

## Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1995\*

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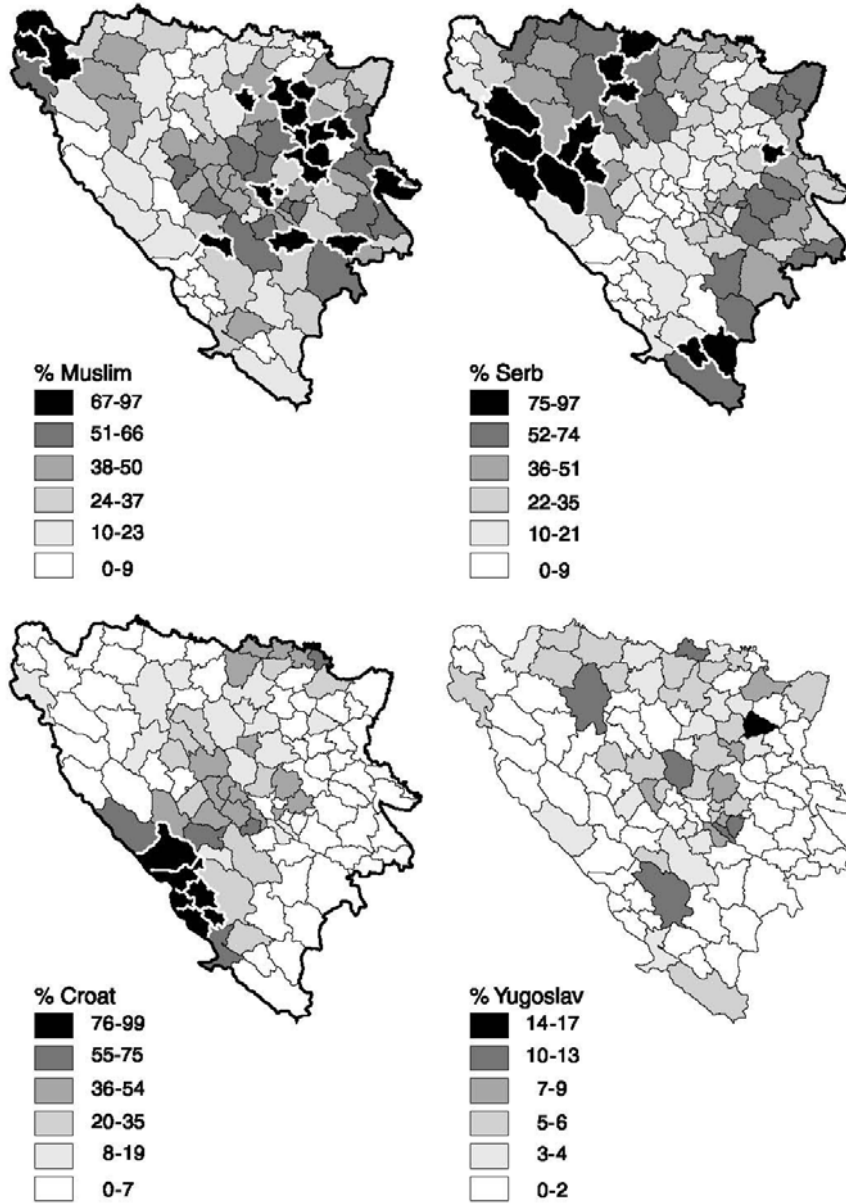
\*[This is a slightly revised version of a report to the Swedish Emergency Management  
Agency. If time is short I suggest that pages 40- can be skipped.]

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the extent to which strategic incentives arising mainly from the interplay of ethnic settlement patterns, types of nationalist ideologies (inclusive or ethnic exclusionary), military frontlines and doctrines, military power relationships, and communication routes, can account for where, when, and why violent ethnic cleansing took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 1992-95 war. The general research puzzle addressed is the variation in violent ethnic cleansing during ethnic warfare. Why does ethnic cleansing take place in some locations and in some moments of time? Most previous research in this field has tended to look at aggregated relationships between whole ethnic groups, using the conflict as a whole as the unit of analysis. Such an approach would seem to be best suited for answering the question of why violent ethnic cleansing took place in one aggregated relationship, e.g. Croats versus Serbs in Croatia 1991-1995, and not in another, e.g. Estonians versus Russians in Estonia 1991-. This paper, in contrast, examines ethnic cleansing at the local (i.e. municipal) level, and through the different phases of war, analyzing information on hundreds of instances of ethnic cleansing that occurred during the Bosnian wars of 1992-1995. Two simple but fruitful basic predictions are derived from this explanation emphasizing strategic incentives: a faction with a military advantage will use violent ethnic cleansing in conjunction with military offensives so as to (1) merge territories dominated by ethnic brethren, and (2) secure vital communication routes. These general predictions, as well as more detailed explications of the logic of strategic incentives, are borne out empirically.

Maps

Figure 2. Distributions of Ethnic Population in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1991





source: Slack, John Andrew and Roy Robert Doyon (2001) Population dynamics and susceptibility for ethnic conflict: The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of Peace Research* 38:139-161.

## Introduction

In this paper I argue that the logic of the so-called security dilemma largely explains the dynamic of violent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 1992-95 wars. More specifically, I propose that strategic incentives arising mainly from the interplay of ethnic settlement patterns, types of nationalist ideologies (inclusive or ethnic exclusionary), military frontlines and doctrines, military power relationships, and communication routes, can account for where, when, and why ethnic cleansing took place. The interplay of these factors is theoretically captured by the concept of the security dilemma. I show empirically that this explanation emphasizing strategic incentives can account for most of the violent ethnic cleansing during these years of ethnic warfare. From the strategic incentives argument I derive two simple but fruitful basic predictions: a faction with a military advantage will use violent ethnic cleansing in conjunction with military offensives so as to (1) merge territories dominated by ethnic brethren, and (2) secure vital communication routes. These general predictions, as well as my more detailed explications of the logic of strategic incentives, are borne out empirically.

The fundamental empirical puzzle that motivated the research that is reported in this paper is the observation that violent ethnic cleansing was not randomly or evenly dispersed in space and time, but concentrated to a few areas, with the amount of cleansing shifting over time among these most targeted areas. On a more general level, the research puzzle that I address is then the variation in violent ethnic cleansing during ethnic warfare. Why does ethnic cleansing take place in some locations and in some moments of time? Most previous research in this field has

tended to look at aggregated relationships between whole ethnic groups, using the conflict as a whole as the unit of analysis. Such an approach would seem to be best suited for answering the question of why violent ethnic cleansing took place in one aggregated relationship, e.g. Croats versus Serbs in Croatia 1991-1995, and not in another, e.g., Estonians versus Russians in Estonia 1991-. This paper, in contrast, deals with ethnic cleansing at the local (i.e. municipal) level, and through the different phases of war, analyzing information on hundreds of instances of ethnic cleansing that occurred during the Bosnian wars of 1992-1995.

In empirical terms, I focus in particular on the years during which most of the violent ethnic cleansing took place, i.e., the first two years of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, i.e., 1992-93. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, an initial wave of massive cleansing accompanied the Serb offensives during the first six months of the war, in April to September 1992. A second major wave of massive cleansing followed the outbreak of war between Bosnian Croat separatists and the Bosniak-dominated Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, i.e. in April 1993. This second major wave of cleansing also lasted about six months. I basically analyze the latest war in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a triangular relationship between three factions: the Bosnian Serb separatist faction; the Bosniak Croat separatist faction; and the Bosnian Government faction. The latter faction was more multiethnic in its outlook, especially in the beginning of the war, but increasingly came to represent the interests of the Bosniaks in the first hand. The Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croat separatist forces allied against the Serbs during the first year of the war, but when this precarious alliance collapsed into war the Bosnian Government faction more rapidly began to transform into a Bosniak force. In this text I will refer to the same faction when I write the "Bosnian Government faction" and the "Bosniak faction". I will tend to use

the former term when I write about earlier stages of the conflict, and the latter term when later stages of the war are dealt with.

### ***What constitutes violent ethnic cleansing?***

This study is primarily concerned with the most violent form of ethnic cleansing, involving murder, sexual abuse, torture, imprisonment, forced disappearance, destruction of houses and cultural objects, and clear threats of the same, where the victims are chosen according to ethnic criteria, and the aim is to induce immediate flight or the removal of the targeted population from the location in question. This means that more low-key cleansing in the form of various selectively applied restrictions that in the long run make life unbearable for those targeted, such as dismissal from employment, selective curfews, and the like are not taken into account.

The reason why the focus is on violent ethnic cleansing is that this type of atrocity is likely to cause the greatest suffering for the victims, as well as the most difficult problems for those trying to mitigate the consequences of ethnic cleansing. Compared to less drastic forms of ethnic cleansing, violence is likely to produce the largest waves of forced migrants in the shortest time. Other forms of cleansing are more likely to produce trickles of displaced people (which of course may add up over time to substantial numbers). Violent ethnic cleansing should also give rise to the worst traumas among the refugees (torture, rape, witnessing murders, etc).

Although sometimes difficult to uphold in practice, a distinction should be made between legitimate clearing actions during combat in built-up areas on the one hand and acts of violent ethnic cleansing on the other. According to international law and the customs of war, military forces that choose to take up positions and fight in built-up areas are legally bound to take preventive actions so as to minimize

civilian casualties and damage to property. Typically, this means that the civilian population ought to be evacuated when military forces take up battle positions, and that these positions must not be established in or immediately adjacent to objects of great civilian or cultural importance (e.g., hospitals, power stations, religious objects). It is of course a war crime to use civilians as human shields. An attacker, then, is legally bound to act so as to minimize unnecessary civilian casualties and damage to property, which is to say that casualties and destruction inflicted must be proportionate to the ends of the operation.

This reasoning dictates that military attacks on civilian objects that at first glance appear quite similar in character may be classified as legitimate military clearing operations or as violent ethnic cleansing depending on particular aspects of the event in question. Consider, for example, the attacks by Bosnian Government forces on two Serb-inhabited villages, Tinja and Gornji Babici, in Bosnia in May 1992, as these events are described in Serb sources. Both Tinja and Gornji Babici were attacked by Bosniaks from neighboring villages organized in the Territorial Defense of Bosnia-Herzegovina, i.e. forces loyal to the Bosnian Government. Before the attack on Tinja, Bosniak leaders entered negotiations with the Serbs of Tinja and demanded that they unconditionally surrender their weapons. The Serbs refused and began to evacuate the village. The ensuing fight lasted two days, and when it subsided most of Tinja had been burned to the ground. It is, however, unclear if the destruction of Serb homes (and of the railway station) in Tinja was intentional arson, collateral damage, or a Serb strategy of scorched earth. If the damage was an unintended consequence of the fighting, or caused by the Serbs in spite, the attack on Tinja could be an example of a legitimate clearing operation. The attack on Gornji Babici is described by the same Serb sources in very similar terms but with the crucial

difference that it is alleged that six old men were murdered, the corpses mutilated and the Serb homes intentionally incinerated. If these allegations are true the attack in Gornji Babici clearly constitutes a war crime and should be regarded as violent ethnic cleansing.

### ***Five types of ethnic cleansing***

I identify five types of violent ethnic cleansing during ethnic warfare: *forward cleansing*, *rearguard cleansing*, *raiding cleansing*, *self-cleansing* and *post-de-fact cleansing*.

I refer to the most important form of violent ethnic cleansing as *forward cleansing*. What I find is basically that most violent ethnic cleansing was concentrated to a handful of areas of vital strategic importance to the warring parties. At any given stage of the war, the presently militarily stronger side primarily targeted for cleansing the communication routes connecting areas demographically dominated by ethnic brethren, and areas with border crossings. The basic principle of this form of violent ethnic cleansing was thus that the stronger side directed military offensives out of its majority areas across the interlinking territories whilst violently cleansing the conquered lands. This type of cleansing thus occurs in connection with offensives that aim to establish and uphold control over new territory.

The second most important form of violent ethnic cleansing I refer to as *rearguard cleansing*. For the militarily weaker side that was mostly pressed back toward its ethnic heartlands prime targets for cleansing were located in areas that were already dominated by ethnic brethren but that were close to the advancing enemy. In

particular, the weaker side appears to have targeted settlements dominated by distrusted ethnic groups located in the back of the defensive lines and at communication routes connecting the frontlines to sources of supply and base areas. This type of violent ethnic cleansing seems to have been especially likely to occur in the rear of areas immediately threatened by enemy advances.

In areas that were dominated by one ethnic group from the outset of the war, and that were not threatened by enemy offensives from the outside (e.g., Banja Luka, dominated by Serbs), less direct and less violent methods of altering the ethnic composition were likely to be employed, such as selective curfews and dismissal from employment. This is in line with the logic of the security dilemma, which suggests that a militarily dominant faction as a rule should face weak or no incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in areas in which ethnic brethren make up the absolute majority. These areas should generally speaking already be relatively secure. Within the territory dominated by ethnic brethren there are, nevertheless, certain areas that are somewhat more likely to be targeted for violent ethnic cleansing nevertheless. I have identified two main criteria for such cleansing by the militarily stronger side of territory already demographically dominated by its own ethnic group: (1) There must be a significant presence of another ethnic group, meaning that the largest other ethnic group is at least half as large as the ethnic brethren; and (2) the region in question contains a vital communication route (i.e., a major road connection across an international border, or other vital road). I view this type of ethnic cleansing as special cases of *rearguard cleansing*.

