ARTICLE

FIGHTING FEAR:

Exploring the Dynamic Between Security Concerns and Elite Manipulation in Internal Conflict

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ABSTRACT

Internal conflicts, particularly those with ethnic dimensions, have been responsible for some of the gravest violence in the world over the past two decades. Among the various causes credited with paying a role in sparking ethnic conflict, two have received increasing attention and form the basis of this paper: security concerns and manipulation by political elites. Attempts to explain ethnic conflict as the result of a 'security dilemma,' however, have been criticised for failing to adequately recognise the role played by politicians who intentionally incite ethnic animosities. Likewise, explanations focused solely on the tactics of opportunistic political leaders have failed to explain why the public responds to such nationalistic appeals. This study seeks to overcome these limitations by explaining the dynamic relationship between insecurity (among both elites and the masses) and the ability of elites to manipulate ethnic identities and animosities for political motivations. By examining this relationship in two case studies (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda), a picture emerges of fear serving as both a permissive condition that allows for elite manipulation (making the population susceptible to nationalist appeals) as well as a specific tool of elite manipulation.   This explanation poses important implications for international actors attempting to craft policies to prevent the outbreak of ethnic violence.

"Men are moved by two levers only: fear and self-interest" -Napoleon Bonaparte (1768-1821)[2]

INTRODUCTION

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[2] Dumas, Alexandre. *The Companions of Jehu,* Doylestown, PA: Wideside Press (2004)

Internal conflicts account for more deaths, more suffering, more destruction, and more displacement than any other type of conflict in the world today.[3] While the nature of these intrastate wars can vary, violence organised along 'ethnic' or nationalist lines is one of the most pervasive.   The brutality of the ethnic wars of the 1990s (particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda) stunned many in the international community and contradicted predictions of a more peaceful and prosperous era emerging in the wake of the Cold War. While the world entered the final decade of the twentieth century amidst talk of a 'new world order' and 'peace dividends,' it exited the 1990s having witnessed a massive growth in intrastate war (peaking in 1994), record numbers of displaced persons, ethnic slaughter in Europe, and one of the most horrifyingly efficient genocides in human history. Continuing ethnic violence in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and elsewhere demonstrate that internal conflicts will remain a major source of instability and human suffering into the 21st century. Attempting to determine the causes and conditions behind internal conflict is a daunting task. Oversimplified explanations focused upon 'ancient hatreds' have gradually been replaced with a more comprehensive understanding that a complex network of interactions between various factors (including structural, political, economic, and social) is often behind the eruption of internal conflict.[4]   Indeed, where once a mere history of ethnic animosity was simplistically pointed to as an explanation of conflict, today items as disparate as journalistic standards, mineral deposits, and the prevalence of soccer hooligans are all cited

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[3] Marshall, Monty G. and Ted Gurr. *Peace and Conflict 2003: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy,* College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management (2003)
[4] Brown, Michael E. "The Causes of Internal Conflict" in Brown (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2001)

in one form or another as being contributing factors to such violence.[5] Internal conflicts (with multiple actors operating under a myriad of motivations) are complex problems that require complex analysis if truly effective policy responses aimed at preventing, ending, or at least mitigating ethnic warfare are to succeed.

Among the various causes credited with paying a role in sparking ethnic conflict, two have received increasing attention and form the basis of this study: security concerns and elite manipulation.   The current study seeks to explain the dynamic relationship between insecurity (among both elites and the masses) and the ability of elites to manipulate ethnic identities and animosities for political motivations. The basic premise of the argument is that public insecurity and uncertainty create an environment in which the public is more receptive to nationalist elites, who in turn employ strategies aimed at increasing public insecurity even further as a means of achieving their political aim (usually to stay in power). The crux of this analysis is that fear serves as both a permissive condition for elite manipulation as well as a specific tool of elite manipulation. The first section of this study lays out the argument, explaining the security dilemma and exploring how fear operates as a pre-condition to ethnic violence (among both the masses and the elites) and how fear is utilised by elites as a means of increasing their political prerogatives. The second section examines the relation between security concerns and elite manipulations in two of the most prominent recent cases of ethnic conflict: Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda. The final

