" (1990, 86, 88). And Hobbes held that the resulting brutish conditions of civil war are scarcely, if at all, distinguishable from those of the barbaric, pre-civilized state of nature (Kraynak 1990, 144). It is a "kingdom of darkness" and a "confederacy of deceivers" in which "force and fraud" become "the two cardinal virtues" (Kraynak 1990, 131, 152).

Hobbes does acknowledge that humans group themselves (so the state of nature may not be quite as "solitary" as his famous description seems to suggest), and thus that the perpetual wars of the state of nature are waged between groups rather than between individuals (Kraynak 1990, 148-49). However, the implication of the image is one of perpetual and total violence in which all partake.

The experience in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia calls this image into question. Although there was plenty of deception, force, and fraud in those civil conflicts, people there did not descend into the war of all against all that Hobbes so vividly depicted and so ardently and influentially abhorred. What happened in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda certainly did resemble a Hobbesian state of nature, but it came about not because people generally fell into, or gave into, murderous enmity, but because they came under the arbitrary sway of armed thugs.

Ethnicity as an ordering device

In all this, ethnicity proved essentially to be simply the human characteristic around which the perpetrators and the politicians who recruited and encouraged them happened to array themselves. This process did, however, furnish them with a degree of predictability--if you were a member of the opposite group you can be sure they will persecute you, but if you were a member of their group, they would more

or less protect you as long as you seemed to be reasonably loyal. That is, they may have been thugs, but they were not *random* thugs.

Ethnicity, then, was important as an ordering, organizational, sorting, or predictive device or principle, not as a crucial motivating force. The same sort of dynamic could hold if the thugs' organizational principle were class or ideological allegiance--or, for that matter, handedness or loyalty to a specific soccer team. If they took control in a town determined to cleanse it violently of, say, lefthanders or of supporters of an opposing team, those in that group would quickly find it in their interest to leave. Meanwhile righthanders or fans of the thug-favored team would, often reluctantly, come to recognize that the thugs had become their only protection against revenge-seeking thugs of another group. And as they hunkered down behind their protecting thugs or as they sought gradually to flee the war zone, members of each group would probably reflect in bewilderment from time to time that before the thugs came, they often didn't even know the handedness or the soccer loyalties of their friends, neighbors, and schoolmates. Under such conditions, identity, as Chaim Kaufmann notes, "is often imposed by the opposing group, specifically by its most murderous members" (1996, 144).

None of this is to argue, of course, that no neighbor ever persecuted a neighbor in these conflicts. Some locals did enthusiastically join in the process, sometimes out of ethnic loyalty, sometimes to settle old scores, most often, it seems, opportunistically to pursue profit in the chaos. In many cases, the war conditions did bring out the worst in some people, and victims did sometimes know their victimizers--though this is something that happens in most civil wars, not just ethnic ones. And, of course, once the thugs took over, former cross-ethnic relationships and friendships were often warily broken off because the thugs were likely to punish such sympathies. The crucial dynamic of the conflicts, however, was not in the risings of neighbor against neighbor, but in the maraudings of comparatively small groups of violent thugs recruited and semi-coordinated by politicians.

The propensity for violence

Ethnic war, it seems, is frequently a condition in which what is released is not deep-seated hatreds, but rather natural propensities to violence. Indeed, hatred is often an excuse for the violence rather than a crucial cause of it.⁴⁸

The enjoyment of violence. In this paper I have stressed the murderous behavior of relatively small numbers of people who actively seem to enjoy violence (see also Aschheim 1996, 64). Combat studies suggest that perhaps two percent of combat soldiers enjoy killing--that is, they are "aggressive psychopaths" or, put a bit more mildly, "if given a legitimate reason, will kill without regret or remorse" (Grossman 1995, 180). And considering the violence in Yugoslavia Brian Hall reflects on the "one-to-five percent of any population, any nation...that become Ustasha, or Chetnik, or Partisan, not because they were afraid, or confused, or idealistic, but because they wanted to hurt people....War was their dream come true" (1994, 210).

People who enjoy violence probably fall into one of three categories. There are, first of all, people who simply can't help committing violence--serial killers, for example, or some sadists, who continue to perform violent acts even though they know this makes it increasingly likely that they will be apprehended.

Only slightly removed on the psychopath scale are those who feel the need to commit violence or are, in an important sense, addicted to it--criminals and sadists who feel pain if they do not commit violence, but nonetheless can bring the addiction under a degree of control. Milan Lukic, the butcher of Višegrad, who is reported to be spending the post-war years in Serbia, a wealthy man (Vulliamy 1996a), seems to fit into this category. It is said that he claims to be proud he killed so many Muslims in the war and to have an almost uncontrollable urge to kill again--but also that he has sought psychiatric care, has become unhinged, sleeps with all the lights on, and drives around in a different car all the time (Sudetic 1998, 355-56, 358).

Finally, there are people who, while not necessarily compulsively violent, do find they enjoy committing violence when the conditions are opportune--it is something of a high for them. Many criminals and hooligans doubtless fall into this category: Jack Katz, for example, discusses the sensual high many find

⁴⁸ On these issues, see also Kalyvas 1999a, Kalyvas 1999b, Fearon and Laitin 2000.

in the criminal act (1988, especially ch. 2). Similarly, drill sergeants and others in control in the military have traditionally and routinely found themselves in a position to apply violent or near-violent intimidation to recruits and other underlings--and some have clearly enjoyed the opportunity and have exploited it with great gusto.⁴⁹

But so, it seems, do other, more ordinary, people. For example, a famous study conducted at Stanford found that a considerable amount of brutal and sadistic behavior emerged in some people when a group of apparently normal students were put into an experimental situation in which they were supposed to play the role of prison guards (Haney et al. 1973; Zimbardo et al. 1973). Musing on this general issue, Maass discusses a brutal murder by two British boys of a three-year-old, the My Lai massacre carried out by American troops in Vietnam, gratuitous murders and dismemberment of Argentine soldiers by British soldiers during the Falklands conflict, and the torture and murder of a Somalia boy (complete with trophy photographs) by Canadian soldiers on peacekeeping duty in the boy's country (1996, 54-57). Behavior like this tends to be opportunistic, and drugs and alcohol often seem to help such people overcome whatever inhibitions they might otherwise have: consider, for example, the mindless cruelty that often comes out during fraternity hazing.

It is important to note that people in this third category do not actually *need* violence, and that, afterward, they can often descend back into what we like to think of as normality without further necessary reversion to violent behavior. Thus most "aggressive psychopaths" seem entirely capable of blending back into the population after the war without finding a need to do further killing (Grossman 1995, 181). Indeed, if this were not the case, war would probably become impossible: for societies to find war tolerable, soldiers must be able, after committing violence in war, to slump comfortably back into drab peacetime endeavors without seeking to recreate the combat experience on their own--those few unable to make the transition are locked up in prisons or mental institutions (on this issue, see Mueller 1995, ch. 8). And quite commonly violent criminals go straight, particularly as they age a bit, and never again succumb to the temptations or euphoria of violence (Wilson and Herrnstein 1985, 5).

It is from among these people, I have contended, that the principal murderers and predators in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda were drawn. In all, these categories do not seem to embrace a terribly large portion of any population, but it is my contention that, under the conditions that prevailed--or were fabricated--in those cases, not very many people were required utterly to debase the conditions of life.