I have identified a third form of violent ethnic cleansing that I refer to as *raiding cleansing*. This type of cleansing was carried out by forces that were strong enough to sally out into areas dominated by the enemy but too weak to hold on to any

territorial gains. The purpose of these raids may have been strictly military in the first hand, e.g. harassing enemy supply lines and second echelon forces, or capturing weapons and other supplies, with the violent ethnic cleansing of civilians occurring as a less important activity in the wake of the militarily motivated raids, the cleansing perhaps being driven by desire for vengeance for previous atrocities against the raiders' ethnic brethren. *Raiding cleansing* may also have been a primary goal of these military operations, with the intention being to drive the civilian population of the enemy side away from the raided territory, thereby depriving the enemy from economic gains, sources of recruitment and intelligence, and the like.

The fourth type of ethnic cleansing, that only rarely is directly violent, is *self-cleansing*. This label is applicable when members of an ethnic group by way of persuasion, assistance, or coercion induce ethnic brethren to evacuate a locality. This type of evacuation, forced or voluntarily, is most likely to take place when hostile forces are closing in on the locality in question, and the prime motive is then fear. *Self-cleansing* can also be a tool of ethnic hardliners who for ideological, strategic or tactical reasons want to concentrate their ethnic brethren territorially. It seems logical and empirically correct that self-cleansing is more likely the more atrocities one's own side has perpetrated, since atrocities create fear of vengeance. I refer to this tendency as the fear of ethnic collective punishment. The evacuation of the Croat population from Vares illustrates this phenomenon.

Where the population has left as a consequence of self-cleansing advancing adversaries must choose how to behave in the vacated settlements, e.g. either blowing up homes and religious objects belonging to members of other ethnic groups, or sparing them. In this way, a form of violent ethnic cleansing sometimes takes place post de fact, which is to say that the cleansers by way of arson and other

destruction send a violent and threatening message to the evacuees to stay away. I refer to this type of violent signaling as *post-de-fact cleansing*.<sup>1</sup>

## The logic of the security dilemma

The crux of the security dilemma is that actors, through efforts to enhance their own security, provoke fear and countermeasures, with the result that less rather than more security is obtained in the end. Generally speaking, most of the means typically employed to gain security, e.g., military preparations, undermine the security of others, who therefore may feel threatened. If there are possibly decisive advantages to be gained from striking the first blow, both fear and temptation may shortcut efforts to manage a conflict peacefully. Accelerating negative spirals of fears and countermeasures may trigger preemptive attacks and wars that 'no one wants' (Herz, 1950; Jervis, 1978; Buzan, 1991). When the security dilemma is bad, conflict parties may decide to "get the retaliation in first".

Concerning the operation of the security dilemma in ethnic conflict the underlying problem is that parties with an ethnically exclusivist legitimacy base cannot hope to win the allegiance of outgroups. From the point of view of ethnically based factions, the outgroups become a potential security problem in that the outgroups are unlikely to support a nationalist project legitimized in terms of the interests of a select group from which the outgroups themselves are excluded. For example, it is very unlikely that Bosniaks living in Prijedor would support the Crisis Committee of the Serbian District of Prijedor (Krizni Stab Srpske Opstine Prijedor), the exclusivist Serb local organization that violently assumed power in this

municipality in the Bosnian Serb heartland. The excluded population is more likely to support an alternative nationalist project from which they are not excluded. This support may translate into armed resistance to the exclusivist project. An exclusionary ethnic force may then decide that the best way of dealing with this potential threat is to cleanse the area from the unreliable outgroups.

Barry Posen argues that first-strike advantages in the ethnic security dilemma are greater if ethnic groups in conflict live interspersed with each other (1993).<sup>2</sup> Attackers may emerge suddenly from the adversary community and strike a crippling blow, killing or imprisoning males of military age, confiscating arms, and expelling women and children. The side that strikes first thereby stands a good chance of cleansing the other group from the area. If members of the adversary group are living in substantial numbers in one's own area of settlement, or – if a particular territory is disputed – in the disputed area, that presence thus constitutes a threat. In contrast, when the groups in conflict are living in separate areas, or when one group dominates a disputed territory, this kind of first-strike advantage is much smaller. The dominant group is not vulnerable to a crippling first blow by the smaller group, and the smaller group could not forestall an all-out attack by the larger group even if striking first.

If ethnic conflict escalates into ethnic warfare, the forces employed typically consist of light infantry, and the weaker side commonly employs guerilla tactics, at least outside of the localities that are the most favorable to the defense (e.g., cities). Guerilla tactics can be used to deny the enemy full control over a territory but not to gain territorial control. The stronger side normally cannot rely on guerilla tactics since the aim is to capture territory. Now, a territory inhabited by people who are unlikely to be winnable for one's own side, and instead are likely to offer

resistance to one's ambitions, is under threat of becoming a battle zone. From the point of view of an exclusivist ethnic force that controls a given territory, the outgroups present in that territory constitute a potential source of recruitment and support for a hostile guerilla force. This outgroup guerilla threat is likely to be perceived as especially troublesome if the territory in question is of strategic importance to the exclusivist group.

In any ethnic conflict over territory, the political ambition to carve out ethnic homelands for one's own group has to be modified by the demands of territorial viability and survivability. The prospect of a military resolution to constitutional and territorial disputes intensifies such considerations. In war, a prime strategic interest is to link disconnected patches of controlled territory to a smaller number of coherent, larger tracts of land. In military terms a coherent, compact territory shortens defensive fronts and makes it easier to shift around forces to the area where they are needed the most at any given moment. As the military theorist Jomini noted, the side that marches on the radius of a central position, what Jomini refers to as the "internal lines", can out-maneuver an enemy marching along the periphery. Coherent territories are also more economically viable as communication and exchanges are facilitated. Intrinsically, communication routes are strategically important. If the controlled territory is jagged and drawn out sooner than round and compact, the communication routes linking the main parts assume even greater strategic importance.

A first almost trivial necessary condition for ethnic cleansing in a given locale is that the area in question is at least temporarily under the control of the exclusivist group. The additional conditions that make a territory a likely target for ethnic cleansing is a substantial presence of outgroups and strategic importance. Concerns of viability and survivability will impel an ethnically defined conflict party

to strive to control communication routes, and to merge its patches of controlled territory into larger, cohesive lands. This leads to incentives to capture key communication routes as well as other territory separating the different tracts of lands that are already under friendly control. Because of the security dilemma, violent ethnic cleansing is then most likely to be employed when a side with exclusionary ideology takes control over lands that are highly coveted for strategic reasons but inhabited by out-groups.

The strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in a given area change as the military frontlines and power relationships develop over time. Furthermore, I observe that when a territory was captured by force violent ethnic cleansing was more likely to occur immediately or closely after the advance, with violent means being less likely to be employed the longer the time passed since the territory in question shifted hands. I refer to this tendency to rush into cleansing immediately after conquest as the *rush-factor*. The reason why violent cleansing is more likely early than later is that the conqueror is likely to be the most vulnerable immediately after the advance, before frontlines have been stabilized or pushed further away.

### ***The Role of Exclusionary Ideology***

As noted above, a prerequisite of ethnic cleansing is that the perpetrators define themselves, or at least their enemies, in ascriptive ethnic terms. The fundamental problem in the ethnic security dilemma is that parties with an ethnically exclusivist legitimacy base cannot hope to win the allegiance of outgroups. Instead, outgroups are viewed as enemies or potential enemies. This means that the strategic incentives

arising from ethnic settlement patterns, military frontlines and doctrines, and communication routes, were moderated by ideology. Those localities that were controlled by forces with an inclusive ideology were sometimes able to resist the strategic incentives to resort to ethnic cleansing. The co-existence between Bosniaks and Croats in Vares until October 1993 can serve as an example.

The importance of the type of ideology that armed formations adhere to is also observable when comparing the behavior of different units fighting on the same side in similar circumstances. For example, on the Bosnian Government side the foreign Mujahedin and the formations that were officially labeled "Muslim" (e.g., the 7<sup>th</sup> Muslim Mountain Brigade) committed more acts of violent ethnic cleansing than the most inclusive units organized on the Bosnian Government side, in Tuzla (2<sup>nd</sup> Korps), and Bihac (5<sup>th</sup> Korps). Although an exclusivist Muslim ideology dominated in the Bosnian Government forces from 1993 the latter formations remained more inclusive in their outlook and exhibited a relatively professional attitude toward non-combatants and civilian objects even when capturing large tracts of land during offensive operations. I refer to this role of the ideological outlook of armed formations as the *exclusivity factor*; the greater the ethnic exclusivity of an armed formation, the more likely it is that the formation will engage in violent ethnic cleansing.

## Alternative explanations

There are many historical accounts of ethnic cleansing from antiquity to the present, and many attempts at explaining specific cases of ethnic cleansing (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993:Ch 1). Yet, few have attempted to develop systematic theories of ethnic cleansing, i.e. general explanations for ethnic cleansing that are logically valid and applicable to well specified set of cases or circumstances. What I have is mostly what Andrew Bennett and Alexander George has called typological theory, that is, classificatory schemes based on some factor presumed to be important in the causation underlying the phenomenon (George and Bennett, 2005). There are a number of different ways in which violent ethnic cleansing has been classified in this sense. Most typological theories base their classifications on motives (For a useful overview of motives see (Bell-Fialkoff, 1996)). These typological theories almost invariably use aggregate relationships as their unit of analysis. For this reason, they are unsuited to explain micro-level dynamics, the variation in outcomes within a society.

In the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s, two arguments at the aggregate level are of particular interest to the present study. The first is the so-called ancient hatred explanation (Cf (Kaplan, 1993; Mirkovic, 1996)). This explanation basically states that the driving force behind the murderous ethnic cleansing witnessed in the Balkans in the 1990s is a continuation of a historical pattern that has left a legacy of hate and suspicion between groups. Once the controlling influence of the federal Yugoslav government weakened, the ancient hatreds that had for a time been suppressed again asserted themselves, leading to a

continuation of a violent historical legacy. This explanation never had much currency within the scholarly community, but it was common in the media and among politicians in the early 1990s. It therefore probably influenced both public opinion and political decisions made in the rest of the world at a crucial point in time. Therein lays its importance.

As an explanation for ethnic cleansing ancient hatreds does not take us very far. If the cleansing that took place was driven by ancient hatreds between Serb, Croatian, Bosniak communities, then this suggests that cleansing should have taken place with equal ferocity by all groups and in all areas with a mixed population. This did not happen, and no commonly held suppressed or innate hatreds poured out into the open when the lid of autocracy was lifted. There were neither widespread but suppressed hatreds nor a lid that kept them down. Rather, there were quite normal tensions and conflicts of interest between groups, and – when the communist system collapsed – a great uncertainty about the future.<sup>3</sup> The fear and hatred that did emerge are probably better understood as consequences of the situation than as causes of the situation. Moreover, the patterns of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot be explained by variations in historical events or myths, but they can, as I show in this paper, be explained by the strategic logic of the conflict.

The second argument at the aggregate level is put forth by Michael Mann in his recent study *The Dark Side of Democracy* (Mann, 2005). Again, this is a theory about cleansing at the aggregate level, although the causal mechanisms underlying it are unusually well specified making it one of the best-developed theories of ethnic cleansing. It provides an insightful explanation of the circumstances under which ethnic cleansing is most likely to take place at an aggregate level, but it does not attempt to explain local or micro level variations in outcome. Michael Mann's

argument, in short, is that “[m]urderous ethnic cleansing is a hazard of democracy since amid multiethnicity the ideal of rule by the people began to entwine the *demos* with the dominant *ethnos*, generating organic conceptions of the nation and the state that encouraged the cleansing of minorities” (Mann, 2005). This is not to say that ethnic cleansing is associated with established democracies, but rather that it is associated with formation of nation states and the movement towards rule by the people. The most dangerous situation arises when two established ethnic groups both lay claim to the same territory. The perpetrators are radical elites, militias, and “core constituents providing mass though not majority popular support” (Mann, 2005). Perpetrators have a variety of motivations for participating in murderous ethnic cleansing. Individual motivations may be based in ideology, bigotry, fear, career, material gains, discipline, comradeship, or bureaucratic routine – but ancient hatreds is not one of them.

Murderous ethnic cleansing “is unexpected, originally unintended, emerging out of unrelated crises like war”(Mann, 2005). Mann does not mean to say that murderous ethnic cleansing is not intentional or premeditated, only that it is typically resorted to only when original intentions of compromise or repression fails. Most interestingly for my purposes is that most murderous ethnic cleansing takes place in times of war. Michael Mann argues that the reason it happens is in war is precisely because murderous ethnic cleansing is a last resort and war *ipso facto* means that compromise and/or repression has failed. At the micro-level his argument implies that all mixed areas and/or areas with resistance to oppression or compromise would be cleansed. Yet, Michael Mann does not analyze the relationship between war and ethnic cleansing in detail, except for noting that military campaigns may also generate tactical incentives for atrocities against civilians in guerilla warfare and siege warfare

(Mann, 2005). But in Michael Mann's theory tactical and strategic incentives for cleansing are secondary and comparatively marginal causes of atrocities and ethnic cleansing.