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[5] For journalistic standards, see: Snyder, Jack and Karen Ballentine. "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas" in Brown (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2001); For mineral deposits, see: Ross, Michael. "Oil, Drugs, and Diamonds: The Varying Roles of Natural Resources in Civil Wars" in Ballentine (ed.) *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance,* Boulder,

section explores several policy options for international actors attempting to prevent ethnic conflict. It should be noted that this paper does not argue that security concerns and elite manipulation are the only (or even the most prevalent in some cases) factors responsible for sparking ethnic conflict. They are, however, extremely prevalent in most post-Cold War internal conflicts and therefore the relationship between the two phenomena deserves considerable attention.

SECTION ONE: THE MULTIDIRECTIONAL DYNAMIC BETWEEN SECURITY CONCERNS AND ELITE MANIPULATION

The Security Dilemma in Internal Conflicts

Any attempt to understand the impact of security concerns on ethnic conflict should begin with a brief examination of the security dilemma, which provides a framework for analysing the interaction of insecurity and elite manipulation. Modelled from the international relations theory originally articulated by John Herz and Robert Jervis, the security dilemma applied to ethnic conflict presents a scenario where two groups may end up in conflict even if neither seeks such an outcome.[6] In situations where Group A does not trust the government's ability (or willingness) to protect them against attack, they feel obliged to take precautions to ensure their physical security and survival. These precautions often include

CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers (2003); For soccer hooligans, see: Mueller, John. "The Banality of 'Ethnic War'" in Brown (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2001)
[6] Herz, John. *Political Realism and Political Idealism,* Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press (1951); Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics,* no. 2 (January 1978); Posen, Barry R.

mobilisation and arming to deter or defend against an attack by a rival Group B. These

actions, however, appear threatening to Group B which, compelled by the same defensive

logic, proceeds to mobilise and arm themselves, thus reinforcing the fears of Group A and

leading to more defensive armament. The "spiralling cycle" of distrust and increased

arming is a characteristic of the security dilemma and can ignite open conflict in several

ways. One example is if one group senses a 'window of opportunity' when it has a military

advantage, but fears that the advantage will switch to its rivals in the future, the group may

feel compelled to attack as a preventative survival strategy. Another possible trigger could

be an isolated incident of violence by a small group of individuals, which might be

perceived as the beginning of an offensive and therefore prompt a counter-attack.[7] Other

factors that contribute to the security dilemma include the difficulty of distinguishing

offensive from defensive capabilities (given the reliance on small arms), lack of credible

information as to rival group's intentions and action (forcing 'worst-case' assumptions), and

the perception of an offense-dominated environment (where the group that strikes first is

most likely to be victorious).[8] In sum, the self-defeating 'dilemma' is that "what one does to

enhance one's own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure".[9]

While the security dilemma is a useful framework for understanding how security concerns

and steps to address them can spiral into open conflict, in its most narrow form it fails to

differentiate types of insecurity among actors *within* a group and does not adequately

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"Ethnic Conflict and the Security Dilemma" in Brown (ed.) *Ethnic Conflict and International Security,* New Haven, CT: Princeton University Press (1993)

[7] Jervis, Robert and Jack Snyder. "Civil War and the Security Dilemma" in Walter and Snyder (eds.) *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention,* New York, NY: Columbia University Press (1999) p. 26

[8] Byman, Danial L. *Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflict,* Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press (2002) p. 19-20; Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," p. 108-110

[9] Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," p. 104

account for the role played by elites who intentionally manipulate ethnic animosities for political purposes.   Therefore, the security dilemma alone fails to adequately answer the question of why some ethnic antagonisms spiral into violence while others do not. Likewise, arguments that explain ethnic conflict as caused *solely* by elite manipulation fail to account for why such exclusionary ethnic appeals are successful in generating public support and recognition. For example, most multi-ethnic societies have extremist persons that propagate ethnic exclusion and hate, yet usually the vast majority of the public ignores them and they remain politically marginalised. So the key question in attempting to understand the role of elites in generating ethnic conflict is what makes the public receptive to elite 'mythmaking' and polarisation of identities? Snyder and Ballentine answer this question by identifying important components of *how* elites accomplish this task (by partially monopolising the media, successfully segmenting media markets, and relying on weak institutions of public discourse and unprofessional journalism) but never fully address the underlying reason why the public believes it.[10]   This paper argues that it is at the intersection of security concerns and elite manipulation ("fear and self-interest") that the potential for such ethnic polarisation (and subsequent conflict) is born.