The commission of violence under orders. As a number of studies have suggested, however, there seems to be a much wider segment of the population--perhaps a substantial majority--that is capable of committing acts of violence, even very horrible ones, when ordered to do so, even though the activity gives them no particular pleasure and may even cause some of them considerable psychic pain. In war, all soldiers who engage in combat but find no enjoyment in violence fall into this category.

Sometimes people follow such orders because the alternative to them is death. This was seen in the case of the "innocent murderers" or "victim-killers" in Rwanda, and something like this occasionally happened in Bosnia as well it seems. Historically, battle conditions have frequently been configured so that combatants are backed by special rearward troops whose sole purpose is summarily to kill any who desert or fail to advance.

However, the capacity of people to follow authority even without that extreme negative sanction seems to be considerable, something that can lead to what Herbert Kelman and Lee Hamilton (1989) have called "crimes of obedience." Important in discussions of this phenomenon have been the experiments of Stanley Milgram (1975) who subjected quite ordinary people to situations in which, when requested to do so by an experimenter, they were to administer what seemed to them to be electric shocks to other people. He

⁴⁹ It has commonly been argued that this approach has been necessary to instill the requisite attitudes and fighting skills into potential warriors. However, the very substantial reduction in the use of such vicious procedures in the United States military--where drill sergeants are no longer even allowed to use profanity--does not seem to have diminished the fighting capacity of the final product. On the other hand, its rampant persistence in the Russian military does not seem to have turned out a polished and dedicated fighting man. On the brutalities in the Russian army, see Atkinson and Lee 1990; Williams 1999; Lieven 1998, 198.

found that a disturbingly large percentage were willing to comply even when the person being shocked (a confederate of the experimenter) feigned great pain and cried to be spared.

Milgram and others have seen resonances of these experiments in such horrors as the massacre that took place at My Lai during the Vietnam War and in German extermination camps during the Second World War (Milgram 1975, ch. 15; Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Staub 1989; Katz 1993). In the latter case, Christopher Browning has presented a striking study of how a substantial majority of ordinary German policemen engaged in direct executions of Jewish civilians even though they were explicitly given the freedom to refuse the duty and even though many of them apparently found it disgusting and horrifying. Among the explanations for this behavior, Browning stresses conformity pressures to the group and obedience to authority in a context of warfare and ideological racism (1998, ch. 18).

The propensity to conform to orders probably explains part of the Rwanda genocide, though, as suggested earlier, the chief dynamic of the killings seems to have been carried out by people who actually enjoyed the duty. In Yugoslavia, it seems also that the main perpetrators commonly enjoyed what they were doing--partly, as in Rwanda, stimulated by the prodigious consumption of alcohol, by the rewards of booty, and by the opportunity to lord it over others.

However, in Bosnia a partial exception to this pattern was the slaughter of thousands of Muslim men by Serbs after they successfully invaded the "safe area" of Srebrenica in 1995. Unlike most of the depredations in the wars, this seems to have been a calculated and rather orderly massacre that was carried out by the regular army acting under orders (on this issue, see Sadowski 1998, 133). Given that the army had become increasingly thuggish by this time as noted earlier, a formal distinction with less organized bands of hoodlums may be somewhat strained. Moreover, according to rumor at least, the General in charge, Mladic, had scoured the area recruiting militia units who specifically wanted to take vengeance on Srebrenica's Muslims (Sudetic 1998, 296).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this murderous episode does seem to show more method and less madness than the more capricious and improvisatory killings that had taken place during the main period of ethnic cleansing in 1992--even though, as was so typical in this war, the killing squads at Srebrenica were often shored up with generous quantities of liquor (Judah 1997, 241).

This experience suggests that, if it could have been properly organized, an army of ordinary men could probably have carried out the ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia that was instead substantially perpetrated, as noted above, by roving bands of criminals and hooligans. However, even under this circumstance the depredations would have been carried out by small groups of men: the violence would still not have been the result of a Hobbesian frenzy of all against all and neighbor against neighbor.

Passive support for, indifference to, violence. Many commentators have noted with alarm the "strikingly abysmal indifference" Germans displayed during World War II toward the murders by their government of millions of innocent Jews (Browning 1998, 201). A great deal of this behavior was certainly found both in Yugoslavia and particularly in Rwanda.

Often, of course, people look away and do not want to know what is going on because they fear that if they did, they might be morally required to take actions which could be dangerous their own well being--this was certainly the case during the cyclone of violence in Rwanda. But the indifference seems to

⁵⁰ Although in no way excusing the massacre, it may be relevant to point out that the Serbs were deeply bitter about the situation because they had allowed the city to become a UN safe area in 1993 under the agreement that it would be demilitarized and would not be used for attacks against Serbs (Silber and Little 1997, 345; Sudetic 1998, 207). Nonetheless, over the two ensuing years, the forces of Srebrenica defender Orić had repeatedly forayed out from the city to attack Serbs. The Serbs claimed that these attacks had resulted in the deaths of 2,000 including hundreds of civilians, in the mutilation of corpses, in the burnings of over 50 villages including houses in which civilians were trapped, and in the desecration of dozens of graves. Confirmation of these numbers is impossible, but Orić did play a videotape to foreign journalists in 1994 proudly showing headless corpses and a burned out Serb village. In addition, reporter David Rohde says he interviewed a Serb who gave a credible account of how his elderly parents were burned alive in their house, and he notes that Muslims he interviewed confirm that Orić did adopt a tit-for-tat strategy, that there are burned out Serb villages in the area, and that Serb gravestones had been toppled (1997, 215-16, 409; see also Kinzer 1995b, Pomfret 1994).

be far from unusual--indeed, it is probably typical--even in instances where there is no physical sanction to opposition. Americans and residents of other sanction-supporting countries have shown a remarkable lack of concern about the fact that the policies of their governments have inevitably led to the deaths of massive numbers of completely innocent people in Iraq in the 1990s.⁵¹

Refusal to commit violence. If peer pressure can lead many (probably most) people to commit violence when ordered, it can also lead them away from it. This conclusion is supported by one of the variations Milgram tested in his study. When the naive subject was put among two peers (confederates of the experimenter) who, on cue, defied the experimenter's instruction to shock the supposed victim, almost all of the naive subjects broke off the experiment and refused to administer further shocks (1974, 116-21).

Such behavior was seen in very marked measure in the refusal of huge numbers of Serb men in the Yugoslav army to engage in violence when ordered to do so while masses of others effectively did the same thing by refusing draft and reserve callups. And, indeed, it should be stressed that, for all the psychological and historical literature about obedience to authority, the central problem in warfare through the ages has been to keep men from flagrantly disobeying orders by deserting at the earliest opportunity (Keegan 1976). Giving in to this natural proclivity, as will be discussed below, Serb paramilitaries and Rwandan génocidaires were quick to flee when eventually confronted with substantial military opposition.

However, there was no danger from a direct enemy to the German policemen-executioners Browning studied and, unlike the situation in the Serb army, there was a highly supportive peer environment and a well-established authority. Under those circumstances, at most 10 or 20 percent refused to participate even though such a refusal did not involve physical danger to themselves (Browning 1998). Presumably, if the costs had been higher, refusal rates would have been even lower.