I have only found one theoretical argument that sets out to explain local variations in ethnic conflict: ethnic population dynamics. In a study of the conflict between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims J. Andrew Slack and Roy R. Doyon suggests that ethnic conflict was largely a function of ethnic population dynamics (Slack and Doyon, 2001). Slack and Doyon argue that in ethnically stratified societies demographic trends may increase local intergroup competition and conflict. Building on Susan Olzak's ideas about interethnic competition and conflict over jobs, housing and other resources at the local level (Olzak, 1992), they suggest that demographic trends threaten the group's local hold on power, jobs and other resources, thus triggering increased competition and ultimately conflict. This occurs when the formerly dominant group loses its majority position or is about to do so, e.g. when the groups are relatively equal in size at the local level – in this case at the level of the municipality or *opstina*. People on the losing side of the demographic equation would be supportive of military efforts to ethnically cleanse the area, due to increased demographic competition and fears of losing their position and becoming marginalized. In Bosnia Herzegovina as a whole, Serbs and Croats were in relative demographic decline, while the Muslim population was increasing. However, local patterns varied and Slack and Doyon find a correlation between local (*opstina*) population dynamics and the atrocities between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims 1992-1995 such that *opstinas* with higher levels of ethnic competition had more atrocities. In sum, and in contrast to most other theories, Slack and Doyon does provide an account for the variations in ethnic cleansing within a society. Some of the

implications of the population dynamics argument are similar to the implications of the strategic argument made in this paper, but the underlying reasoning is quite different. Slack and Doyon argue that “[a]reas in which Muslims were demographically in strong competition with Serbs, and where such areas were in close proximity to Serb strongholds, would be prime candidates for attack” (Slack et al., 2001). On Slack and Doyon’s account, this is done to secure local jobs, influence and resources to the group in a demographically threatened area. The argument presented in this paper also implies the groups would attempt to merge territories with significant in-group populations, only for very different reasons. On my account the violent merging of territories takes place to create a secure and defensible territory for the group. In addition to similarities in implications, there are notable differences. Slack and Doyon’s argument implies that violent ethnic cleansing will not take place in areas with low levels of ethnic competition. In contrast, the argument made in this paper implies that cleansing in areas without significant in-group populations (low levels of ethnic competition in Slack and Doyon’s terms) may occur if there are sufficient strategic interest in controlling the area, .e.g. to secure a border crossing or lines of communication, or to create a defensible perimeter.

## **Assessing the power of the explanation**

When assessing whether a particular observation confirms with a given explanation or not it is of course preferable to use a clear and unambiguous decision rule rather than to resort to judgemental codings. Such rigorous coding rules do not only facilitate replication of the study but also provide a measure of protection against the risk that researchers may tweak the interpretation of their empirical matter so as to confirm with their pre-conceptions and beliefs. One example of how that might happen in the context of the present study would be if a researcher believing in strategic motives as a reasonable explanation for violent ethnic cleansing looked particularly hard for strategic incentives in situations in which violent ethnic cleansing took place.

When analyzing the pattern of violent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina I will therefore apply a set of unambiguous coding rules for what is considered a strategic incentive for violent ethnic cleansing. The data thus generated will be used as a baseline when assessing the explanatory power of the strategic incentives approach. Such coding rules may nevertheless seem somewhat simplistic when applied to the empirical matter, and additional leverage at the research problem may be gained by developing narratives that take into account more details. An in-depth study, such as the one at hand, will amass information that can be used to go beyond the strict coding rules and the baseline assessment, thereby giving a more nuanced understanding. The quantitative and qualitative analyses are separate but complementary.

For the purposes of the baseline assessment, I will aggregate and analyze instances of violent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the municipal level, and compare the incidence of cleansing for different types of municipalities. The strategic incentives argument points to the areas where militarily dominating conflict parties are most likely to resort to violent ethnic cleansing. The main comparison that I want to make is thus between those municipalities where I would expect violent ethnic cleansing because of strategic incentives on the one hand, and those municipalities where I would not expect violent ethnic cleansing according to the logic of strategic incentives. It turns out that this logic accounts for almost all the violent ethnic cleansing that took place in the space and time under study.

Naturally, whether strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing are present in a given municipality or not may differ depending on which ethnic group is focused. For example, an ethnic group would face weak incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in a municipality in which its demographic preponderance already is overwhelming. Another example is the strategic value of the border crossings from east Bosnia to Serbia. For the Serb side these crossings were vital supply routes whereas the Croat side had few direct strategic interests in eastern Bosnia since almost no Croats lived in this part of the country.

For each of the three major ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina I will ask whether each municipality fulfills the criteria for presence of strategic incentives, and whether that ethnic group engaged in violent ethnic cleansing in the municipality in question. The criteria for presence of strategic incentives relate to the incentive to merge separated patches of controlled territory, and to the benefit to be gained from controlling key communication routes.

## ***Merging Territory***

The first coding rule identifies municipalities where a warring side would face incentives to engage in violent ethnic cleansing because of the possibility to unify areas where ethnic brethren are settled. To capture and cleanse a municipality sandwiched between municipalities demographically dominated by one's own group would in general appear as the most straightforward way of creating solid and coherent ethnic homelands by force. But in a country as ethnically diverse as Bosnia-Herzegovina before the latest wars quite significant settlements that could form part of a larger, ethnically homogenous homeland are often found also in regions demographically dominated by other groups. It is reasonable that there may be strong incentives to interconnect also such areas. Before the first coding rule is presented I will define a significant presence, as I will use this term in this study: *a significant presence denotes an ethnic group that is not an absolute majority but that is at least half as numerous as the largest group in the municipality in question.* (Note that a group with a significant presence may actually be the most numerous group in the municipality in question.) Table 1 below presents several key concepts that I will use in what follows.

<b>Table 1. Concepts Denoting Ethnic Settlement Patters</b>	
Plurality	The largest group in a municipality without an absolute majority.

Significant Presence	An ethnic group that is not an absolute majority but that is at least half as numerous as the largest group in the area in question. Note that a significant presence may denote an ethnic group that is the most numerous group in the area in question (i.e., the plurality, see above).
Strong Domination	An ethnic group that is either the absolute majority or the plurality in an area is strongly dominant in that area if there is no significant presence of any other ethnic group in the area in question.
Weak Domination	An ethnic group that is either the absolute majority or the plurality in an area is weakly dominant in that area if there is also a significant presence of another ethnic group in the area in question.

Mixed population/mixed area	No ethnic group makes up an absolute majority.
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When the strategic incentives facing the Serb side is at issue, the first coding rule reads as follows:

*Merging Territory (Serb version): The Serb side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality without an absolute majority of Serbs, that borders to at least two different municipalities that do not border to each other, both of which have either a Serb majority or a significant presence of Serbs.*

In effect, such municipalities can be seen as linking territory between municipalities with absolute Serb majority or a significant presence of Serbs. Note that as war commences, and terrain is captured and cleansed, the status of a municipality in this regard may change. For example, by way of capturing and cleansing Srebrenica, the Serb side would at the outset of the war not join together two different municipalities demographically dominated by Serbs. But when neighboring Zvornik to the north and Visegrad to the south had been captured by the Serbs and cleansed of its Bosniak population during the first war month, Srebrenica became sandwiched between areas held by the Serbs. The ultimate Serb attack on and ethnic cleansing of the Srebrenica enclave in July 1995 was thus in line with the logic of strategic incentives.

The Croat and Bosniak versions of the first coding rule are analogous:

*Merging Territory (Croat version): The Croat side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality without an absolute majority of Croats, that borders to at least two different municipalities that do not border to each other, both of which have either a Croat majority or a significant presence of Croats.*

*Merging Territory (Bosniak version): The Bosniak side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality without an absolute majority of Bosniaks, that borders to at least two different municipalities that do not border to each other, both of which have either a Bosniak majority or a significant presence of Bosniaks.*

Note that I thus do not predict that the majority group in a municipality will resort to violent ethnic cleansing in municipalities in which ethnic brethren constitute the majority. This is because areas already demographically dominated by brethren as a rule should be more secure from the point of view of the majority population.

Municipalities with border crossings are strategically particularly important, and as explained shortly the coding rules allow for strategic incentives to arise also in municipalities with own majority under certain circumstances.

### **Securing Border Crossings**

Bosnia-Herzegovina is for all practical purposes a landlocked country, surrounded by Croatia in the south, west and north, and by Serbia-Montenegro in the east. Granted,

the country has a tiny outlet to the Adriatic sea and a diminutive harbor in Neum, but not only is the harbor itself unsuitable for heavy shipping, its only access route that does not pass Croatian territory is a steep secondary road across a mountain range. What is more, the narrow strait to Neum is easily blockaded from surrounding Croatian territory. Since the use of Neum as a port thus would require Croatian consent in any event it is much more practical to use the larger Croatian ports nearby, e.g. Split and Ploce. Given this lack of deep-sea ports in Bosnia-Herzegovina,<sup>4</sup> the crossings on the land border to Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro (i.e. rump Yugoslavia) assumed great importance in the Bosnian wars. To control land routes to neighboring friendly territory outside Bosnia-Herzegovina was important not only for the long-term economic prospects of the ethnic homelands envisioned by the different separatist forces, but more crucially for the immediate goal of winning the war. Any side that lacked access to supplies from the outside world would be severely disadvantaged. Moreover, even a partially blockaded border would result in longer supply lines for a side drawing supplies from abroad. The strategic value of the border crossings was further increased by the terrain. The borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina either run along rivers with a limited number of bridges (Una, Sava and Drina) or along mountain ranges with major roads confined to relatively few valleys and passes.

For the Serb side, all territory in Serbia-Montenegro was friendly territory in the sense that supply lines and contacts with the outside world could be kept open. Also the territories that were controlled by Serb separatists in Croatia were friendly in the sense that the Serb separatist troops in Croatia could help their Bosnian Serb allies. To control the border crossings to Serb-controlled parts of Croatia was also critical because of the common overarching goal of creating a contiguous Greater Serbian realm stretching from eastern Croatia over northern Bosnia to western Serbia-

Montenegro. If the Serb separatist statelet in Croatia were to be denied the use of the roads through Bosnia the separatist Serbs in Croatia would be cut-off from their sponsors in Serbia, and their situation would then be most precarious.

For the Bosnian Croats, access to government-controlled Croatian territory was obviously of great strategic interest. It was also a long-term strategic interest of the Croatian government, the sponsor of the Bosnian Croat separatist faction, to control Bosnian territory adjoining the Serb separatist enclaves in Croatia. If and when Croatia would become sufficiently strong militarily to try to eliminate the Serb separatist statelet on Croatian territory, it would naturally be a great advantage to be able to threaten and attack these areas from behind, i.e. from Bosnian territory.

As previously discussed, the Bosnian Government faction, which increasingly came to reflect the interests of the Bosniak population as the war dragged on, were allied with the Bosnian Croats and Croatia when the war started. It was thus a vital interest to keep lines of communication open to Croatian territory. Later, when the Bosnian Croat separatist faction fought the Bosniaks, the Bosnian Government became almost completely cut-off from the outside world. This was a strategic nightmare scenario, and only very peculiar international conditions at the time prevented the Bosniaks from suffering even more severely from this development.

Also, in war a disadvantage to one side as a rule equals an advantage to that side's enemy, and consequently each faction has an interest in controlling border crossings that are valuable to the enemy. For example, the Bosnian Government would have gained a very significant advantage in its fight against the Serb separatist faction if Government forces could have denied the Serb side the use of the border crossings to Serbia. Given that each side can appreciate the value to both sides of

controlling the border crossings, the preemptive incentives should become particularly compelling.

At each stage of the war, the strategic incentives should be strongest to secure those border crossings that are not yet currently under secure control but are located close to areas settled by ethnic brethren. I code for two variants of this situation. First, a border crossing may be located in a municipality that is not demographically dominated by ethnic brethren but is adjacent to areas settled predominantly by ethnic brethren. I predict a tendency that the ethnic group dominating the areas adjacent to the border crossing will "capture" the border crossing and cleanse the area. The second variant concerns border crossings in municipalities in which ethnic brethren constitute a majority but nevertheless may be considered vulnerable because of a significant presence of a rival ethnic group. I similarly predict that the majority group will "secure" the border crossing by way of violently cleansing out-groups.

The two coding rules concerning border crossings read:

*Capturing Border Crossings (Serb version): The Serb side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality without an absolute majority of Serbs, that borders to at least one municipality with either a Serb majority or a significant presence of Serbs, and that has a border crossing.*

*Securing Border Crossings (Serb version): The Serb side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality with an absolute majority or*

*plurality of Serbs, a border crossing, and a significant presence of either Croats or Bosniaks.*

*Capturing Border Crossings (Croat version): The Croat side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality without an absolute majority of Croats, that borders to at least one municipality with either a Croat majority or a significant presence of Croats, and that has a border crossing.*

*Securing Border Crossings (Croat version): The Croat side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality with an absolute majority or plurality of Croats, a border crossing, and a significant presence of either Serbs or Bosniaks.*

*Capturing Border Crossings (Bosniak version): The Bosniak side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality without an absolute majority of Bosniaks, that borders to at least one municipality with either a Bosniak majority or a significant presence of Bosniaks, and that has a border crossing.*

*Securing Border Crossings (Bosniak version): The Bosniak side faces strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in each municipality with an absolute majority or plurality of Bosniaks, a border crossing, and a significant presence of either Serbs or Croats.*

Thus, the coding rules dictate that strategic incentives are at hand in municipalities in which ethnic brethren constitute a majority under certain conditions, namely the presence of a border crossing and a significant presence of one of the two outgroups.