Fear as an Underlying Condition for Successful Elite Manipulation

When talking about insecurity among members of a group, it is important to differentiate between various actors within the group. While specific conflicts may have a number of sub-sets of actors (each with unique concerns and motivations) this study focuses on two

segments of a group: the masses and the elites.   Distinguishing these two sets of actors is essential to an accurate understanding of the dynamic of security concerns in sparking ethnic conflict.[11]   The following section examines the significance of mass security concerns, identifies types of mass insecurity, and examines the conditions under which such fears are likely to emerge.

Mass Fears

Understanding insecurity among the public is important because it is this insecurity that in turn makes them receptive to elite manipulation. People that feel physically safe, economically secure, and politically represented are unlikely to be moved by extremist politicians' ethnic fear mongering and scape-goating. If, however, there is a wide perception among the public that they are at risk due to the actions or perceptions of another ethnic group, the likelihood that they will be prone to respond to elite manipulation is greater, owing to the fact that the elites often employ ethnic solidarity as a means of protection from other groups. Should members of a group that do perceive a possible threat fail to defend themselves through alignment with their group, they risk destruction. As explained by Snyder and Jervis, "(t)o trigger a security-driven conflict, all that is required is that the people believe that such assessments (by elites) *might* be true."[12] Such a scenario

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[10] Snyder, Jack and Karen Ballentine. "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas" in Brown (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2001)

[11] For the purposes of this section, 'security' and 'insecurity' refer to a broad set of factors, akin to 'human security,' incorporating factors of physical security, economic security, political security, and social/cultural security.

[12] Snyder, Jack and Robert Jervis. "Civil War and the Security Dilemma" in Walter and Snyder (eds.) *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention,* New York, NY: Columbia University Press (1999)

suggests that the existence of security concerns among the general population is a permissive condition that increases the group's receptiveness to elite 'nationalist' appeals. The types of threats that a group perceives and the object of its fears can be broken down into four general categories: threats to physical security, threats to political security, threats to economic security, and threats to cultural/social security (Table 1-I).[13]   While all of these threats can be significant, the threat to physical security is the most likely to produce the highest public responsiveness to elite manipulation and ethnic polarisation, since failure to do so could lead to a group's physical destruction.

There are five primary conditions that can produce increased mass fears (see Table 1-II). First, the existence of antagonistic histories among ethnic groups, particularly involving open violence, may increase the level of insecurity a group feels in relation to another group. This is likely to be even more so if the violence has occurred relatively recently and the memory of such conflict is kept vivid through collective memory, official history, and/or a reliance on oral history. It has been suggested that security concerns and mistrust are likely to be even higher if the perceived 'guilty' party denies its culpability in past violence.[14]

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[13] Modelled from Brown, Michael E. "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict" in Brown (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (1996) p. 577
[14] Lischer, Sarah Kenyon. "Causes of Communal War: Fear and Feasibility," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* vol. 22, no. 4 (November 1999) p. 331-355

Table 1: Mass and Elite Fears and Conditions

I.　　　　　MASS FEARS[15]	III.　　　　　ELITE FEARS
1.　　Physical Security 2.　　Political Security 3.　　Economic Security 4.　　Cultural Security	1.　　Risk of losing power 2.　　Risk of being prosecuted for former crimes
II. Conditions that Generate Mass Fears	**IV. Conditions that Generate Elite Fear[16]**
1.　　Antagonistic ethnic history 2.　　Change or threatened change in ethnic balance of power 3.　　Economic deterioration/increased resource competition 4.　　Perceptions of state weakness (5.　　Elite Ethnic Fear mongering)	A. Weakening state structure B. Political transitions C. Pressures for political reform (democratisation) D. Rise of political rivals E. Economic problems