Active opposition to violence. There was very little direct opposition to the rampaging génocidaires in Rwanda or, for the most part, to the rampaging thugs in Yugoslavia because such opposition, as in Hitler's Germany or Saddam Hussein's Iraq, was likely to be terminal.

In democracies, of course, peaceful opposition to governmental policies is, by definition, fully tolerated, and many people over the course of history have chosen actively to oppose governmental violence. Although such protesters are not at risk for their lives, there can be other negative consequences: for example, Abraham Lincoln criticized the Mexican War and lost his seat in Congress in consequence (he returned to politics later).

As noted, in the early days there were major demonstrations in Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia against the prospect of civil war. And at various times thousands in Serbia have had the courage to protest Milošević's policies and reign. There has only rarely been physical danger in such protest, but there has been government harassment of demonstrators and the potential for loss of jobs or of governmental handouts has often been sobering to some, particularly when the opposition movement has been so divided and (partly in consequence) ineffectual (Erlanger 1999j).

The chief form of opposition in Rwanda and especially throughout the former Yugoslavia has been more passive: emigration. The resulting loss, particularly of skilled young people, is likely to have long lasting negative consequences.

The relevance of hatred. In this discussion I have essentially stressed the human propensity to commit violence for the sake of violence: violence for enjoyment, because the opportunity arises, or because one is ordered to do so. Much of the literature on ethnic war, by contrast, stresses hatred as a key motivating force for violence.

I do not wish completely to dismiss the role of hatred. Many of the chief killers and instigators of

⁵¹ Interestingly, it would be illegal for U.S. Air Force officers to comply with an order to conduct an air campaign that would inflict the same sort of damage that has been caused in Iraq by sweeping trade sanctions with such disproportionately little result (Mueller and Mueller 2000, 180). Indifference seems to be facilitated when the people dying are foreigners. Indeed, German executioners were often disoriented when they came upon German Jews or Jews in areas of Poland that had been incorporated into Germany because it was more difficult to dehumanize such people (Browning 1998, 153; Browning 2000, ch. 6).

the violence that destroyed Rwanda and Yugoslavia have indeed been dedicated and highly focused haters. But when one looks closely at the actual perpetrators of the violence, it seems to me that hatred plays a rather attenuated role. Indeed, it often seems to be more the result than the cause of the violent conflict (see also Kaufmann 1996). As one Croatian thug, a former photographer's model, put it philosophically, "I don't really hate Muslims, but because of the situation I want to kill them all" (Block 1993, 10). And there is surely hatred in the desire for revenge after one has experienced brutalizing war.

But the actual process of warfare tends to become routine, and cynicism often becomes more common than anything resembling hatred. As one Serbian sniper in the hills around Sarajevo reflected, "I don't fight for nationalism--I sleep with girls of all nations. I don't fight for religion--God is no place. I fight because I want to be back down there with my books and my CD player and my Gitane cigarettes" (Horwitz 1993, 36).

The problem with employing hatred as a key motivating element is that hatred is so common. As was pointed out in Section 1, Archie Bunkers are everywhere. The phenomenon, in fact, was celebrated in a 1958 song, "The Merry Minuet," by Sheldon Harnick:

The whole world is festering
With unhappy souls
The French hate the Germans,
The Germans hate the Poles
Italians hate Yugoslavs
South Africans hate the Dutch
And I don't like anybody very much

At the same time, haters mostly manage to live peacefully side by side, often for centuries, and they frequently intermarry at prodigious rates. Furthermore, given the amount of knee-jerk ethnic hatred that seems to exist when people are asked about it, ethnic violence is exceedingly rare--proportionately, it almost never happens. For example, Fearon and Laitin calculate that only five one-hundredths of one percent of potential ethnic conflicts in Africa between independence and 1979 actually erupted into violence (1996, 717).

Moreover, it is not clear how deep and lasting these apparently elemental hatreds really are. Daniel Goldhagen takes a Kaplanesque view of the efforts of the Nazis in World War II to exterminate the Jewish population. There had long been, he argues, a "pre-existing, pent-up antisemitism" in Germany that Hitler and the Nazis merely needed to "unshackle and thereby activate" (1998, 443). If this is so, what happened to these hatreds after the war? Goldhagen argues that democracy and legal proscriptions against making antisemitic statements quickly wiped them out, transforming Germans into liberal democrats "like us" (Smith 1996; Goldhagen 1998, 593-94). But then, as some critics have pointed out (Bartov 1998, 34; Browning 1998, 193), if they could vanish so quickly and so completely how elemental were they to begin with?

Christopher Browning takes a more nuanced view of the same tragic episode, and uses much of the same data. He puts less stress on ideology and on ancient hatreds, but he does emphasize that the war context itself was a major impelling factor in the systematic exterminations that took place and provided a framework for them (1998, 186; see also Aschheim 1996, 64). Somewhat similarly, John Dower has documented the savage, almost animal, hatreds that burgeoned during World War II between Americans and Japanese (1986). But after the war, these hatreds dissipated quickly and almost completely. Antisemitism is rare in Germany, and polls were soon to discover that the foreigners the Japanese most admired had become the Americans--the very people who in 1945 had dropped the bombs on Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki.

Closer to the concerns in this paper, one might wonder about the almost complete absence of violence between Muslims, Croats, and Serbs in Bosnia since the signing of the Dayton Accords of 1995. It was commonly anticipated at the time by experienced observers that violence would soon return.⁵² The

⁵² See, for example, the confident predictions by General Lewis McKenzie and Colonel Bob Stewart on 60 Minutes, CBS Television, 19 November 1995.

peoples in those areas continue to live in distrust and often at a wary distance, but if their hatreds are so ancient and elemental why has the killing stopped so completely? Even more remarkable is the substantial absence of violence between Tutsis and Hutus within Rwanda since the genocide. In this case, physical separation, as in Bosnia, is essentially impossible. Yet the two groups have gone back to living side by side--uncomfortably but peacefully, at least thus far (Ourdan 1998, Fisher 1999).

Also worth consideration is the fact that violence often seems to occur mostly for its own sake--hatred is often irrelevant. Soccer or football hooligans, for example, embrace the exhilarations of violence with considerable gusto. Ethnic or national or racial or regional or class or religious or ideological loyalties have a sort of objective reality to them (at least comparatively), but even most soccer hooligans would probably admit that their intense loyalty to a certain team is essentially trivial and superficial: in the great scheme of things, it scarcely matters whether Manchester United or West Ham has the better team.⁵³ Yet hooligan supporters of opposing teams--supporters who come from the same class, religion, and ethnic or national group as each other--frequently engage in lethal violence over the patently absurd distinction even when the players and team management vehemently denounce their activities. For example, although Dutch soccer fans generally do not turn violent at international matches, they often clash at domestic ones. In one instance, the supporters of the Feyenoord club of Rotterdam and those of the Ajax club of Amsterdam contacted each other by mobile phone and agreed to meet in a parking lot in Rotterdam well outside the heavy police presence at the stadium, and commenced to have a little war in which one fan was killed (Agnew 2000). Something similar can be said for battles among urban street gangs which often distinguish themselves by establishing exquisitely differentiated, if thoroughly artificial, loyalties to separate street corners. And criminals, of course, often commit violence with even less of a rationale.