### ***Expectations***

In terms of Serb cleansing behavior, the two rules broadly predict a heightened risk that Serb forces, given military superiority, will resort to violent ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs in several relatively distinct areas with either a non-Serb majority or an ethnically mixed population: (1) two belts of municipalities on either side of the Bosnian Serb heartland in Bosnian Krajina in the northwest of Bosnia-Herzegovina; (2) the Posavina corridor in the north of Bosnia-Herzegovina, potentially linking Bosnian Krajina in the west with the Serb territories in eastern Bosnia, and with the crucial border crossings to Serbia; and (3) eastern Bosnia, especially the border crossings to Serbia (e.g. Foca). In total, 35 municipalities out of a total of 109 are at a heightened risk according to my baseline explication of the logic of strategic incentives. In other words, the coding rules narrow down the area of expected Serb violent ethnic cleansing to less than a third of the municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The predicted area of Croat violent ethnic cleansing given military superiority is even more precisely delimited to 32 municipalities, or 28% of all municipalities. Two major zones of heightened risk stand out: (1) the ethnically mixed municipalities of Central Bosnia as well as the municipalities with mostly Bosniak

majority or plurality sandwiched between the Croat enclaves in Central Bosnia and the Bosnian Croat heartland in Western Herzegovina; and (2) the Posavina.

The predictions are considerably less precise when the Bosniak faction is concerned; according to the coding rules, the Bosniak side faced strategic incentives to use violent ethnic cleansing given military superiority in 52 municipalities, i.e. in close to half of the total number of municipalities. This, however, does not mean that the coding rules are flawed, but rather accurately reflects the precarious strategic situation of the Bosniak people. The Bosniaks were the most widely dispersed of the three largest ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the major Bosniak areas were broken up or surrounded by strips of land dominated by either Serbs or Croats. Areas of strategic interest for the Bosniak people are thus spread over most of the country except that the incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing should generally have been weaker in the core of the Bosnian Serb heartland in Bosnian Krajina (e.g., in and near Banja Luka), in the strip of land massively dominated by Croats in Western Herzegovina (e.g., Grude), and in the core of the Bosniak heartland in the northern half of Central Bosnia (i.e., in and near Tuzla).

Overall, the predictions for all three groups are on the face of it quite reasonable and relatively precise. The areas singled out by the coding rules correspond well to what would likely have resulted from a more qualitative discussion on the strategic incentives facing each of the three major factions. Given these preliminaries, we are now ready to see how well the predictions can capture the violent ethnic cleansing that actually took place.

### ***Observed Patterns***

Serb violent ethnic cleansing was concentrated mostly to 20 out of the 109 municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, that is to 18% of all municipalities. Out of these 20 municipalities, 17 (or 85%) were municipalities for which the strategic incentives argument predicts a heightened risk of Serb violent ethnic cleansing. This striking finding is not the consequence of ubiquitous presence of Serb strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing. As noted above, according to the strategic incentives argument such strategic incentives were present only in 35 municipalities, i.e. in 32% of all the municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In other words, the strategic incentives argument does not predict ethnic cleansing all over Bosnia-Herzegovina, but singles out a limited group of municipalities that are most at risk, and the actual cleansing carried out by Serb forces was concentrated to these municipalities as expected. Table 1 (below) shows the strong relationship between incentives and actual Serb cleansing.

**Table 1.**

	<b>No Serb Violent Cleansing</b>	<b>Serb Violent Cleansing</b>	
<b>No Serb Strategic Incentives</b>	71 (80%)	3 (15%)	74 (68%)
<b>Serb Strategic Incentives</b>	18 (20%)	17 (85%)	35 (32%)
	89 (100%)	20 (100%)	109 (100%)

Chi2=31.43  
p=0.000

Croat violent ethnic cleansing occurred largely in 14 municipalities, i.e. in 11% of the municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Out of these 14 municipalities marked by violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Croat side, 12 municipalities (corresponding to 86%) were municipalities with a heightened risk of Croat violent ethnic cleansing according to the strategic incentives argument. Again, this is not the result of ever-present Croat incentives; the strategic incentives argument singles out 30 municipalities (corresponding to 28% of all municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina) in which the Croat side faced stronger strategic incentives to violently cleanse the non-Croat population. Again, this strong association between incentives and cleansing also for the Croat separatist faction is very evident in Table 2 (below).

**Table 2.**

	<b>No Croat Violent Cleansing</b>	<b>Croat Violent Cleansing</b>	
<b>No Croat Strategic Incentives</b>	77 (81%)	2 (14%)	79 (72%)
<b>Croat Strategic Incentives</b>	18 (19%)	12 (86%)	30 (28%)
	95 (100%)	14 (100%)	109 (100%)

Chi2=27.27  
p=0.000

Bosniak violent ethnic cleansing was mainly carried out in 16 municipalities, i.e. in 15% of all the municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Out of these 16 municipalities, the Bosniak side faced strategic incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in 11 municipalities, i.e. in 69% of the municipalities that were actually targeted for ethnic cleansing by Bosniak forces. Also for the Bosniaks, this result is not the consequence of such incentives being present everywhere. The predictions were admittedly less precise for the violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Government forces, but nonetheless the total number of 109 municipalities was narrowed down to 52 municipalities (corresponding to 48%) that were at a heightened risk of being targeted. Table 3 (below) shows that this pattern amounts to an association between incentives and cleansing that is statistically weakly significant ( $p=0.068$ ) for the Bosniak faction.

**Table 3.**

	<b>No Violent Cleansing</b>	<b>Bosniak Violent Cleansing</b>	
<b>No Bosniak Strategic Incentives</b>	52 (56%)	5 (31%)	57 (52%)
<b>Bosniak Strategic Incentives</b>	41 (44%)	11 (69%)	52 (48%)
	93 (100%)	16 (100%)	109 (100%)

Chi2=3.33  
p=0.068

Thus, the violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the separatist forces of the war, i.e. the Croat faction and the Serb faction, is extremely well predicted by the strategic incentives argument as it is codified in the rules used to derive the figures reported above. Also the cleansing carried out by Government forces is to a considerable extent captured by this logic of strategic incentives, although a substantial part cannot be accounted for in terms of the baseline coding rules.

Moreover, the aggregated pattern for all three factions is that the ethnic cleansing was predominantly concentrated to relatively more diverse municipalities. The average percentage made up of the largest ethnic group was around 50 in municipalities targeted for violent ethnic cleansing whereas the average for all 109 municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina is 64. With the partial exception of the cleansing perpetrated by Bosniak forces, the ethnically more homogenous municipalities, when they were targeted, were not subjected to violent ethnic cleansing by the demographically dominant group. Instead, relatively homogenous municipalities were usually targeted when they were captured by forces fighting for

another group than the demographically dominant group as, for example, when Serb forces captured and cleansed several municipalities with a clear Bosniak majority in Eastern Bosnia during the first months of the war. The Croat separatist forces only rarely targeted Serbs and Bosniaks living in municipalities with a majority of ethnic brethren (i.e. Croats). Serb forces targeted a few municipalities with a Serb majority, typically in municipalities with only a slight Serb majority, a significant Bosniak minority, and a strategic border crossing (Bosanski Novi, Bijeljina, Cajnice). The Bosniak forces, however, resorted to violent ethnic cleansing in several municipalities with a clear Bosniak majority (Gorazde, Gracanica, Jablanica, Konjic, Lukavac and Zenica), although also the Bosniak forces mostly targeted municipalities in which ethnic brethren were not in majority. That the Bosniak forces violently cleansed Serbs and Croats from so many municipalities with a Bosniak majority reflects that the Bosniak side was militarily weaker during most of the war and consequently were pushed back into its ethnic heartland by its adversaries.

Generally speaking, the Serb and Croat separatist factions used violent ethnic cleansing in connection with military offensives aimed at capturing territory demographically dominated by outgroups (and both Serbs and Croats more often targeted Bosniaks than each other). The cleansing perpetrated by the Serb and Croat separatist forces mostly fits the pattern of what I refer to as *forward cleansing*. In contrast, the cleansing carried out by the Bosnian Government faction is less well accounted for by the strategic incentives logic as it is operationalized in this baseline examination. During the period of study, the Bosniak faction was more often on the defensive than the other two factions of the war (especially compared to the Serb forces). Because of the offensives launched by its better-armed enemies, and as a result of being pushed back into its ethnic heartland, the Bosniaks often had to fight in

territory that was demographically dominated by ethnic brethren. Much of the violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Bosniak forces therefore fits the pattern of *rearguard cleansing*.

### ***Serb Violent Ethnic Cleansing***

The violent cleansing perpetrated by Serb forces was foremostly concentrated to three regions: (1) ethnically mixed areas in the Posavina and further south across the corridor in northern Bosnia linking the Bosnian Serb heartland in Krajina with Serbia, e.g., Doboj, Bosanski Samac, and Brcko; (2) the areas with Bosniak absolute majority in Eastern Bosnia and with major road connections to Serbia, e.g., Foca and Zvornik (Drina valley); and (3) ethnically mixed areas in Western Bosnia, e.g., Prijedor, astride the main road connecting the Bosnian Serb capital Banja Luka and the areas around Glina (across the border in Croatia), that at the time were occupied by Serb separatists.

Over time, the cleansing perpetrated by Serb forces started in limited scale in Posavina in March 1992, focused mostly on Eastern Bosnia in April, and escalated in Posavina in April and May, and reached the Prijedor area in late May. During the summer Serb cleansing activity was concentrated on Doboj, and by the end of summer the level of cleansing dropped as the Serb side by and large had achieved its primary war aims and started to consolidate its conquests rather than launching offensives aimed at capturing additional territory. Outside the timeframe of this study, a last swath of massive cleansing followed in 1995, when Serb forces captured two remaining Bosniak enclaves in the Drina valley, Zepa and Srebrenica, and massacred thousands of male Bosniaks in the process.

### ***March: Cleansing Begins in Posavina***

The violent ethnic cleansing in the 1992-95 Bosnian war began in late March around the strategic bridge across the river Sava located in Bosanski Brod. This town in Northern Bosnia is located in the Posavina region, and its bridge is also a border crossing to Croatia on the other side of the river. After the war in Croatia in 1991 most of the territory on the northern shore of the Sava was controlled by the Croatian government. Five bridges connected Croatian government territory on the northern shore to the ethnically mixed areas on the southern shore in Bosnian Posavina. These bridges were vital routes for arms and supplies for the clandestine militias that Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks, often jointly, were organizing in the area. Sabotage and open military operations focused on these bridges during the prelude to full-scale war. By late March 1992, the bridge in Bosanski Brod was the only bridge that had not yet fallen into the hands of the JNA and its Serb allies, or been destroyed already. It is telling that both military hostilities and violent ethnic cleansing begun in earnest around this key strategic object.

In terms of the hypotheses to be examined in this narrative, Bosanski Brod municipality fulfills the criteria for *Merging Territory* (linking the municipalities Derventa and Modrica, both with a Serb plurality). According to the strategic incentives argument this would lead us to predict that Serb forces, given their clear military superiority at the beginning of the war, would be likely to target Bosanski Brod for ethnic cleansing. This prediction is further strengthened by the importance assumed, because of the larger strategic situation, by the last remaining bridge that was not in Serb hands. Whereas the bridges over Sava were important lifelines to

Croatia and the rest of the outside world for the Croats and their Bosniak allies in the Posavina, the whole region (consisting of the following ethnically mixed municipalities: Derventa, Bosanski Brod, Modrica, Bosanski Samac, Brcko; two municipalities with Croat majority, namely Odzak and Orasje; and one municipality with Bosniak majority, that is Gradacac) was a natural route if the Serb side wanted to create a corridor connecting the Bosnian Serb heartland in Bosanska Krajina in the west and Serbia proper in the east. Although no municipality in Posavina had an absolute Serb majority, two of them had Serb pluralities (Derventa, 41% Serb, and Modrica, 35% Serb) and the other six had substantial Serb minorities. The terrain in Posavina is mostly made up of plains that in case of war would benefit the Serb side that had an overwhelming advantage in terms of armor, heavy weapons and air power, but were numerically potentially outnumbered. If captured, a corridor through the Posavina would also be advantageous in that the northern flank would be protected by the river Sava, provided that all Croat bridgeheads on the southern shore were to be eliminated.

The alternatives to a Serb corridor through Posavina would have to intersect the Bosniak heartland in central Bosnia (via Tuzla, Zenica, or Jablanica). This in turn would most likely have meant that any Bosniak state would have been rendered completely unviable, and would thus in all likelihood be strongly resisted by the Bosniak population and, perhaps, powerful external actors as well. A Serb corridor through central Bosnia would probably have been a more appealing for the Serb side in connection with a reliable deal with the Croats to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina, as in the 1939 Sporazum. However, as I have argued elsewhere, the Serbs and the Croats had very strong incentives not to trust each other at the time of the onset of the Bosnian war (Melander 1999).