Second, significant changes (or perceived changes) in the ethnic balance of power can foster an increased sense of insecurity among a group.[17] Examples of such a scenario could include government takeover (either forcefully or democratically) by a rival ethnic group, changes in demographics or political borders that result in a majority ethnic group becoming a minority, or a perceived sudden increase in a rival group's military capability (e.g. through a tacit alliance with a neighbouring country).

Third, economic problems and diminishing resources could lead to increased insecurity within a group, especially if accompanied by the perception that a rival ethnic group is experiencing less economic difficulty or is in someway responsible for the economic crisis

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[15] Modelled from Brown, Michael E. "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict" in Brown (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (1996) p. 577

[16] Fearon, James. "Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem" Paper presented at Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association, New York, (August 30-September 2 1994)

affecting one's group. This condition is most likely to produce an even higher rate of mass

fear if it occurs suddenly through an economic crisis or rapid depression.

Fourth, the perception of state weakness could increase insecurity within a group if it has

traditionally viewed the state as a protector and fears that the capacity for such protection is

diminishing (evidenced through diminished state services or increasing crime). Since

physical security is "the most central and foremost political good," the increased weakness

of the state and concern over protection is likely to result in mass fear and self-help

protection strategies, and the potential for a security dilemma will arise.[18]

 Each of these conditions is likely to increase mass insecurity, thereby increasing the

public's willingness to listen to and believe elites who may employ ethnic polarisation and

identity politics as a means of rallying public support. In the absence of these conditions

which create insecurity, it is unlikely that ethnic elites will find a large audience for their

ethnic scape-goating and fear mongering.   While the elites may paint a picture of imminent

threat from rival ethnic groups as a means of rallying loyalty and support, the insecurities

truly motivating these political opportunists are distinct from the masses they claim to

represent.

Elite Fears

<www.stanford.edu/~jfearson/papers/ethcprob.pdf>
[17] Ibid.
[18] Rotberg, Robert I. "The New Nature of Nation-State Failure," *The Washington Quarterly,* vol. 25, no. 3, (Summer 2002) p. 87

The public at large is not the only group dealing with insecurity and uncertainty. Elite fears are also a major component in the run-up to conflict, since it is often these concerns that motivate elites to engage in predatory, dangerous, ethnically polarising behaviour as a means of defending against their fears. This section addresses what elite fears are and what conditions are likely to create or exacerbate such fears. It should be noted that ethnic manipulation by elites is not *always* driven by elite fears alone (sometimes it occurs for economic self-gain or as a means of gaining power), yet the higher the elite insecurity the higher the likelihood of such behaviour.

In its most simplified form, there are two main elite insecurities: the fear of losing power (including political influence, economic opportunity, and social standing), and the fear of being prosecuted for past crimes (Table 1-III). The fear of losing power is the most prevalent and most powerful of these two fears and most often associated with resort to 'ethnic nationalism.'[19]

There are a variety of conditions that can lead to increased insecurity among elites (Table 1-IV).[20]   These include: weakening state structures (where leaders in the central government lose power due to state collapse or increased federalism); political transitions (such as the end of imperial rule); increased political pressure for democratisation (threatening elites who have enjoyed non-representative rule); rise of popular political rivals; and worsening economic problems (which spread discontent among the masses towards rule by elites).

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[19] Gagnon Jr, V.P. "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia" *International Security,* vol. 19, no. 3, (Winter 1994/95) p. 130-166

Another condition that could threaten the elites' hold on power is internal or international pressure for investigations and prosecution of crimes in which the elites are culpable. All of these conditions increase the level of insecurity among elites by threatening their positions of power. In response to such threats, leaders may turn to ethnic scape-goating and polarisation as a way to deflect criticism, rally domestic support, and maintain their status as elites. The logic of such 'ethnic politics' and the strategies used by elites (including the tool of fear) are explored below.