I do not wish to trivialize the depredations that took place in the former Yugoslavia and still less the genocide that occurred in Rwanda. But when one looks at the actual perpetrators of the violence there--so often opportunistic, criminal, and drunken--it frequently seems that ethnic hatred, like soccer rivalries, more nearly serves as an excuse than as a cause for violence.

The rural-urban divide

Yahya Sadowski notes that "ethnicity is one pattern around which people can organize--and its appeal must constantly compete with many other ways that people might group themselves" (1998, 150). In this regard, it is worth repeating and reflecting upon a striking observation by Christopher Bennett: after World War II, he argues, the "great divide within Yugoslav society was increasingly that between rural and urban communities, not that between peoples" (1995, 63, 211).

Others have made similar observations, mostly in passing. Of the conflict in Bosnia, Peter Maass observes that "to a surprising extent, this was a war of poor rural Serbs against wealthier urban Muslims, a Deliverance scenario" (1996, 159). And Robert Donia and John Fine note that it was the "relatively uneducated armed hillmen, with a hostility toward urban culture and the state institutions (including taxes) that go with it" who proved "susceptible to Serbian chauvinist propaganda." Accordingly, they "allowed themselves to be recruited into Serb paramilitary units," and formed a significant portion of those shelling Bosnia's cities (1994, 28).

Only about half the Serbs in Croatia lived in rural areas, but it was here that the rebellion took place; the Serbs in the cities tended to remain docile, in place, and sometimes contemptuous of the efforts of their raucous rural cousins. Of the 1.3 million Serbs who lived in Bosnia before the war, it is estimated that fully 200,000 stayed in territory controlled by the Muslims--50,000 of them in the city of Sarajevo (Merrill 1999, 282). A survey of 50 Chetnik volunteers conducted in 1991 found that most had rural backgrounds

⁵³ Some evidence from the United States might be instructive in this regard. In December 1984, CBS Sports conducted a poll in which people who said they were football fans were asked a series of memory-jogging questions about favorite players and teams. Then they were asked to name the team which had won the Super Bowl the previous January. Only 39 percent were able to recall--and even this number is high in some respects because the winner had been the Los Angeles Raiders and the poll accepted the erroneous response, Oakland Raiders, as correct even though the team had moved to Los Angeles three seasons earlier. The poll was based on a sample of 1,340 adults of whom 744 were determined to be football fans. CBS Sports/New York Times Poll 1984.

(and that 20 percent had had serious problems with the law) (Thomas 1999, 98).

There also seems to be a considerable difference between the rural and the urban among the Albanians in Kosovo. The KLA is substantially composed of rural dwellers, often raw and unschooled, who have considerable disdain for the Albanian urban elite--which, in turn, often sees them as "arrogant, brutal, and rude" (Hedges 1999a). And Gourevitch discusses the importance in the Rwandan genocide of the "the extreme poverty, ignorance, superstition and fear of a cowed, compliant, cramped--and largely alcoholic--peasantry" (1998, 180).⁵⁴

In assessing the civil wars that have taken place since World War II, James Fearon and David Laitin arrestingly discover that virtually all of them have been based in rural areas, particularly ones with hilly or rough terrain. The urban-based violence in Northern Ireland is a rare exception (Fearon and Laitin 1999, Fearon and Laitin 2000; see also Laitin 1995, Kalyvas 1999b).

There seem to be several reasons for this. As Fearon and Laitin suggest, insurgencies, which characteristically are carried out by small, lightly-armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare, are more likely to be effective in rough terrain because there are more places to hide. As they also note, because it is essentially city-based, the insurgents' opposition is less likely to prove effective in unfamiliar rural terrain and less likely to have, or to be able to extract, valuable local intelligence. As a result, these opposition forces, as the Serbs demonstrated so spectacularly and counterproductively in Kosovo, often resort to massive depredation as an intended or resulting strategy causing the rural population to become further alienated and even less cooperative.

In an extensive analysis, Fearon and Laitin do not discover that historic *ethnic* discrimination is associated with civil war. However, it may be that *urban-rural* discrimination--something they do not measure--is relevant to the story. A major, indeed profound, aspect of modern history, particularly of the post-World War II era, has been a world-wide process of urbanization. Cities have become increasingly important, and rural areas have been left behind. Moreover, particularly in Third World areas, inept governments have often discriminated in favor of urban dwellers since they can be more easily mobilized into anti-government mobs that can cause or aid coups. Hence, for example, agricultural prices are fixed low to please (essentially, to buy off) city residents. This make good short term sense to the governments, but in the long term it can lead to deep resentments in rural areas--hence, perhaps, the ruralness of so many "ethnic" conflicts.

Finally, contrary to modern assumption, it is rural areas, not urban ones that have traditionally been violent. Historically, in fact, cities gained appeal in part because they offered relative safety and comparatively effective police forces (Johnson and Monkkonen 1996; Butterfield 1994).

To characterize the conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda as entirely rural-based would be incorrect, of course. Depredations were visited upon rural members of the "wrong" ethnic group as well as upon urban ones. And I have stressed the important role of criminals and thugs, many of whom came from the cities. However, to complicate things further, the urban underclass has often been significantly recruited from rubes, hillbillies, hicks, and rednecks (to use American vernacular) who have only recent emigrated to the cities and who often suffer discrimination and even contempt at the hands of urban sophisticates.

Because of such migrations and consequent confusions about definitions, it would be difficult to argue that "ethnic" wars are instead essentially conflicts between the cities and the countryside. But in many cases the process does seem to play a notable contributory role.

7. "ETHNIC WAR": POTENTIALLY UBIQUITOUS BUT HARDLY INEVITABLE

If my assessment is essentially correct, it suggests that what transpired in Yugoslavia and Rwanda is not unique to those areas, but could happen just about anywhere. By the same token, the catastrophes that

⁵⁴ Though not an "ethnic" conflict, there seems to have been a marked urban-rural effect in Cambodia. Soldiers of the forces that committed the genocide there were very disproportionately drawn from rural areas. Morris 1998.

engulfed Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Rwanda were by no means inevitable.

What happened in Yugoslavia and Rwanda could happen anywhere

The Serbian writer Aleksandar Tisma has gloomily concluded from his country's tragedy that "There are civilized people and less civilized people. Here in the Balkans, people don't belong to the civilized but to the less civilized" (Perlez 1997). But the wars in Yugoslavia did not break out because the people there are "less civilized." When criminals and sadists are given free rein, they can easily redefine and debase the conditions of life. As a Serb nurse and war widow who yearns to return to Sarajevo after the Bosnian war puts it: "Ninety percent of the people in Bosnia want to live together, but no government will protect minorities from the 10 percent, and they can kill you. We are still only safe among our own people" (O'Connor 1998a).

Thugs are everywhere at least in small numbers, and small numbers, only, are necessary if the conditions are ripe. That is, under the right conditions, thugs can rise to a dominant role, others can lend a hand or withdraw into terrified isolation or studied indifference, and any place can degenerate into a Bosnia or a Rwanda.