After the referendum on independence in February 1992, Serb nationalists raised barricades around Bosanski Brod and gradually moved them closer, tightening the grip around the last remaining supply route to Croatia open to the non-Serb forces in Posavina. A joint Croat-Bosniak militia, at least partially armed by the Croatian Army (HV) based in Slavonski Brod on the other end of the bridge, defended the town. A decision was made that if the Serbs moved any closer, fire would be opened (Silber and Little 1994, 243). The Serb nationalists accused the Croat-Bosniak militia of massacring eleven Serbs outside Bosanski Brod on 26 March. By 29 March Bosanski Brod was being besieged and shelled by the JNA and Serb paramilitary forces (Judah 1997, 203). Later, units from the regular Croatian army, HV, crossed the River Sava to bolster the defense (Judah 1997, 208; Vego 1993c).

Violent ethnic cleansing by Serb forces is reported first from villages on the outskirts of Bosanski Brod. For example, on 28 March 1992 a group of armed local Serbs (organized in the Serb Territorial Defense) reportedly searched for guns in the Croat houses in the village Donja Vrela. After the search many of the houses were looted and set on fire. Also, members of the Serb militia the White Eagles detained and executed several local Croats. Fighting began already in late March also in nearby Derventa, as Croat paramilitaries took control of the town sitting on one of two possible road connections through Bosnian Posavina between the Bosnian Serb heartland in Bosnian Crajina in the west and the Serbian border in the east (the other road going through Dobož further south). The ethnically mixed Derventa municipality (41% Serb, 39% Croat) linked two municipalities with absolute Serb majority (Srbac, 89% Serbs; and Prnjavor, 72% Serbs) and was thus according to the strategic incentives argument at heightened risk of being subjected to violent ethnic cleansing by the Serb side. The presence of the strategic road further increased this risk.

Fighting raged on around Derventa until the town fell to a major Serb offensive in July, and after the hostilities had ceased the Serb forces proceed to systematically destroy Bosniak and Croat homes and businesses in the town.

### ***April: Cleansing Spreads to Eastern Bosnia***

On the last day of March murderous ethnic cleansing erupted in Bijeljina, at the eastern endpoint of the strategic corridor that the Serb side needed to carve out across Northern Bosnia. The Serb capture and cleansing of Bijeljina municipality fulfills the criteria for *Securing Border Crossing*. The municipality had a Serb majority (59%) with a significant Bosniak minority (31%) concentrated in the town itself, and contains a major border crossing to Serbia in the northeast. From the strategic incentives argument thus follows that the risk that Serb forces would resort to violent ethnic cleansing was heightened in this region. What is more, the strategically vital road from Posavina to the Serbian border passes through Bijeljina. The town also connects the Posavina road with the road running southward along the western bank of the river Drina that in turn is connected to the border crossings between Eastern Bosnia and Serbia. The town is thus a linchpin in the network of communication routes that the Serbs needed to control in order to connect the Bosnian regions dominated by Serbs to each other and to Serbia. The Bosniaks in Bijeljina had organized a small detachment of the Patriotic League and took up defensive positions in the town center. Beginning on the last day of March, various Serb paramilitaries, of local origin as well as coming from Serbia, fought the Patriotic League for control over the city. After a few days the Patriotic League was shattered, and the Serb paramilitaries proceeded to execute several non-Serbs and to deport the survivors. The

most infamous Serb perpetrators were from the Serb Volunteer Guard, also known as Arkan's Tigers, but also several other paramilitary organizations participated, among them also different locally recruited bands.

Having thus initiated attempts to take control over the so-called Posavina corridor, and having broken all resistance in Bijeljina and cleansed its non-Serb population, the still militarily largely untested Serbs shifted the focus to the capital, Sarajevo, and to Eastern Bosnia, during the first half of April. At this early stage the Serb military offensives for the most part took either the form of quick, lightly resisted coups, or fairly limited armed probes that were halted if determined resistance was encountered, as happened in Sarajevo on 2 May.

South of Bijeljina, there are four major routes crossing the border between Bosnia and Serbia/Montenegro. Three of these four routes, with their bridges over the river Drina, run through municipalities that had Bosniak absolute majorities (Zvornik: 59% Bosniak, 38% Serb; Visegrad: 66% Bosniak, 33% Serb; Foca: 52% Bosniak, 45% Serb). The fourth major border crossing, in Trebinje, was located in a municipality with a clear Serb majority (69%) and a strong JNA presence. All the three municipalities with a Bosniak majority were adjacent to municipalities with absolute Serb majorities. The municipalities of Zvornik and Foca were furthermore sandwiched between municipalities with absolute Serb majorities, thus linking territory already dominated by the Serb side. The strategic incentives argument thus strongly predicts that these three municipalities were at risk of being subjected to violent ethnic cleansing by the Serb armed formations. On April 7-8, Serbian forces crossed the river from Serbia and laid siege to Zvornik, Visegrad and Foca, meeting only very light resistance or none at all. The Serb forces proceeded to cleanse the captured territory of its non-Serb population, and many civilians were thereby

massacred, among them Bosniaks that had sought refuge in a local facility of the JNA. Almost the whole gamut of Serb paramilitary forces from Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as from Serbia participated alongside regular JNA troops in the massive atrocities that followed in the area during the second half of April, including the Serb Volunteer Guard (Arkan's Tigers), the White Eagles, and Seselj's Chetniks.

Also in the beginning of April, Serb paramilitary forces and JNA artillery attempted to intimidate the capital Sarajevo into submission, but these probes were largely ineffective in the face of determined resistance by the defenders of the city. Meanwhile, in southwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina, the town of Kupres was first controlled by Croat paramilitaries on April 3, and then captured by the JNA on April 8. In Posavina in the north fighting and violent ethnic cleansing continued during April around Bosanski Brod, Bosanski Samac, and Derventa. In these spots of cleansing both JNA units and militias such as the White Eagles were active on the Serb side. Like Bosanski Brod and Derventa, Bosanski Samac was according to the strategic incentives argument a prime candidate for Serb cleansing operations. The municipality was ethnically mixed with a significant Serb minority (45% Croat, 41% Serb) and bordering to another municipality with a significant Serb minority, Modrica (35% Croat, 27% Serb) to the South, and it was linked to Croatia by a bridge across the Sava to the north. The overall strategic situation further strengthened the Serb incentive to cleanse Bosanski Samac in that the town sits on two vital communication routes, namely the Croat supply line to Croatia across the bridge, and even more importantly, the Serb lifeline between the Bosnian Serb heartland in the west and Serbia in the east.

***May: Bosanska Krajina and beyond***

On the last day of April, Serb forces proceeded to attack and cleanse the suburbs of Brcko. The municipality was mixed with a Bosniak plurality (44% Bosniaks, 25% Croats, 21% Serbs) and bordered on two municipalities with absolute Serb majority (Lopare and Bijeljina). Brcko was perhaps the strategically most important town during the war. It sits on two bridges across the Sava and thus on the Bosnian Croat supply lines to Croatia. Most importantly, Brcko was the natural chokepoint on the Posavina corridor, the strip of land that the Serbs needed to capture in order to secure communications between the Bosnian Serb heartland in Bosnian Krajina in the west and the border crossings to Serbia near Bijeljina in the east. To the southwest Brcko borders on the Bosniak heartland in northern and central Bosnia-Herzegovina. Just kilometers away from the town and the strategic east-west road the wooded Majevisa hills rise from the Posavina plains, and these hills in turn grow into the mountains of central Bosnia further south. This terrain negated some of the advantages that the Serb side enjoyed in terms of armor, heavy weapons and air power. If the Serbs' adversaries were to cut off the Posavina corridor it was most likely to be from the Majevisa hills toward the river Sava at Brcko. Whereas the resistance to the Serb onslaught in Brcko itself was light, the Majevisa hills were to become a major battlefield in the war. It is telling that strategically crucial Brcko is the only municipality in which all three factions resorted to violent ethnic cleansing. Some of the worst atrocities perpetrated by the Serb side took place in and around Brcko. Again, JNA units as well as various militias were active, including both local Serbs and Serbs coming from other parts of the country or from Serbia.

In the first days of May, the Serb side made a major attempt at bisecting Sarajevo using tanks, but was repulsed. Instead, Doboj in northern Bosnia fell under

Serb control on May 3 as the Serb side widened its operations southward from the opening moves in the Posavina. Dobož municipality was ethnically mixed (40% Bosniak, 39% Serb) and it interconnects municipalities with Serb absolute majority, Serb plurality or Serb significant minority (Prnjavor, Teslic, Derventa, Modrica). Crucially in the wider strategic context, the Serb lifeline from Bosnian Krajina through northern Bosnia had to pass through either Dobož or Derventa. The town and nearby villages were subjected to violent ethnic cleansing in May and June, as the strategic incentives argument predicts.

Meanwhile, having captured and cleansed the major routes of communication between eastern Bosnia and Serbia, the Serb forces in the Drina valley advanced against the remaining minor border crossings that were located in municipalities with Bosniak majority: Bratunac and Srebrenica. With border crossings to Serbia and Bosniak majorities, these municipalities were according to the strategic incentives argument exposed to a higher risk of being subjected to ethnic cleansing by the Serb side. What is more, following the Serb offensives and cleansing operations in the preceding months, Bratunac and Srebrenica were now adjacent to areas with Serb majority and strong military forces posed to attack. Bratunac was captured on May 5 and subjected to massive cleansing by Serb militia and JNA forces during the following week. Srebrenica was to hold out as a surrounded enclave until the summer of 1995 when Serb forces captured the enclave and massacred thousands of Bosniak males in the worst war crime in Europe since the Second World War.

In military terms, the next significant development was a major Serb defeat as the JNA garrison in Tuzla tried to break out from its barracks and link up with Serb forces in the Posavina who were trying to break through the Majevisa range. On May 15, most of the JNA column was ambushed and destroyed by the

forces organized by the local authorities in Tuzla that were loyal to the Bosnian Government. The Bosniaks captured much desperately needed military equipment in these battles, and the Tuzla region hence became a key stronghold for the Government faction.<sup>5</sup> With the help of these arms, the Bosniak defenders halted the Serb forces advancing toward Tuzla over Doboje and the Majevica range, and the Bosniak heartland around Tuzla was thus never subjected to ethnic cleansing by the Serb forces.

Having been at least temporarily halted outside Sarajevo and Tuzla in the first half of May, the Serb side instead turned its attention toward outstanding issues in its rear areas in Bosanska Krajina. To the west of the self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb capital Banja Luka there was a belt of three ethnically mixed municipalities almost evenly divided between Serbs and Bosniaks: Prijedor (44% Bosniak, 42% Serb), Sanski Most (47% Bosniak, 42% Serb), and Ključ (48% Bosniak, 50% Serb). These three municipalities were interspersed between municipalities with Serb majorities, thus linking Serb majority municipalities. The strategic incentives argument therefore predicts an increased risk of ethnic cleansing by Serb forces in these areas. What is more, the towns Prijedor, Sanski Most, and Ključ are nodes in the road network linking Banja Luka to the areas occupied at the time by allied Serb separatists in Croatia to the west of the Bosnian Serb heartland. In the second half of May, the Serb side established control in the area in a series of armed coups and subjected its non-Serb population to massive ethnic cleansing. The embryonic Bosnian government forces in the towns activated when the Serb coups were launched but were quickly brushed aside by the Serb onslaught. Some of the worst atrocities of the war were committed as the Serb forces emptied the area of its non-Serb population.

By the end of the summer the Serb side had achieved most of its war aims, and the large campaigns of violent ethnic cleansing petered out. Post de fact, it is however possible to conclude that the Serb failures to wrest control of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, and Bihac from the Bosniaks, and Mostar from the Croats, represents the military culmination point of the war, in the sense that the "belligerent on the offensive... has attained his apogee and begins to lose momentum to the opponent" (definition from Cigar, 2001:205). Although the Serb side would capture additional territory during the later offensives, the Bosniak strongholds in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, and Bihac provided the backbone for the Bosniak resilience that enabled the Bosnian government to fight back until the balance of forces decisively turned and the Serb side had to settle for considerably less territory than captured in the first months of the war. In Western Herzegovina the HVO had stopped the Serb advance with direct support from hastily dispatched troops of the regular Croatian Army, HV. Out of this Bosnian Croat stronghold bordering on Croatia the combined HVO and HV forces would direct further highly successful offensives against the Serb forces during the last stages of the war. But first the Bosnian Croats embarked on a catastrophic war that lasted roughly a year against their allies, the Bosniaks.

### ***Croat Violent Ethnic Cleansing***

The Croat forces perpetrated acts of ethnic cleansing at first mostly in ethnically mixed areas of Northern Bosnia, e.g. Brcko. These events are best characterized as *rearguard cleansing*. Later, when Croat separatist forces fought the forces of the Bosnian Government, the Croat forces resorted to both *forward* and *rearguard cleansing* in Central Bosnia, e.g. Vitez. The Croat forces are also responsible for the most clear-cut example of *self-cleansing* that I have identified: the evacuation of the Croat population of Vares in October 1993.