Fear as a Tool of Elite Manipulation

The incentive for elites to turn to base 'ethnic' appeals in response to threats to their power stems from a recognition that ethnicity (including language, customs, religion) is one of the basic foundations of people's identities. Since some form of insecurity is usually necessary in order for the public to be receptive to elite manipulation (as explained above), elites attempt to present themselves as a representative and protector of a particular ethnicity. The key challenge for elites in such a scenario, according to Gagnon, is to "define the interest of the collective in a way that coincides with their power interests."[21] By playing on mass fears, elites attempt to maintain their power.

In order to accomplish this goal and mobilise support, elites will often portray another ethnic group as, in the words of Snyder, "more threatening, more implacable, (and) more culpable

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[20] Adapted from Brown, Michael E. "The Causes of Internal Conflict" in Brown (ed.), "Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict," p. 19
[21] Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," p. 136

for historic wrongs" than they really are.[22] In a situation of limited information, where the public has no means of determining the true intentions of a rival group, elite control of the media becomes a critical tool in the strategy of generating mass fear. In such a scenario, elites are able to exaggerate threats posed by other groups, present skewed accounts of inter-ethnic histories, and thereby engage in ethnic mythmaking aimed at making ethnicity the central component of political dialogue. Such portrayals of rival ethnic groups as imminent threats is significant in causing conflict and Valentino notes that perpetrators of mass killing often cite the threat posed by their victims as a main motivator for their behaviour.[23]

It should be noted that such a scenario usually does not occur in one group alone. By the same logic outlined above, an ethnic group that perceives a growth in ethnic nationalism in a neighbouring group and observes the increasing popularity of nationalist elites is likely to feel a growing sense of danger and insecurity. They too, therefore, are likely to prove increasingly receptive to elite 'ethnic' appeals within *their* group. Thus fear serves as a permissive condition for elite manipulation as well as a tool of such manipulation. It becomes a security dilemma which is largely fuelled and exacerbated by elite action aimed at generating exactly such security concerns in order to rally public support. The result is an increasingly volatile, distrustful environment where a growing number of people feel compelled to choose between following nationalist leaders (as a defensive strategy against a rival group's attack) or remaining ethnically-neutral by dismissing such threats (which would leave them vulnerable should predictions about a rival group's predatory intentions prove accurate). The danger and costs of remaining neutral push many to rally around a

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[22] Snyder, Jack. *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict,* New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, (2000), p. 67

leader as a defensive strategy. This vicious cycle produces a situation where any number of triggers can prompt open warfare.   In order to further understand this dangerous interaction between security concerns and elite manipulation, it is useful to briefly examine several recent ethnic conflicts.

SECTION TWO: FEAR AND MANIPULATION IN ACTION: BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA AND RWANDA

Insecurity, Manipulation, and the Spiral of Violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina

A complete review of the Bosnian conflict is beyond the scope of this study and therefore the following analysis provides a brief overview of the conflict and then focuses solely upon identifying the conditions for mass security concerns, elite insecurity, and elite utilisation of fear as a political tool, and how these three factors combined to push all parties towards war.

Brief Overview of the Balkans Conflict

Marshal Josip Broz Tito ruled the Republic of Yugoslavia as a Communist nation from 1945 until his death in 1980. The country consisted of six republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Serbia), with power shared between the federal government in Belgrade and the regional governments. During the 1990s, regional political leaders pressed for a decentralisation of power and increasing demands for

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[23] Valentino, Benjamin. "Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide" *Security Studies,* vol. 9,

democratisation led to free, multiparty elections in 1990. The elections resulted in the rise of nationalist leaders in the republics and growing calls for independence in Slovenia and Croatia. Between June and December 1991, both republics officially declared independence.