Every nation and people has a ready supply of thugs, sadists, and psychopaths. England may seem rather tranquil and well ordered in many respects, but it is also the home of some of the world's most notorious soccer hooligans (Buford 1991). Canada often seems to be a nation of eminently reasonable people, but that is not the conclusion one would draw from watching a hockey game. Denmark may today remind people mainly of Hans Christian Andersen and little mermaids, but it once was the home of world-class marauders, and it seems unlikely that that propensity has been fully bred out of the race in the intervening centuries.⁵⁵

What happened in Yugoslavia and Rwanda was not inevitable

The conflicts in Yugoslavia and Rwanda emerged not out of inevitable historic necessities, but were instigated and orchestrated by designing politicians and local extremists who, however, often did not know how to control the violent processes they set into motion.⁵⁶

Yahya Sadowski finds that cultural strife occurs about as much in developed countries as in poorer ones, but that such strife is less likely to turn violent in prosperous societies. From this he concludes that economic advancement tends to reduce cultural violence (1998, 174-76).

But it seems rather that the actions of leading politicians and police organizations are most important in keeping ethnic and cultural conflict from leading to major violence. Prosperous societies do seem to do better in this regard than poorer ones (which, in fact, is probably one of the reasons for their comparative prosperity). Prosperity may therefore be beneficial if it helps to develop competent governments and police forces, but wealth itself is not the key operative factor.⁵⁷

"War upon rebellion," T. E. Lawrence once observed, "is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife" (1926, 196, ch. 33). Policing forces that do not understand this elemental fact are likely, in their impatient overreaction, to adopt policies that are counterproductive--the effort of the Serbs to police the

⁵⁵ On the murderous rivalries of motorcycle gangs in tranquil Denmark, see Kinzer 1996. In this case, however, the thugs are taken to be an aberrant "social pathology," and they are not held to be typical of the entire national spirit as so often happens in Kaplanesque discussions of the Balkans.

⁵⁶ Thus, although Milošević is often seen in the West as a consummate, even diabolical, dictator and manipulator of events, he made a determined effort in 1993 to get the Bosnian Serbs to settle the conflict by accepting the Vance-Owen plan and, later, the 1994 Contact Group plan (which he proclaimed to be in the "paramount national interest of the Serbs.") His proteges firmly rejected his demands (Doder and Branson 1999, 183-87, 198-200; Burg and Shoup 1999, 247-49, 306). Mirjana Marković, Milošević's influential, hard-line wife began publicly calling the Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia "a bunch of louts addicted to the bottle preaching a crude nationalism" (Hartmann 1995).

⁵⁷ On this issue, see also Fearon and Laitin 2000.

Albanian population of their Kosovo province forms a pertinent case in point.⁵⁸ Thus it is entirely possible to imagine Bosnian-like chaos in prosperous Quebec or Northern Ireland if the Canadian or British authorities had attempted to deal with cultural conflicts there by encouraging murderous rampage rather than through patient policing and political accommodation.

Because of sound and accommodating political policies, ethnic violence has been avoided in Bulgaria and Romania even though those countries are hardly more developed than Serbia or Bosnia.⁵⁹

And surely the most impressive case in point is Macedonia, the former Yugoslavia's poorest province--a condition made even worse for most of the 1990s by a double economic embargo, one imposed by Greece, the other by the international community against trade with Serbia. In 1991, Robert Kaplan declared that "Macedonia is once again poised to erupt. Never in half a century has there been so much anger in Macedonia, as its people wake up from a Communist-imposed sleep...Unable to stand on its own, like its more populous and historically grounded neighbor Serbia, Macedonia could implode under the pressures of Albanian nationalism from the west and Bulgarian nationalism from the east. And this is to say nothing of the pressures of Greek nationalism from the south....The various popular convulsions in the Balkans are inexorably converging on Macedonia...It is a tragic yet fascinating development. Rarely has the very process of history been so transparent and cyclical" (1991, 104). Even later, when war had sprung up not in Macedonia, but in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, Kaplan continued to see Macedonia as "ground zero for the coming century of culture clash" (1993c, 15).

We continue to wait. In the meantime, Macedonian political leaders have deftly and successfully sought calm accommodation (see Sudetic 1994b; Hartmann 1996; O'Connor 1998e; Lund 2000). This experience strongly suggests that the disasters in the more prosperous areas of the former Yugoslavia, far from being inevitable, could almost certainly have been avoided if politicians and police had behaved more sensibly.

8. THE PROSPECTS FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICING

Hobbes' greatest mischief comes from his solution to the problem he invents. He assumes that *every* person is, at base, "radically insecure, mistrustful of other men and afraid for his life" (Kraynak 1990, 179). Therefore the only way out of the mess is for everyone permanently to surrender to an authoritarian ruler, one who primarily values glory and stability rather than doctrinal orthodoxy or ideological purity, and one who will maintain the necessary force to keep all people from once again giving in to their natural proclivities for isolation, hostility, and insensitivity to the rights of others (Kraynak 1990, 165, 176).

But the experience in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia suggests that this monumental--perhaps even impossible--task is hardly required. Most people most of the time do not have a great deal of difficulty getting along and in fabricating useful rules and patterns of conduct which allow them peacefully to coexist. For example, by the time Hobbes was writing, business contracts had very often been effectively and efficiently honored out of mutual self-interest and through reputational enforcement mechanisms, despite an absence of effective political and legal force.⁶⁰ This experience is contrary to his cynical and uninformed assertion that bonds "have their strength, not from their own nature (for nothing is more easily broken than a man's word), but from fear of some evil consequence upon the rupture" (1909, 101).

Police may indeed be needed, even necessary, to maintain order, but they need not normally be numerous nor must their control be Leviathan-like. This is because they mainly need simply to protect the many from the few, rather than everyone from everyone else as Hobbes would have it. But, as it does not normally take a large number of police to maintain order in a community, it does not take a large number of thugs to maintain a different kind of order, one that can look a great deal like chaos--or hell--and where life indeed can readily become solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

⁵⁸ On this phenomenon in Algeria, see Kalyvas 1999a, 261.

⁵⁹ On Bulgaria, see Ganev 1997; Châtelot 1997. On Bulgaria and also Lithuania, see Gordon and Troxel 1995. On Romania, see Binder 1993. On Romania and also Slovakia, see Linden 2000. On Kazakhstan, see Kaufman forthcoming, ch. 3.

⁶⁰ On these issues, see Benson 1997; Ellickson 1991; Mueller 1999, ch. 4.

It follows that policing the situation in Yugoslavia and in Rwanda would not have been the major challenge often anticipated. Essentially, the intimidating, opportunistic thugs were successful mainly because they were the biggest bullies on the block.⁶¹ But, like most bullies (and sadists and torturers), they were not particularly interested in a fair fight. Moreover, they substantially lacked organization, discipline, coherent tactics or strategy, deep motivation, broad popular support, ideological commitment, and, essentially, courage.⁶² Consequently, if confronted by a military force with those qualities, their most likely reaction would be to flee. And, to a considerable degree, this seems to be what happened both in Yugoslavia and in Rwanda.