### ***April-September 1992: Resisting the Serb Onslaught***

The JNA attacks in Herzegovina during April and May were resisted primarily by local HVO units shored up by rapidly dispatched brigades from the regular army of Croatia (HV). In late May the Croat forces in Herzegovina counterattacked and pushed the Serb side back to some extent. In connection with the fighting in and around Mostar, Serb neighborhoods and villages were ethnically cleansed by Croat forces who detained and maltreated the Serb men, expelled the women and children, and demolished their houses and churches. Mostar was an ethnically mixed municipality with a small Bosniak plurality (35%), and an almost equal presence of Croats (34%). There was also a significant Serb minority in the municipality (19%). From the perspective of the Bosnian Croats, Mostar is of utmost strategic importance. It is the largest city in Herzegovina (and the second largest city in all of Bosnia-

Herzegovina) as well as the envisioned capital of the separate statelet that the Croat nationalist faction attempted to create around Western Herzegovina and parts of Central Bosnia. Mostar municipality links several municipalities with Croat majority (Posusje, Listica, Citluk) or plurality (Stolac). This in itself suggests that the Croat nationalist faction faced strategic incentives to violently cleanse the municipality of the segments of the population that the Croat nationalist forces in accordance with their exclusionary ideology regarded as hostile or unreliable. At this early stage of the war, when the Croat nationalist forces still were in alliance with the Bosnian Government forces, the group singled out for removal was accordingly the Serb minority. Later the Croat forces in Mostar would turn on the Bosniak population in the municipality. Mostar was particularly important in the context of the situation in the spring of 1992. This strategic incentive to attack the Serb minority was further strengthened by the fact that Mostar sits on the major road leading from the ports in Croatian territory to Central Bosnia. If the Serb side could cut off this supply route the Croat position in Central Bosnia would suffer.

In Herzegovina most of the fighting and ethnic cleansing on the Croat side was done by HVO in coordination with HV. In fact, HVO was subordinated to HV although HV most of the time maintained a relatively limited presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina in terms of the number of soldiers. The main competitor to the HVO/HV in the Bosnian Croat faction, the HOS, meanwhile perpetrated acts of violent ethnic cleansing aimed at the Serb population in Central Bosnia. HOS carried out several such atrocities in cooperation with the loosely organized Bosniak paramilitaries referred to as the Green Berets, targeting Serb villages in the Konjic and Zenica municipalities.

Konjic had a slight Bosniak majority (55%), and Croat (26%) and Serb (15%) minorities. From the perspective of the Croat nationalist faction Konjic lay sandwiched between the two main Croat points of access into Central Bosnia (Prozor, 62% Croat) and Mostar (35% Bosniak, 34% Croat) in the south, and Kresevo, 71% Croat) in Central Bosnia to the north. Two villages with Serb population, Bradina and Donje Selo, sat on or near the key road running from Herzegovina to Sarajevo via Konjic. These two villages were burned down by the HOS and Green Berets in late May, and the inhabitants detained in camps. Several women were raped in the process.

Like Konjic, Zenica had a slight Bosniak majority (55%), and Croat (16%) and Serb (16%) minorities. The municipality is sandwiched between two municipalities with Croat plurality in the south (Vitez and Busovaca) and Zepce further north, a municipality with a Bosniak plurality (47%) and a significant presence of Croats (40%). In early June, the HOS in cooperation with the Bosniak paramilitary Patriotic League attacked the Serb inhabitants of the village Drivusa in Zenica municipality, detaining the men, raping several women, and looting the homes.

In late June, HOS in cooperation with HVO and Bosniak forces captured the village of Predrazici, Zavidovici municipality, and looted the houses belonging to Serbs that had fled. Several Serbs were also detained. Zavidovici had a Bosniak majority (60%) and was sandwiched between several municipalities with Croat plurality (Vares) or substantial Croat presence (Zepce, Kakanj). An important road runs through the municipality, connecting the Bosnian Government strongholds Zenica and Tuzla. The Serb side, however, soon cut off this road.

In the Posavina in the north, the Serb attempt to open a supply corridor between the Bosnian Serb heartland in the west and the border crossings to Serbia in

the east was temporarily undone by counterattacks launched by joint Croat and Bosniak forces. One HV brigade, i.e., regular army units from Croatia, crossed the river Sava and provided vital punch in these attacks. At times, the nascent Serb corridor was completely cut. The Serb side held on to key towns along the corridor, and the fighting was intense. In Late June, the Serb side launched Operation "Corridor 92", gradually pushing the Croat-led forces back into fewer and smaller enclaves with their back against the river Sava. During the late summer and autumn offensives and counteroffensives continued to rage across Posavina, and the Serb corridor was cut on several occasions. In connection with this bitter fighting the Serb population of several villages in Brcko municipality were subjected to violent ethnic cleansing by Croat forces.

The Croat violent ethnic cleansing of Serbs during the first year of the war was in some areas and during certain time periods systematic and extensive. Nevertheless, the Croats were about to engage in an even more pitiless campaign of violent ethnic cleansing against the Bosniak population in Central Bosnia, and in and around Mostar. At the same time, the massive violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Serb forces is unequaled by far if the whole war is considered.

### ***The Croat Separatist War***

In order to appreciate the strategic dynamic and the incentives to resort to violent ethnic cleansing in the war between the Bosnian Croat separatist forces and the Bosnian Government forces it is necessary to understand certain aspects of the background to this conflict. Although the Bosnian Croats and the Bosniaks from the outset of the war fought the same enemy in the Bosnian Serb forces and their backers

in rump-Yugoslavia, the Croat nationalist faction in Bosnia and the Bosnian government advanced conflicting agendas for the future of the state. The Croat nationalists wanted Bosnia-Herzegovina to be divided into largely autonomous cantons along ethnic lines, whereas the Bosnian government argued for a unified state in which ethnic considerations played no role for the demarcation of administrative borders or individual rights. At the same time the overriding goal of the Croat nationalist faction was to prevent that Bosnia-Herzegovina were to remain within the Serb-dominated rump Yugoslavia after the secession of Slovenia and Croatia. This paramount ambition clashed outright with the most desired outcome of the Serb nationalist faction, which was to keep Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Yugoslav state. What is more, if Bosnia-Herzegovina were to secede from Yugoslavia the question would arise if parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina in turn could secede, supposedly so as to join rump-Yugoslavia or Croatia. In any case, the future internal structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina was sharply disputed although the ultimate existence of this republic as an undivided sovereign state remained uncertain. Both the Croat nationalist faction and the Serb nationalist faction wanted a territorial division along ethnic lines. In this connection the Croat nationalists claimed much territory for their envisioned Bosnian Croat autonomous regions that the Bosnian Serbs not only claimed for themselves, but also seemed bent on capturing militarily. The unresolved differences between the Croat nationalists and the Government faction were thus initially overshadowed by the immediacy of the Serb onslaught.

Nevertheless, as the joint war against the Serbs raged on there was growing mutual suspicion and localized clashes between the Bosnian Croat nationalists and Bosnian government forces. The issues of contention in these incidents seem to have revolved around control over captured JNA arms and military

facilities, and the display of political symbols, such as flags and state emblems, that could be understood as conveying which source of authority had preeminence in the locality in question, the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosna, or the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo. Another source of conflict was the extent to which the Croat forces taxed supplies, including arms deliveries, going through Croat controlled territory to Government controlled areas. In the most serious such incident during 1992, a small battle was fought in October over Prozor in Central Bosnia, resulting in the dislodgement of the ABiH and the flight of the Bosniak population from the town.

When the international mediators Cyrus Vance (for the United Nations) and Lord Owen (for the European Union) in January 1993 put forth a concrete proposal for the regulation of the constitutional status of Bosnia-Herzegovina the dormant conflicts between the Croat nationalists and the Bosniak faction could no longer be put off for future resolution; as the Vance-Owen plan seemed to endorse territorial division along ethnic lines the question of how to separate Croat and Bosniak territories became acute. Although both the Croat nationalists and the Bosnian Government faction eventually signed the Vance-Owen plan, including the territorial division into ethnic cantons worked out by the mediators, there were nevertheless important issues that remained unregulated throughout. Most importantly, the future disposition of military forces in Central Bosnia was not decided in the agreement, and was supposed to be worked out by the Croats and Bosniaks themselves. The Croat side demanded exclusive military control over the areas assigned to it in the mediators' proposal, whereas the Government side insisted on keeping its forces where they were, and instead proposed that all Croat and Bosniak forces were to be integrated under one national command. These military issues were crucial since it was likely that the side with military forces on the ground

in practice would be able to control developments, regardless to which political unit a particular area was assigned in the agreement.

What is more, maintaining military control became even more important since it was clear from the outset that the Vance-Owen plan was unlikely to be accepted by the Serb side unless the West intervened militarily, something which seemed increasingly improbable at the time. If the Vance-Owen plan were to be rejected by the Serb side the Bosniaks would not gain the territory that the Serbs were obliged to cede according to the plan. If the Bosnian Government, then, were to follow its obligations under the Vance-Owen plan even if the Serbs did not reciprocate, the government side would yield much territory in Central Bosnia to the Croats with little compensation. The Bosniak faction, however, made it clear that unless all sides agreed and adhered to the plan, their own signature would be void. Thus, everything would then be up for grabs again, and the Bosniak faction had in the preceding negotiations demanded that several of the municipalities supposed to be handed over to the Croat side in the Vance-Owen plan instead were to be assigned to the Bosniak cantons. In the negotiations preceding the final version of the Vance-Owen plan, the Croat side on its part claimed more or less all the territory that it was eventually rewarded in the mediators' proposal, and significantly more territory as well.

Thus, the territorial demands of the Bosnian Croats and the Bosniaks were incompatible. The following municipalities with Bosniak majority or plurality in Central Bosnia that were assigned to the Croat side in the Vance-Owen plan had been claimed by the Bosniak side: Konjic, Jablanica, Gornji Vakuf, Donji Vakuf, Bugojno and Travnik. Each side had deployed strong military formations in these disputed municipalities as well as in other parts of Central Bosnia. In addition, the Croat side

had also claimed areas in the northern half of Central Bosnia that Vance and Owen assigned to the Bosniak side (e.g. Vares and Zepce).

The unstitching of the precarious alliance between the Croat nationalist faction and the Bosniak faction accelerated following the publication of the Vance-Owen plan in early January 1993. In the second week of the year HVO and ABiH clashed in the strategically located town of Gornji Vakuf in Central Bosnia. The spark that ignited the fighting was a bomb detonated in a Bosniak-owned hotel used as a headquarters. The HVO deployed artillery and tanks whereas the only heavy weaponry in Gornji Vakuf on the Bosniak side was a few mortars. The HVO used its advantage in heavy weapons to systematically demolish houses in the town of Gornji Vakuf as well as in surrounding Bosniak-majority towns elsewhere in the municipality. The HVO representative in Gornji Vakuf demanded that the Bosnian Government forces accept HVO control of the town, but the Government forces refused and held on to parts of the town. Gornji Vakuf had a slight Bosniak majority (56%) with the rest of the population being Croat (43%). The municipality is sandwiched between municipalities with Croat majority (Prozor), plurality (Pucarevo), or significant Croat minorities (Bugojno, Fojnica). What is more, Gornji Vakuf sits on the strategic road from the Croatian ports to Central Bosnia.

Shortly after the fighting in Gornji Vakuf began the Croat side on January 15 issued an ultimatum to all Bosniak forces on territory assigned to the Croat side in the peace plan to submit to Croat control. The Bosniak side, however, refused to subordinate its concerned troops to Croat command. Just as the fighting in Gornji Vakuf died down, new clashes occurred in Zenica and Busovaca a little further to the north. On 24 January Bosnian Government forces killed two HVO soldiers outside Busovaca, and two days later Bosnian Government forces attacked and cleansed the

Croat population from the village Dusina in Zenica municipality. In and around Busovaca intensive fighting followed until the situation in Central Bosnia winded down in March in what was to be the calm before the storm.

### ***April 1993: The Lasva Valley on Fire***

During negotiations in Zagreb in the last days of March, the Croats repeated their demands for exclusive military control over Western Herzegovina and the southern part of Central Bosnia, but the Bosniaks remained unyielding. The local HVO command in Central Bosnia then gave ABiH an ultimatum to withdraw by 15 April.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the Serb side, having rejected the Vance-Oven plan, went on the offensive against the Bosniak enclaves in Eastern Bosnia, and increased the artillery bombardment of Sarajevo. The Bosnian government was hard pressed by the renewed Serb onslaught, and especially the situation in the Srebrenica enclave in Eastern Bosnia seemed desperate.

At the height of this crisis the Croat ultimatum expired, and HVO in Central Bosnia attacked Bosniak forces along several fronts, apparently aiming to enforce Croat control over the territory assigned to the Croat provinces in the Vance-Oven peace plan at a minimum. In practice this meant attacking out of the Croat strongholds in Central Bosnia along the routes of communication so as to link the different territories already under Croat control and secure supply lines. Brutal ethnic cleansing of the Bosniak civilian population took place where the Croat forces advanced. The Bosniak side was, however, able to halt most Croat attacks, and immediately launched its own offensives, resorting to equally brutal ethnic cleansing of Croat civilians in the process.