A referendum on Bosnian independence from what remained of Yugoslavia was held on February 28-March 1 of 1992. The result of the referendum, which was boycotted by the Bosnian Serb population who wished to remain a part of Yugoslavia, demonstrated the desire that many Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats had to create an independent country. Fearing their new minority status within Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bosnian Serbs attempted to declare an autonomous territory for themselves with the Bosnian borders. Bosnian Serbs formed militia units that began attempting to "cleanse" their proclaimed territory of Muslims. The fighting escalated rapidly, with Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic lending direct support (including the use of the Yugoslav National Army) to the Bosnian Serb offensive.

Despite repeated ceasefire agreements and the involvement of the international community, heavy fighting continued for three years. Finally, the decision to employ NATO air-strikes against Serb military targets and an increased commitment by the international community to bring the conflict to an end, led to negotiations culminating in the Dayton peace agreement, signed in December 1995. The agreement called for the independence of Bosnia within its former border, yet made up of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

(51 percent of the territory) and the Serb Republic (49 percent of the territory). The

agreement also established a 60,000-strong NATO 'Implementation Force' (IFOR) to

oversee and enforce the terms of the peace agreement.

Mass and Elite Fears

The conditions for insecurity among the citizenry of Yugoslavia were plentiful in the early

1990s. The central government had become virtually dysfunctional due to increasing attacks

by republican (state) politicians attempting to gain power at the expense of the federal

government, an IMF-debt repayment programme that drastically limited the government's

hold on the economy, and debilitating quarrels at the federal level. The extent of the

government's loss of power was to the point that Susan Woodward described the country as

"resembl(ing) the conditions of anarchy."[24]

Beyond the political breakdown, the country was in the midst of an economic crisis. The

budgetary austerities of macro-economic stabilisation, debt repayment, and economic reform

in the 1980s, led to increased competition over diminishing resources, thus "laying the

foundation for successful scape-goating and nationalist appeals."[25] By the late 1980s, the

unemployment rate throughout Yugoslavia had surpassed 20 percent, inflation had reached

50 percent and continued to rise, and the household savings of nearly 80 percent of the

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[24] Woodward, Susan. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: How Not to End a Civil War" in Walter and Snyder (eds.) *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention,* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, (1999) p. 81
[25] Daadler, Ivo. "Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia," in Brown (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (1996) p. 38

population had been depleted.[26] The fact that the economic situation deteriorated rapidly in

the late 1980s and coincided with massive political change further increased the level of fear

among the masses.

Ethnic geography also contributed to increased insecurity among the Yugoslav population.

Bosnian Serbs, who made up a third of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population, suddenly found

themselves being transformed from a majority is the context of the Republic of Yugoslavia,

to an isolated minority in the newly independent Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnia's declaration

of independence represented a huge shift in the perception of ethnic balance-of-power in the

eyes of Bosnian Serbs. Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, making up 44% of Bosnia-

Herzegovina's population, felt increasingly insecure as a minority (10%) of the Republic of

Yugoslavia's population, and therefore sought security through independence.[27]

On top of all of these insecurity inducing conditions, all ethnic groups involved in the

conflict had a history of ethnic tension and violence that, while in and of itself does not

explain the outbreak of war in 1991, provided ample ammunition for nationalist elites and

contributed to security fears among the groups.[28] In general, these conditions created

significant feelings of vulnerability among the citizens of Yugoslavia, which made them

receptive to elite attempts at 'playing the ethnic card.'[29]

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[26] Woodward, Susan. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War,* Washington, DC: The
Brookings Institution, (1995), p. 73
[27] Woodward, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: How Not to End a Civil War," p. 82
[28] Deniche, Bette. "Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide,"
American Ethnologists, vol. 21, no. 2, (May 1994); for a full survey of historic animosity see: Kaplan, Robert.
Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History, New York, NY: St. Martin's, (1993)
[29] Human Rights Watch, *Playing the Communal Card: Communal Violence and Human Rights,* Washington,
DC: Human Rights Watch, (April 1995)