While Serb forces remained criminal-dominated, their opponents began to develop real armies. Unprepared and badly outgunned at the beginning, independent Croatia, despite an international arms embargo, gradually built up and trained a conventional military force employing Western advisers and, essentially, receiving Western encouragement (Cvijic 1996, 209; Vasif 1996, 134-35; Silber and Little 1997, 360; Silverstein 1997; Tanner 1997, 284; Pavkovic 1997, 180; Binder 1998; Shearer 1998, 58-59). And an important step in building *its* army was the Bosnian government's risky but successful military operation in October 1993 to destroy two of the most important criminal gangs in Sarajevo that had helped defend the capital in 1992 but had then taken control in various areas of the city, terrorizing non-Muslims and Muslims alike (Vasif 1996, 136; Judah 1997, 217-18; Maass 1996, 33; Hedges 1997c; Burg and Shoup 1999, 138-39; Burns 1993a, 1993b; Merrill 1999, 285-86; see also Rieff 1995, 132). In the process, the leader of one of the gangs was killed while the other reportedly surrendered. An indication of the fighting tenacity of these criminals is suggested by a report that many of those arrested in the raid quickly "repudiated their commanders and asked for clemency" (Burns 1993a). A third Sarajevo gang leader, Jusuf Prazina, known as "Juka," demonstrated the depth of his ethnic loyalty by deserting and joining the Croats. He later fled to Liege, Belgium, where he was assassinated on 3 December 1993 by two gunshots to the head administered by one of his own bodyguards (UN Experts 1994, para. 78; see also Burg and Shoup 1999, 139). His body was found by hitchhikers two weeks later near a highway (Maass 1996, 33).

As early as January 1993, only a year after Serbs had effectively partitioned the country, the new Croatian army launched an attack on several important targets in Serb-held territory in Croatia and encountered little resistance (Bennett 1995, 228-29; Silber and Little 1997, 353; Tanner 1997, 288). In May 1995, it achieved another success in Croatia in the Slavonian area known as "Sector West," taking control in thirty-two hours (they called it "Operation Flash"). Then, over three or four days in August, using plans partly devised by retired American generals, the army pushed from most of the rest of Croatia the remaining Serb opposition, which for the most part followed the example of its erstwhile "protectors" and simply ran (Silber and Little 1997, 353-60; Vasif 1996, 135; Tanner 1997, 294-97). As Marcus Tanner puts it, "As soon as the bombardment started the Serb troops fled the frontlines, provoking a panicked flight into Bosnia by thousands of civilians, who left their houses with washing on the lines and meals half eaten on kitchen tables" (1997, 297). Similar results were soon achieved in neighboring Bosnia by organized Croat and Bosnian forces.⁶³

The military conclusion of the 1999 war in Kosovo bears similarities to the endings of the wars in

⁶¹ Of interest in this regard is that the Serbs never felt strong enough to take Sarajevo militarily even though at the outset of the war it was mainly defended only by police units, volunteers, and armed street gangs (Vasif 1996, 135-36; Rieff 1995, 131; Hedges 1997d; Burg and Shoup 1999, 138; Judah 1997, 211-12). Something similar happened in Srebrenica in 1992 (Rohde 1997, xiv-xv). They also had great difficulties in battles with a rag-tag Croat army along the Bosnia-Croatia border (Judah 1997, 208-10). And, although the Serbs eventually won the battle over the Croatian city of Vukovar, they did so at great cost and difficulty even though they vastly outgunned the defenders, most of whom were untrained and hastily organized local militia (Cigar 1993, 325-26; Silber and Little 1997, 177; Mackley 1993).

⁶² Judah observes of Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic that "his war was a coward's war. He fought few pitched battles but managed to drive hundreds of thousands of unarmed people out of their homes," and he also questions Mladic's mental stability (1997, 230-31). On this latter issue, see also Block 1995; Perlez 1995.

⁶³ In victory, however, the discipline of the Croat forces often broke down in arson, destruction, and looting (Heller 1996; Tanner 1997, 298).

Bosnia and Croatia. Beside the ethnic cleansing of cities and villages, there was also a somewhat more coordinated effort to engage the Kosovo Liberation Army in what may have resembled actual military operations. The KLA was a small force, poorly trained, applying tactics more nearly improvisatory than planned, and far less well equipped. It was growing rapidly however, and it was probably less casualty-averse than the Serbs. Moreover, it was supported by semi-coordinated NATO air attacks which were much more likely to be effective whenever the Serbs massed for an attack. After engaging and failing to extinguish this unimpressive force with its damaging longer-term potential, it seems that the Serbs essentially crumbled.

As in the former Yugoslavia, the marauders in Rwanda were put down fairly easily when confronted with a reasonably coherent military force. Several thousand refugees were saved in a Kigali stadium because the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), which Prunier characterizes as "the powerless UN 'military' force," simply forbade the murder squads entry (1995, 254, 377). And when the Tutsis eventually were able to get their comparatively capable army into the country, they had to battle for the capital city, but took over the rest of the country "with a minimum of fighting" (Prunier 1995, 268). For the most part, Hutu authorities, like their counterparts in the former Yugoslavia, simply ordered their forces to flee when confronted with military force (Gourevitch 1998, 156-57).⁶⁴

It seems likely therefore that a large, impressively armed, and well-disciplined international policing force could have been effective in pacifying the thug-dominated conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. The approach could have resembled the "wall-to-wall cop" technique used to suppress riots in American cities or successfully applied by the U.S. military in Haiti in the mid-1990s or by Australian and other international policing troops in East Timor in 1999: well-armed and disciplined troops would occupy an area; the thugs would either flee or blend back into the population; and the troops would then gradually be reduced in number. The thugs would still exist of course, and many might remain in the area, as they do in American cities.⁶⁵ But, insofar as they remained unpacified, the thugs would be reduced to sporadic and improvised crime and violence, not town mastery.⁶⁶

There seem to be two reasons why such a force was never put together by concerned members of the international community.

First, they assumed that the wars were essentially inexplicable Kaplanesque all-against-all conflicts, rooted in old hatreds that could hardly be ameliorated by well-meaning, but innocent and naive, outsiders. Thus, waxing eloquent about the Bosnian conflict on national television on 5 June 1995, Vice President Al Gore allowed as how the tragedy had been unfolding, "some would say, for five hundred years." President Bill Clinton, not to be outdone, opined in the same interview that "their enmities go back five hundred years, some would say almost a thousand years" (Cohen 1998, 397-98). The exact identity of the hyperbolic "some" was not specified, but one source, perhaps, was Henry Kissinger who has noted authoritatively that "ethnic conflict has been endemic in the Balkans for centuries" (as opposed to gentle, troublefree western Europe presumably), and, patronizingly and absurdly, that "none of the populations has any experience with--and essentially no belief in--Western concepts of toleration" (1999).⁶⁷ As the discussion above

⁶⁴ Interestingly, something like this happened even in Afghanistan. After the Soviets had been driven out in 1989, many of the Mujaheddin disintegrated into banditry and warlordism as noted earlier. When these formerly effective, but now decadent, warriors were confronted in 1994 and 1995 by the dedicated, even fanatical, forces of the newly-created Taliban, many of them simply collapsed in disarray, sometimes without a shot being fired. Frequently, the Taliban bribed commanders to switch over to their side (Rashid 2000, chs. 1-2).

⁶⁵ In Haiti, however, the thugs seem to be reemerging after the troops left.