Croat forces attacked out of the Croat stronghold Vitez along the road to Busovaca, another Croat local stronghold, on April 16. Overlooking this strategic road connecting Vitez and Busovaca was the Bosniak village of Ahmici (in the Vitez municipality), which was attacked and cleansed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion's Antiterrorist Platoon (known as the 'Jokers') of the HVO. Many Bosniak civilians were massacred in Ahmici, and most of the Bosniak houses were burned with the bodies of the murdered civilians still inside them. The 'Jokers' proceeded the following day to link up with HVO units from Busovaca in an attack against the nearby village Loncari (in the Busovaca municipality), which also was subjected to violent ethnic cleansing.

Both Vitez and Busovaca were ethnically mixed municipalities with Croat pluralities and almost equal numbers of Bosniaks. Vitez links Pucarevo (Croat plurality) and Busovaca, whereas Busovaca links Vitez and Kiseljak (Croat majority). Both Vitez and Busovaca are thus municipalities that link significant Croat territory, and according to the strategic incentives argument therefore likely to be subjected to violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Croat forces. This prediction is further strengthened when the actual strategic situation on the ground is considered in somewhat more detail. In the event of a Croat-Bosniak war in Central Bosnia, Vitez and Busovaca were vulnerable to being encircled and cut off from the major Croat power base in Western Herzegovina and the supply lines from Croatia. Bosniak villages in the area, such as Ahmici and Loncari, were situated close to the roads that would be of great value for the Croat forces in Central Bosnia in order to shift forces between Vitez and Busovaca, and to bring in supplies from Croatia via Prozor in the south. If the Croat side were intent on holding on to these municipalities by force it would consequently face strong strategic incentives to deal with the Bosniak

settlements and troop concentrations interspaced in the territory that the Croats claimed.

In the old parts of Vitez itself, a small Bosniak force was encircled and besieged by the Vitez HVO. Other HVO forces attacked out of the Croat stronghold of Prozor along the road toward Jablanica but were halted by ABiH near the village of Slatina, where the terrain is particularly favorable to the defense. The neighboring village of Doljani, which lies on another road leading from the Croat heartland in Western Herzegovina to Jablanica was, however, cleansed by HVO forces during the first week of the war; the Bosniak civilian population being imprisoned in camps, and the Bosniak houses as well as two mosques being destroyed. In Jablanica itself the ABiH quickly pushed out the local HVO forces and maintained control throughout the Croat-Bosniak war.

The Jablanica municipality was predominantly Bosniak (72%) and adjoins the Croat heartland in Western Herzegovina as well as the Croat stronghold Prozor (62% Croat) in Central Bosnia. The strategic incentives argument thus points to a heightened risk that Croat nationalist forces would resort to violent ethnic cleansing in Jablanica. These incentives appear even stronger when the strategic situation is considered in more detail. Jablanica assumed uttermost strategic importance during the war. In Jablanica, the only metalled road from Mostar to Central Bosnia forks into the road to Prozor in the northwest and the road to Sarajevo in the northeast. The Jablanica municipality also contains strong defensive terrain in the form of the steep and narrow Neretva gorge and high mountains with a long road tunnel. Jablanica was thus a vital communications hub as well as a natural Bosniak strongpoint. As noted above, Croat forces did cleanse villages in the Jablanica

municipality, and it in all likelihood the whole area would have been cleansed if only the Croat offensive had been strong enough to dislodge the Bosniak forces.

Another major HVO attack in April aimed to link up the two enclaves around Vitez and Kiseljak, respectively. Several small towns along the road connecting Vitez and Kiseljak were burned down by the advancing troops, but ABiH forces prevented the Croat columns from meeting.

### ***May – September 1993: Mostar and Stolac***

In early May, the fighting moved further south to Mostar, the largest city of Herzegovina, as the Croat side launched attacks aimed at driving the Bosniaks out of the western part of the city on the right bank of the Neretva river. Bosniak civilians were forced to leave their homes, and many were incarcerated under very harsh conditions in prison camps. As previously explained Mostar, an ethnically mixed municipality with significant presence of all the three major ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was of utmost strategic importance, especially for the Croat nationalist faction.

Bordering on Mostar municipality in the southeast is the municipality of Stolac. This municipality was ethnically mixed with a Bosniak plurality and a significant presence of Croats. The territory of Stolac municipality interconnects Mostar and the Croat majority municipality of Neum further to the south. According to my baseline version of the strategic incentives argument the Croat nationalist faction thus faced incentives to cleanse the municipality of Stolac of its non-Croat population. This prediction is further strengthened when the importance of the road

through Mostar is taken into consideration. Under the control of Croat separatist forces the terrain around Stolac would act as a buffer along the road and protect the eastern flank of the Bosnian Croat heartland in Western Herzegovina.

In line with this expectation based on the strategic incentives argument, the Croat nationalist forces initiated a campaign of violent ethnic cleansing against the Bosniak plurality in Stolac, following the outbreak of fighting in Mostar. The Bosniak population in Stolac itself and surrounding villages was expelled during the summer. Many Bosniaks were imprisoned in camps, tortured and killed, and mosques and Bosniak homes were purposely destroyed.

### ***October 1993: The End of Coexistence in Vares***

The atrocities continued during the autumn as Bosniaks detained by the Croat forces were used as human shields in the battles, resulting in numerous murders. The offensive power of the Croat nationalist forces was soon spent, and instead the Bosnian Government forces advanced against the Croat-held areas. In late October the last major surge of Croat violent ethnic cleansing against the Bosniak population took place in Vares municipality in Central Bosnia. The events in Vares are remarkable in several aspects. First, the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Croat forces is an anomaly in terms of the simplified strategic incentives argument. Second, Vares remained until October 1993 an increasingly unique example of peaceful coexistence between Croats and Bosniaks even as the former allies fought each other savagely over most of the rest of Central Bosnia. Third, in addition to the infamous massacre perpetrated by Croat forces in the village of Stupni Do, the Croats also organized a large-scale evacuation of the Croats of Vares, i.e. a case of self-cleansing in the terminology used

in this study. Two peculiar factors seem to have been crucial in the turn of events in Vares from co-existence to massacre and ethnic separation. First, the moderate and cooperatively oriented local Croat leadership was replaced with nationalist hardliners coming to Vares from the Croat nationalist stronghold of Kiseljak. This new radical leadership also brought loyal troops from Kiseljak. The second factor in the doom of the Croat-Bosniak peace in Vares is the influx of large numbers of refugees from other parts of the country that had been subjected to ethnic cleansing.

Vares municipality was ethnically mixed with a Croat plurality (41%) and a significant Bosniak presence (30%) before the war. The municipality is completely surrounded by five municipalities with Bosniak majority (Breza, Visoko, Kakanj, Zavidovici, and Olovo), and one mixed municipality (Ilijas) with a Serb plurality (45%) and a significant Bosniak presence (42%) but an insignificant presence of Croats (7%). During the period of cooperation with the Bosniak Government the local Croat forces in Vares held a section of the frontline against the Bosnian Serb separatist forces in Eastern Bosnia. As pointed out above, the Croat settlements in and around Vares constituted a Croat enclave separated from the Croat strongholds in Central Bosnia further south: Kiseljak and Vitez. In order to link up with the Croat enclave the forces in Kiseljak would have to pass through the Visoko area, but the Croat offensive out of Kiseljak in the spring of 1993 was stopped near the border between Kiseljak and Visoko. The Croats evidently prioritized to try to link Kiseljak-Busovaca-Vitez, which would make military sense, but even this ambition was soon thwarted.

The tension in Vares between Croats and Bosniaks began to increase when thousands of Croat refugees arrived following the capture of the Kakanj area 20 km to the west in the middle of June. As a result, a housing shortage became

increasingly acute, and the Bosniak residents were forced to leave three villages outside Kakanj. The decisive factor in the breakdown of co-existence in Vares was in all likelihood the arrival in mid-October of the commander of the HVO Central Bosnian Operational Zone's Second Operational Group – Ivica Rajic from Kiseljak, and the orders that he issued. At this stage of the war, Croat separatist forces and Serb separatist forces cooperated against the Government forces in many areas, and Rajic and his troops took a route to the Vares enclave through Serb-held territory. At the same time, the fighting in other parts of Central Bosnia closed in on Vares as the Bosnian Government forces advanced on several smaller towns located between Kakanj and Vares. On October 23, Rajic and his hardline followers from Kiseljak took political control of Vares from the more moderate Croat leadership that had dominated in the enclave until then.

On the morning the same day, Rajic ordered the troops under his command to attack the Bosniak village of Stupni Do 4km south of Vares. After the light defending force was brushed aside the Croat troops proceeded to massacre at least 31 Bosniaks, including women and children. Rape and wanton destruction also accompanied the attack. Following the eradication of Stupni Do, the HVO told the Croat population of Vares that everyone had to leave or face the Bosniaks' wrath when they responded to the attack on Stupni Do. The HVO evacuated thousands of Croats through Serb-held territory to Kiseljak. The removal of the Croat population of Vares thus qualifies as a case of self-cleansing in my terminology. Before the last Croat forces left, Vares was totally cleansed of all Bosniaks except for about one hundred terrified civilians that gathered around the armored vehicles of a platoon of Swedish peacekeepers that had arrived to investigate what was going on.

The most reasonable interpretation of Rajic's behavior in Vares is that the higher HVO command had decided beforehand that the Vares enclave was doomed given the setbacks that the Croat separatist forces had experience on the battlefields across Central Bosnia. The attack on Stupni Do could then have been intended to rally the Croats of Vares behind the evacuation to Kiseljak. The fear of collective punishment in Bosniak hands would then be a factor willingly introduced by the hardline Croat nationalists so as to gush out any hope of reestablished coexistence between Croats and Bosniaks in Vares. It was in the strategic interest of the Croat separatist faction to concentrate the Croat population in the more established strongholds further south. It was also in their interest to destroy any living disproof of their rationale for their claim to leadership and power – that peaceful coexistence between the different ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina was impossible. In that light, the seemingly senseless destruction of Stupni Do would assume a logical role in a greater scheme of extreme nationalist politics; the Croat hardliners purposely engineered a strong fear of ethnic collective punishment among their ethnic brethren in Vares.

### ***Bosniak Violent Ethnic Cleansing***

The cleansing perpetrated by Bosnian Government forces at first mainly took place in the areas with Bosniak absolute majority where the Government forces were resisting Serb offensives, e.g., Gorazde, Lukavac, Konjic and Zenica. In the terminology proposed here, these events can be characterized as *rearguard cleansing*. In later stages, when the Bosnian Government was also fighting Bosnian Croat separatist forces, the Government forces resorted to *rearguard cleansing* as well as *forward cleansing* against Croats in central Bosnia, mostly in ethnically mixed areas, e.g. Fojnica and Travnik. For most of the time of study, the Bosnian Government faction was militarily weaker than its enemies. My explication of the logic of strategic incentives does not provide precise expectations for what a militarily inferior side will do in terms of ethnic cleansing behavior.

### ***Rearguard Cleansing in East and Central Bosnia***

Bosniak forces resorted to violent ethnic cleansing for the first time about a month into the war. In Eastern Bosnia, the Serb forces were then in the process of eliminating or reducing the Bosniak presence in the Drina valley along the border to Serbia step by step. Serb forces had already brutally cleansed Zvornik at the northern end of the Drina valley, and Foca close to the point where the river Drina originates on the Serbian side of the border in the south. Then, on 3-5 May 1992 Bosniak "Green Berets" attacked the Serb village of Vitkovici in Gorazde municipality. The Serb civilian population of the village was taken to detention camps. Gorazde was an overwhelmingly Bosniak municipality (70%) with a Serb minority (26%). The cleansing of the Serb population of Vitkovici village by Bosniak militants is not in

line with the two baseline predictions derived from the logic of strategic incentives. As the reader will remember, according to my two predictions a militarily superior side is expected to use what I call forward cleansing so as to merge territory already under control by ethnic brethren, and so as to gain exclusive control over areas with border crossings. Instead, the Bosniak attack on Vitkovici represents a case of rearguard cleansing by a militarily weaker side in my terminology.

The Bosniak population in Eastern Bosnia was rapidly pressed back into fewer, smaller and increasingly isolated enclaves surrounded by ethnically cleansed territory held by vastly superior Serb forces. Gorazde was, probably partially because of its relatively isolated location, the only such Bosniak enclave in Eastern Bosnia that was to survive throughout the entire war. Vitkovici is located just outside Gorazde town on the road to Foca some 40 km to the southwest. The Serb cleansing of Foca was just completed when the Green Berets struck Vitkovici. In this context, the cleansing of Vitkovici can be interpreted as part of an attempt by the Bosniak forces to consolidate the enclave around Gorazde and safeguard the supply route to the front being established against the Serb forces ravaging nearby Foca. It may be pertinent at this stage to point out that my characterization of the attack on Vitkovici should neither be understood as any kind of moral justification for this act of ethnic cleansing nor as an attempt at downplaying its gravity. The unlawful confinement of civilians is a war crime. What I argue here is that the causal mechanisms leading to the cleansing of Vitkovici appears to be different from most of the violent ethnic cleansing that took place during the war.