Yugoslav elites faced insecurities during this period as well, as pressures for political liberalisation from reformists grew in the wake of Tito's death in 1980. Following the series of mass mobilisations that had successfully ousted regimes across Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia's conservative elite faced threats to its power on numerous fronts. The battles between the local and national governments had significantly decentralised power and limited the authority of conservatives in Belgrade. Anti-socialist parties successfully won elections in Slovenia and Croatia in the spring of 1990 on a platform of further limiting the control of the national elites running the Yugoslav government. Within Serbia itself, demands for multi-party, competitive elections spiralled into massive protests in June of 1990.[30] All of the various forces for change left the political elites of the national government and the ruling party feeling acutely insecure.   As noted by Gagnon, these reformist efforts posed a direct threat to the conservative elite's control over "economic and political power," prompting them to "provoke conflict along ethnic lines" as a means of "deflect(ing) demands for radical change and allow(ing) the ruling elite to reposition itself and survive."[31]

Thus the combination of mass insecurities and elite insecurities presented the opportunity for increased 'ethnification' of politics. However, without the underlying insecurities that existed among the masses, it is doubtful that they would have been as receptive to elite

[30] Gagnon, V.P. *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s,* Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, (2004), p. 90-91
[31] Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict," p. 140

manipulation. As Mark Thompson has noted, elite efforts did not *create* fears and beliefs among the population, but rather played upon and exacerbated those that already existed.[32]

Fear as a Tool of Elite Manipulation

One of the strategies used by Yugoslav elites to rally domestic support and deflect criticism was to play upon ethnic security concerns among the masses. This was accomplished through media manipulation, exaggerated claims as to threats posed by other ethnic groups, and constant references to historic violence and animosity. Such a manipulation of mass fear allowed them to gain public support by arguing that the population's security depended on voting for their ethnic representative, who would work to defend them. In the words of Woodward, politicians' rhetoric centred on "*survival*, arguing that the fate of the individual depended on the fate of the group…and that the role of the group for the individual and the politician for the group was *protection.*"[33]

Led by Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic and Croatia's Franjo Trudjman, elite leaders presented their respective groups with increasingly dire predictions as to the predatory nature of rival ethnic groups. One example of such fear mongering is the Serbs use of a television monopoly in Northern Bosnia in 1992, which Milosevic and his supporters used to galvanise Bosnian Serbs by repeatedly charging that Bosnian Muslims intended to establish an Islamic

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[32] Quoted in Snyder and Ballentine. "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," p. 85
[33] Woodward, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: How Not to End a Civil War," p. 83

fundamentalist state.[34] Thus, insecurity among the various populations and elite 'ethnic'

appeals grew exponentially in the run-up to war, feeding off of each other and producing a

spiral of distrust, ethnic polarisation, and insecurity. In such a tense situation, the eruption

of violence (even limited, criminal violence by 'thugs') was enough to ignite wide-spread

war as groups perceived their fears as being realised.[35] Once the first shots of the war were

fired, ethnic 'mythmaking' about rival group threats turned into the realities of ethnic

conflict.

Rwanda: From Fear in the Corridors of Power to Fear in the Streets

Given the size, severity, and brutality of the 1994 genocide, any contemporary effort aimed

at explaining the dynamics of ethnic conflict must seek to draw lessons from Rwanda. The

following analysis (again focused on mass fears, elite fears, and how fear was utilised by the

elites) focuses predominantly on the outbreak of genocide in April of 1994, instead of

focusing on the outbreak of war between the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front

(RPF) in 1990. A brief overview of the Rwanda crisis precedes the analysis.

Brief Overview of the Rwandan Genocide

Rwanda gained independence from Belgium in 1962, after years of fighting between Hutus

(the majority ethnic group of the country) and the Belgium colonial rulers and the Tutsis

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[34] Snyder, Jack. *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict,* New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co. (2000) p. 217

who had been given preferential access to government posts. The Belgium colonial period had been characterised by an ethnic stratification that produced inequalities in the level of wealth and opportunities afforded to the two ethnic groups, with Hutus suffering widespread discrimination. Under the subsequent Hutu governments that ruled following independence, the minority Tutsis faced varying levels of official discrimination that periodically flared into ethnic violence.