⁶⁶ This process, it should be stressed, involves the use of effective and disciplined international troops. Ineffectual ones, such as those sent to Sierra Leone in 2000, only compound the problem. See Maren 2000, Onishi 2000.

⁶⁷ At the source of many of these perceptions is Rebecca West's two-volume Black Lamb and Grey Falcon of 1941. The work was written after the author had made three visits--the longest of which lasted less than two months--to Yugoslavia between 1936 and 1938, and it often propounds views that are essentially racist. For a superb assessment, see Hall 1996.

suggests, this explanation, so convenient to those favoring passivity, was substantially flawed.⁶⁸ But, as Brian Hall observes, "Literary clichés do not die easily, especially when informed by superficialities" (1994, 68).

Second, the international community had, and has, an extremely low tolerance for casualties in peace keeping ventures in which clear national interests do not appear to be at stake.⁶⁹ If there was ever any doubt about this, the experience in Somalia in 1993 was illuminating. The international mission there helped to bring a degree of order to a deadly situation that was causing a famine reportedly killing at its peak thousands of people per day. Never before, perhaps, has so much been done for so many at such little cost.⁷⁰ Yet, American policy there is held to be a "failure" in large part because several Americans were killed in the process. In essence, when Americans asked themselves how many American lives peace in Somalia was worth, the answer came out close to zero (Mueller 1997, 83; Dole 1995, 41).⁷¹ The general reluctance to become involved in the fighting in Bosnia (despite, incidentally, years of the supposedly action-impelling "CNN effect") suggests that Americans and others reached a similar conclusion for that trouble spot--as did, it seems, Britons, Germans, Canadians, and others in their own terms. By 1997, Spanish troops had suffered 17 deaths in the Bosnian war, and, in policing the deeply-troubled situation in postwar Mostar, the government indicated that this was enough for them, and they withdrew from further confrontation, something that greatly encouraged the Croat gangs in the city (Hedges 1997a). Similarly, Belgium abruptly withdrew from Rwanda--and, to save face, urged others to do so as well--when ten of its policing troops were very deliberately massacred and mutilated early in the genocide (Des Forges 1999, 618-20; Gourevitch 114, 149-50; African Rights 1995, 1112; Jones 1999, 133). It seems clear that policing efforts will be politically tolerable only as long as the cost in lives for the policing forces remain extremely low--and perhaps not even then.⁷²

⁶⁸ On this issue, see also Malcolm 1995, 4-5; Sadowski 1998, 24-25, 66-68. On President Clinton's seduction by Kaplan's book, see Drew 1994, 157; on his belated, regretful, public recantation in 1999 of the Kaplan perspective, see Seelye 1999.

⁶⁹ In the case of Yugoslavia, outsiders also tended vastly to overestimate the fighting tenacity of the defenders under the assumption that Serbs, in particular, were fanatically dedicated fighters. This notion derives from a World War II myth which maintains that the occupying Germans, confronted with a dedicated guerrilla opposition, were forced to divert a huge number of forces to maintain their control in Yugoslavia. Even assuming the situations are comparable, the Germans occupied the country in a matter of days and rarely found the Yugoslav occupation much of a diversion, although quite a few Yugoslavs did manage to kill other Yugoslavs during and immediately after the war (Bennett 1995, 49-50; Mackley 1993). In Bosnia, suggests Mackley, no Yugoslav combat unit, regular or irregular, could successfully compete with the U.S. military "in anything but a drinking contest" (1993).

⁷⁰ According to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the lowest estimate of the number of lives saved was 110,000 (MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, 2 March 1995). But there are estimates putting the number at 10,000-25,000, with an estimated financial cost to the U.S. of \$2.3 billion: Laitin 1999, 178.

⁷¹ On the other hand, this is not such an unusual position for humanitarian ventures. If Red Cross or other workers are killed while carrying out humanitarian missions, their organizations frequently threaten to withdraw no matter how much good they may be doing. Essentially what they are saying, then, is that the saving of lives is not worth the deaths of even a few of their service personnel.

⁷² Potentially, an independent UN volunteer force or international mercenary troops would not function under the same severe political restrictions. See Urquhart 1993, Shearer 1998. Poll data demonstrate that President Bill Clinton (in part because he confronted vocal Republican opposition on the issue) was never able to increase the numbers of Americans who saw wisdom or value in sending U.S. policing troops to Bosnia even though it was expected that there would be few casualties. In fact, six months after the venture began, support for it had *still* not risen even though it was completely successful in that the Bosnians had stopped killing each other (even if they hadn't come to love each other) and, most importantly, in that no Americans were killed. Before U.S. troops were committed to Bosnia in late 1995, some 67 percent said they would favor sending the troops if none were killed (a figure that dropped to 31 if it was suggested 25 might die). However, three years after the troops had been sent, the percentage approving of the presence of U.S. troops in Bosnia had only risen to 57 even though none had been killed. Mueller 2000a; see also Larson forthcoming. In 1999, Clinton was pilloried for indicating that ground troops would not be sent into Kosovo unless the environment was "permissive." However reassuring this policy

Policing the thug-dominated conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda probably would have been neither difficult nor terribly costly. In Yugoslavia, it might have taken a fair number of troops, perhaps over a hundred thousand, but there would likely have been very little real fighting and most of the troops would probably not have had to stay long. Indeed, it is possible the fighting conditions might have been nearly as benign as those that prevailed when troops were finally sent to Bosnia at the end of 1995 after the signing of the Dayton Accords. Similarly, policing the murderous, rampaging thugs in Rwanda would not have been costly in lives: in estimates that seem to be regarded as militarily sound, the local UN commander and other experts have suggested that 5000 well-equipped and determined soldiers with a free hand to fight could probably have brought the genocide rapidly to a halt.⁷³

It would be impossible, however, to guarantee that such operations could be carried off with extremely few--or no--casualties. Thugs may be cowardly, but a few might fight, especially if cornered, and some might lob shells or snipe at the policing forces. The international community tends to wait, then, until policing troops can be sent in with almost no prospect for taking casualties. It is a policy, heavily determined by domestic politics, which values the lives of the foreign police far more than those of the local victims.⁷⁴

9. THUGS AS RESIDUAL WARRIORS

Michael Ignatieff traveled around the world between 1993 and 1997 seeking the identity of the "new architects" of "postmodern war." He found them in "the paramilitaries, guerrillas, militias, and warlords who are tearing up the failed states of the 1990s" and in "the barefoot boys with Kalashnikovs, the paramilitaries in wraparound sunglasses, the turbaned zealots of the Taliban who checked their prayer mats next to their guns." In these considerations, he is, as he acknowledges, echoing and developing some of the notions of Martin van Creveld who has proclaimed that war has become "transformed" as we enter a "new era, not of peaceful competition between trading blocks, but of warfare between ethnic and religious groups." In the future, "war will not be waged by armies but by groups whom we today call terrorists, guerrillas, bandits, and robbers."⁷⁵

But, actually, banditry and depredations by roving militias are hardly new. And, as Sandra Halperin (1998) has documented, ethnic conflict occurred frequently in Europe in the nineteenth century--far more so than in the twentieth. Van Creveld himself points out that what is often called "low-intensity conflict" has been vastly more common worldwide in the entire post-1945 period than conventional armed warfare (1991, 20).