During the remainder of the spring and the summer several more instances of Bosniak rearguard cleansing occurred as various paramilitary bands (e.g., Green Berets in cooperation with HOS), or Bosniaks organized in the Territorial

Defense of Bosnia-Herzegovina, attacked and cleansed Serb villages in Central Bosnia, e.g. in Lukavac, Konjic, Zavidovici, Zenica, Zepce, Trnovo and Gracanica. All these instances of violent ethnic cleansing by Bosniak forces occurred in municipalities with a Bosniak majority close to the expanding Serb realm.

### ***Wanton Destruction around Srebrenica***

In late June, the Bosniak forces defending the enclave around Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia began to strike out against surrounding Serb villages. This was the beginning of a series of Bosniak forays that were to last well into the winter. The attacks on Serb villages were sometimes of raiding character, but the Srebrenica Territorial Defense also expanded the enclave and attempted to cut off Serb supply routes from the Serbian border to Central Bosnia. From August, the attacks had reached Bratunac municipality, and in December Bosniak forces even fired mortar rounds into Serbian territory in the rump Yugoslav Federation, from positions right at the border. During the first year of the war, the campaign around Srebrenica was exceptional in that Government forces actually captured relatively large tracts of land from the Bosnian Serb forces. This campaign was also exceptional in that the Bosniak forces striking out of Srebrenica repeatedly resorted to violent ethnic cleansing. Around 50 Serb villages and hamlets were subjected to wanton destruction not justified by military necessity. Whereas other incidents of violent ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Bosniak forces during the first year of the war usually were isolated incidents, the havoc wrecked on Serb villages around Srebrenica was systematic. The forces from Srebrenica stand apart from Bosnian Government forces in general, who in most cases

behaved quite correct toward civilians and property (although numerous transgressions occurred as well) during the first year of the war.

### ***Absorbing the Croat Onslaught in Central Bosnia***

Immediately following the attacks in January 1993 by Croat nationalist forces on Bosniaks in Gornji Vakuf (on January 12) and Busovaca (on January 25) in Central Bosnia, Bosniak forces on January 26 attacked and subjected to violent ethnic cleansing the village Dusina in Zenica municipality. One Bosnian Serb civilian and several surrendered HVO soldiers were killed in the wake of the attack. The village was looted and burned to the ground. When the war between Croat separatist forces and Bosnian Government forces finally erupted in April 1993, Bosniak forces immediately responded in force to the onslaught by the Croat separatist forces, and several Croat villages in Konjic and Zenica municipalities were violently cleansed within days of the onset of fighting. These two municipalities had slight Bosniak majorities (55% in Zenica as well as in Konjic) and Croat minority populations. The frontline that was established in April as the Bosniaks absorbed and then turned back the Croat offensives ran through these municipalities. Zenica and Konjic were important Bosniak strongholds and sat on the most important roads through Central Bosnia. Seen in a wider context, the violent cleansings of Croat villages in Zenica and Konjic by Bosniak forces can be characterized as rearguard cleansing.

### ***The Bosnian Army on the Offensive***

On April 24 Bosnian Government forces also cleansed the Croat population of the village Miletici in the ethnically mixed Travnik municipality bordering to Zenica to

the west, murdering five Croat male prisoners in the process. This atrocity was carried out by the foreign Islamic volunteers organized in the El Mujahed of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps of the Bosnian Army. In most of Travnik municipality the HVO and Croat population stayed put in the first two months of the new war. In early June, however, the Bosniak forces launched an offensive dislodging the Croat forces from Travnik, and opening a corridor connecting Travnik and Zenica. During this fighting Bosnian Government forces perpetrated a massacre of around 30 Bosnian Croat civilians and surrendered HVO soldiers after the capture of the village Maline in Travnik municipality. Again, foreign Mujahedin played a major role in this atrocity. Several other Bosnian Croat villages in Travnik municipality were also subjected to plunder and wanton destruction during the month of June. Travnik was an ethnically mixed municipality with a slight Bosniak plurality (45%) and a nearly equal presence of Croats (37%). Travnik is sandwiched between several municipalities with Bosniak majority (Zenica, Donji Vakuf) or plurality (Bugojno; before the war also Jajce, but this town had already fallen to Serbs forces). According to the logic of strategic incentives, Travnik is thus one of the areas where I would expect a heightened risk of violent ethnic cleansing by Bosniak forces given local military superiority. The strategic value of Travnik was further increased by the presence of an important arms industry.

Further east, in the Bosniak majority municipality Kakanj the Bosnian Government forces consolidated their frontline against the Croat separatist forces in Central Bosnia, taking the town on June 16. Thousands of Croat inhabitants of Kakanj fled from the advancing Bosniak forces, and sought refuge in ethnically mixed Vares to the east. The next major Bosniak advance accompanied by violent ethnic cleansing came in the first days of July when Fojnica was captured and its Croat population driven out. Fojnica, like Travnik, was an ethnically mixed Central Bosnian

municipality with a slight Bosniak plurality (49%) and an almost equal presence of Croats (41%), bordering to several municipalities with Bosniak majority (Konjic and Gornji Vakuf) or significant Bosniak presence (Pucarevo, Busovaca, and Kiseljak). The violent ethnic cleansing of Fojnica is thus in line with my predictions derived from the logic of strategic incentives.

From mid-July the focus of activity changed to the southern part of Central Bosnia and the area around the road from Mostar via Jablanica-Prozor-Gornji Vakuf to Serb-held Donji Vakuf, Jajce and the Bosnian Serb heartland in Western Bosnia beyond. This road was potentially a very useful transport route for the side that controlled its length through Central Bosnia. If the Bosniak side gained control over the road by way of capturing Bugojno and Prozor from the Croats, the Croat enclave further north around Vitez would be cut off from all support from the Bosnian Croat heartland in Western Herzegovina. If the Croat side were to control the road they would be in a better position to supply its strongholds in the Lasva valley at the same time as the Bosniak defenders of East Mostar would be cut off from the Bosniak heartland in Central Bosnia. Having gained the initiative during the previous months, the Bosniak side captured Bugojno in late July. Simultaneously, Bosniak forces were attacking out of Jablanica, capturing the nearby village of Doljani, whence several Croat civilians were murdered.

The largest Bosniak offensive during the year was Operation "Neretva 93", launched on September 14. This was a general attack along almost the entire front against the Bosnian Croat forces, and it aimed to open up as much as possible of the already bitterly contested road running from Mostar to Gornji Vakuf via Jablanica. The attacking Bosniak forces carried out two major atrocities during this operation. On 8 September, Bosniak forces murdered 33 Bosnian Croat civilians in the ethnically

mixed village Grabovica, in Jablanica municipality, on the road to Mostar. On 14 September the Bosnian Croat village Udzol in Prozor municipality fell, and 29 Bosnian Croat civilians and one HVO surrendered soldier were massacred.

## **Policy Implications: Early warning and accurate prediction**

Violent ethnic cleansing directly involves immense human suffering. Moreover, the costs in terms of destroyed societies and precluded opportunities for future beneficial interactions linger for decades, if not centuries. It is thus natural that many different actors in various capacities and roles would like to prevent violent ethnic cleansing, or if that turns out to be impossible, to mitigate the consequences when violent ethnic cleansing takes place. Both preventive and mitigating measures benefit from earliest possible warning about when and where people are the most at risk of being victimized in this way. The more specific in time and place the predictions are, the more effectively the response can be tailored to meet the crisis. Based on my empirical studies I propose several guidelines on this issue in what follows.

### *1. Violent ethnic cleansing is most likely in weakly held areas*

Even in an ethnically very heterogeneous country such as Bosnia-Herzegovina there are often areas that at the outset of ethnic warfare immediately fall under relatively strong control of a certain ethnic group. This will happen in areas that are demographically clearly dominated by one ethnic group (or sometimes, by a coalition of cooperating ethnic groups) provided that the demographically dominant group is militarily strong relative to its enemies. For example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina this meant that areas with compact Serb population almost immediately after the outbreak of the war fell under Serb control without any significant fighting. Thanks to the support provided by the Yugoslav authorities, especially the JNA, the Serb population

of Bosnia-Herzegovina was extremely well armed, organized for war, and backed by strong Yugoslav military formations. Within the confines of these areas I expect that the local security dilemma will be very weak, and the incentives for the dominant group to resort to violent ethnic cleansing will consequently be low. Given the dominance of an ethnic exclusionary ideology, discrimination and persecutions of minorities are likely but they will probably take a less overt and violent form. As will be related below, it is another matter that such firmly held areas often serve as staging areas for outward offensives aimed at capturing and cleansing adjoining contested territory. When an area is not clearly dominated by one group (or coalition of groups), control becomes uncertain, and the preemptive incentives of the security dilemma come to the fore. My first guideline is consequently that violent ethnic cleansing is most likely in weakly held areas.

## *2. The importance of ethnic exclusionary ideology paired with military strength*

Given an ethnic exclusionary legitimacy base, the militarily superior side with unfulfilled territorial ambitions is most likely to resort to violent ethnic cleansing. This side is expected to strike out from its heartlands so as to conquer and cleanse the coveted territory. For example, at the outset of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, the Bosnian Serb separatist faction was militarily stronger than its opponents at the same time as this highly exclusionary faction had as of yet unfulfilled territorial ambitions. In line with my prediction, the Bosnian Serbs committed most of the atrocities in the beginning of the war. In what follows, I will provide examples that show how my more specific expectations predict where and when the Bosnian Serb faction resorted to violent ethnic cleansing. (Similar examples could be given for the other two factions as well.)

### *3. The expected endeavor to merge friendly-controlled territory*

A militarily superior side with an ethnically exclusionary legitimacy base will typically strive to merge separate areas dominated by ethnic brethren by way of militarily capturing the territory separating the already dominated areas, thereby violently cleansing out-groups either immediately upon capturing territory or shortly afterwards. For example, the municipality of Prijedor had in 1991 a Bosniak plurality (44%). It was sandwiched between several surrounding municipalities with Serb majority. In line with my expectations, the Bosniak (and Croat) population of Prijedor was subjected to violent ethnic cleansing as the militarily superior Bosnian Serb separatist forces took control over the area in May 1992.

### *4. The expected endeavor to capture border-crossings*

A militarily superior side with an ethnically exclusionary legitimacy base will also strive to capture border crossings (and deep-sea harbors if present) adjacent to areas dominated by ethnic brethren. Example: At the outset of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the spring of 1992, Bosnian Serb forces captured the municipality of Zvornik and violently cleansed the area of its Bosniak majority (59%) population. Zvornik borders to Serbia and has three bridges over the border river Drina. The municipality also borders to several municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina with Serb majority.

### *5. The expected endeavor to secure border-crossings*

A militarily superior side with an ethnically exclusionary legitimacy base will also strive to secure border crossings (and deep-sea harbors if present) in areas weakly dominated by ethnic brethren. Examples: Violent ethnic cleansing in the latest war in Bosnia-Herzegovina began in earnest in Bijeljina in April 1992. The municipality of Bijeljina was weakly dominated in demographic terms by the Bosnian Serbs (59%) and had a significant presence of Bosniaks as well (31%). Bijeljina borders to Serbia and Croatia and has an important bridge over the Drina to Serbia.

#### *6. The rush factor*

A final factor that I observed is what I term the *rush factor*, i.e. the tendency that when a territory is captured by force violent ethnic cleansing is more likely to occur immediately or closely after the advance, with violent means being less likely to be employed the longer the time passed since the territory in question shifted hands. The *rush factor* reinforces the need for early and accurate warnings. Actors who may want to prevent violent ethnic cleansing or mitigate the consequences thereof must be ready to react quickly to military developments, otherwise prevention will come too late and mitigation will suffer from a slow start. The *rush factor* thus underlines the importance of my other guidelines about when and where violent ethnic cleansing is the most likely to occur during warfare with ethnic ramifications.

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<sup>1</sup> In this connection it is perhaps pertinent to point out that I in applying these terms in no way intend to imply that any of these forms ethnic cleansing is more legitimate or morally defensible.

<sup>2</sup> See also Kaufman (1994/95; 1996a; 1996c; 1996b; 2001), van Evera (1994), and Kaufmann (1996; 1998).

<sup>3</sup> It is fear of the future and not the past that seem to matter for people's willingness engage in war (Fearon, 1994; Lake and Rothchild, 1996). The role of distant history and perhaps more importantly historical myths, is that when the future is uncertain and seems risky, historical myths and events can be used as symbols and rallying points. Recent history may play a slightly more important role when, in a situation of uncertainty, people assess possible future developments. Peoples expectations about the future are shaped by whatever information they have about that future. But when the future is uncertain, present circumstances and historical experience may influence the expectations formed about the future. Under such circumstances past experience may become symbolically important, but it is still the present circumstances and the uncertainty about the future that motivates peoples behavior. But this is a very different story than that suggested by the ancient hatreds explanation. Thus, the key

here is the uncertainty about the future caused by the unraveling of the communist system and the Yugoslav state, not some pent-up ancient hatred.

<sup>4</sup> There are smaller, inland ports on the river Sava.

<sup>5</sup> Important amounts of weapons and other military equipment were also captured by Bosnian government forces in Zenica, Bihac and Sarajevo (Divjak, 2001:165 and 265).

<sup>6</sup> (Gow, 1993:11)