For his part, Ignatieff agrees that "irregulars are as old as war itself, and their savagery is proverbial." But he argues that in the past "armies managed to co-opt irregular militias, introduce regimental discipline, and bring their violence under state control," whereas "the irregulars of the Balkan wars are historically distinctive, in that instead of being co-opted and tamed by the state, they were covertly instigated by states--Serbia and Croatia--to perform atrocities, not as an unintended consequence of drunkenness and indiscipline, but as a deliberate military strategy." War, he concludes, "used to be fought by soldiers; it is now fought by irregulars. This may be one reason why postmodern war is so savage, why war crimes and atrocities are now integral to the very prosecution of war" (1997, 6, 132).

declaration may have been to marauding Serb forces, it also happened to reflect actual politically feasible policy. To indicate otherwise would have been at best an empty bluff (the NATO bluff about bombing had already been called) and at worst a lie. Clinton seems to get into trouble both when he lies and when he tells the truth.

⁷³ Gourevitch 1998, 150; Des Forges 1999, 22, 607-8; Feil 1998. But on logistic and other potential difficulties, see Kuperman 2000.

⁷⁴ As Martin Bell puts it, "The unstated principle seemed to be that British and French and Dutch lives mattered more--much more--than Bosnian lives. That probably reflected majority opinion in the troop-contributing nations" (1995, 266). Americans have a deep concern for U.S. casualties and very little for foreign ones, and they have never had much stomach for losing American lives in humanitarian ventures. On the other hand, it seems likely that, if they are not being killed, U.S. troops can remain on peace keeping missions almost indefinitely. See Mueller 1996, 1997, 2000a.

⁷⁵ Ignatieff 1997, 3, 5-6. van Creveld 1991, ix, 197. See also Keen 1998.

Since history is liberally festooned with instances of marauding bandit gangs, violent local uprisings, and rampaging mobs, it is not immediately clear that such energies have been terribly well modulated by organized armies in the past (Hobsbawm 1969).

And the notions that the savagery of war was traditionally brought under control by disciplined armies and that annihilation has not often been part of a deliberate military strategy would come as rather remarkable news to quite a few of their victims--the residents of Carthage, for example, whose city was totally devastated by Roman forces in 146 BC. According to Thucydides, when the Athenians invaded the island of Melos in 416 BC, they very deliberately "put to death all the grown men whom they took and sold the women and children for slaves, and subsequently sent out five hundred colonists and inhabited the place for themselves" (1934, 337). Josephus' classic account of the Jewish War that ended in 79 AD catalogues massacre and the slaughter of prisoners as a process "integral to the very prosecution of war," which, together with pestilence, human sacrifice, famine, and cannibalism, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions (1982, 450-51). When Genghis Khan's hordes deployed into Russia in the thirteenth century, whole towns "vanished"--they were deliberately smashed, burned down, and depopulated. In Riazan, for example, the captured men, women, and children were killed with swords or arrows, thrown into fires, or bound, cut, and disemboweled (Brent 1976, 117, 120). Of the 160,000 inhabitants of Herat in Afghanistan, they spared only 40 (Rashid 2000, 37). In ancient times it was not uncommon for victors quite deliberately to "consecrate" city-states to the Gods by killing every person and animal in them and by destroying all property (Botterweck and Ringgren 1986, 189-98).⁷⁶

Moreover, predation and booty-seeking has often been central to the war process. It was the motto even of the well-organized Gustavus Adolphus that "war must support war" (Millet and Moreland 1976, 15; see also Contamine 1984, 57). Knights in the fourteenth century, observes Richard Kaeuper, "seem to have accepted arson and pillage as normal and expected accompaniments of campaigning"; as Henry V put it jauntily, "War without fire is like sausages without mustard" (1988, 84). Wanton destruction was central, not peripheral, to Genghis Khan's approach to war; it was his motto that "the vanquished can never be the friends of the victors; the death of the former is necessary therefore for the safety of the latter," and some 18,000,000 may have fallen victim to this policy in China alone (Montross 1944, 27, 145). He also found the "greatest pleasure in life is to defeat your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses, and to clasp to your breast their wives and daughters" (Kellet 1982, 292-93).

While the phenomenon may not be particularly new, however, Ignatieff and van Creveld may be correct in observing that regular soldiers are no longer engaging in combat nearly as much as they used to. That is, organized, disciplined, coordinated warfare has become comparatively rare, and we are increasingly left with the poorly-coordinated, if sometimes savage, ravages of irregulars. It is not, as van Creveld would have it, that low-intensity warfare has risen to "dominance" (1991, 205). Rather it is that, increasingly, warfare of that sort is the only kind still going on--war by thugs is the residual, not the emerging, form.⁷⁷

Van Creveld suggests that "armies will be replaced by police-like security forces on the one hand and bands of ruffians on the other" (1991, 225). If that is true, the experience from Yugoslavia and Rwanda strongly suggests that the security forces, if they are willing to make the effort, can rather easily

⁷⁶ If the Bible is to be taken as literal truth, the Israelites launched a series of such wars. Concerned that the current occupants of the promised land might subvert the Israelites by teaching them the "abominations which they have done unto their gods" thus causing the Israelites to sin, God sternly required that such damage be prevented (Deuteronomy 20: 16-18). The book of Joshua routinely relates the consequent and very deliberate annihilation of the peoples of Jericho, Ai, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Hazor, and the areas in between (the people of Gibeon, however, cut a deal and were merely enslaved).

⁷⁷ On this trend, see also Mueller 1989 and Mueller 1995, ch. 9. Those seeking to identify a truly new form of war might better focus on the economic warfare that has become more effective because the ending of the Cold War allows major countries more fully to coordinate their efforts. Economic sanctions may have killed more people in the 1990s in Iraq alone than have been killed in all of history by all weapons of mass destruction and far more than have been killed in all the wars attending the breakup of Yugoslavia. See Mueller and Mueller 1999; Mueller and Mueller 2000.

prevail and at low (but not zero) cost. Irregular forces are ill-disciplined, opportunistic, easily bored, and often cowardly. In particular, they have not solved a problem that is crucial to military effectiveness: the creation of an armed force that will stand and fight when ordered to do so (no matter how absurd and dangerous the situation appears to be) rather than giving in to a natural inclination to run and hide.⁷⁸ Consequently, when confronted by real armies, irregulars have a way of disintegrating before very many shots are fired.

Of course, if irregulars *can* be molded into disciplined and dedicated fighting forces willing to stand and fight and to take substantial casualties, they can become highly formidable.⁷⁹ Almost by definition, however, such forces may not really be "irregulars." At any rate, it seems wise to avoid placing them in the same category as "bands of ruffians."

Moreover, if states like Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Rwanda came to depend on irregulars, it is not because they find this approach preferable, but because they are unable to muster an adequate number of recruits to field a real army. And if, again like Serbia and Rwanda but unlike Croatia and Bosnia, they continue to rely on such corrupt, opportunistic, fundamentally inept, and often cowardly forces, they are likely eventually to go down in pathetic defeat.

⁷⁸ On this issue, see Mueller 1995, ch. 8.

⁷⁹ On the extraordinary ability of the Vietnamese Communists to accomplish this, see Mueller 1980.

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