In 1979, Tutsi exiles in Uganda formed a revolutionary group that came to be known as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF invaded Rwanda in 1990 and battled government forces throughout the countryside until a peace agreement was signed in 1993. The Arusha Accord called for power-sharing arrangements and free elections and included provisions for a neutral peacekeeping force to help implement the agreement. The peace process unravelled rapidly in early 1994. On April 6, 1994, Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane was shot down. Within 45 minutes, members of the Presidential Guard, the Rwandan military and bands of militia began setting up roadblocks throughout Kigali and killing Tutsi citizens.[36] The slaughter expanded dramatically over the following weeks. In less than three months, roughly 800,000 Tutsi were slaughtered. Despite the presence of a drastically shrunken UN peacekeeping force in the country and a number of belated Security Council resolutions, the slaughter concluded only after the RPF successfully overthrew the government in July of 1994.

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[35] Mueller, John. "The Banality of 'Ethnic War'" in Brown (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2001)

[36] Vacarro, J. Matthew. "The Politics of Genocide: Peacekeeping and Disaster Relief in Rwanda," in William Durch (ed.), *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s,* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, (1996), p. 373

Mass and Elite Fears

 There is ample evidence of widespread insecurity among Rwanda's population (both Hutus and Tutsis) prior to the genocide. Economically, the already poor country was in the midst of an economic disaster, a result of a drop in global coffee prices and a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) that led to a currency devaluation of 40% in 1990.[37] Much more significant than the economic insecurity, was the insecurity of the population due to the war. The RPF, made up predominantly of Tutsis who had fled to Uganda after the 1959 revolution, had launched an invasion into Rwanda in October of 1990. In response, the Hutu-led government had arrested more than 9,000 citizens (mainly Tutsis, many mistreated) as suspected RPF sympathisers.[38] These mini-pogroms left the Tutsi population feeling especially vulnerable. The Hutu population was also subjected to an intense propaganda campaign (discussed below) aimed at presenting the Tutsi invaders as mass killers, thereby causing considerable vulnerability and insecurity among the population. Added to this insecure environment was the reality of ethnic animosity in the history of Rwanda, with a colonial past that was shaped largely by the Tutsi minority's suppression of the Hutu majority. Hutu mass fears were further fuelled in 1993, when 50,000 Hutus and Tutsis were slaughtered in neighbouring Burundi after a failed Tutsi-led coup (only three

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[37] Prunier, Gerard. *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide,* New York, NY: Columbia University Press (1995) p. 159-160
[38] Newbury, Catherine. "Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda," *Africa Today,* vol. 45, is. 1, (Jan-March 1998) p. 6

years after the slaughter of 20,000 Tutsis in 1988).[39]   All of these conditions, as well as the government control of media outlets, made Rwandan citizens receptive to the calls of elites, who responded to their own insecurities by priming the masses for genocide.

But what were the elite insecurities that led them to adopt such a strategy? The Habyarimana administration (dominated by a wealthy, powerful group known as the *akazu*) had been losing its grip on power prior to the RPF invasion.   Widespread popular dissatisfaction, especially in the southern and central areas of the country, and intense inter-Hutu struggles over class and regions "threatened the continued hegemony of those in power."[40] The Habyarimana regime accused the RPF of trying to overthrow the government and take control of the state, despite the RPF's insistence that it was seeking only to ensure the right of return for Rwandan exiles and challenge the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan government. The threat of the RPF invasion was a strong incentive among the *akazu* in Kigali to take dramatic steps aimed at maintaining their power. The Arusha peace negotiations, launched in the summer of 1992, produced an accord that called for a radical transfer of power, relegating the current ruling clique to a weak, minority position in a coalition government shared with opposition parties and the RPF.[41] Compounding the fear of losing power was the fact that part of the settlement included naming government elites who were responsible for small-scale Tutsi killings, thus raising the fear of future

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[39] Berkeley, Bill. "Road to Genocide" in Mills and Brunner (eds.), *The New Killing Fields: Massacre and the Politics of Intervention,* New York, NY: Basic Books, (2002) p. 110
[40] Newbury, "Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda," p 6-7
[41] Jones, Bruce D. "Military Intervention in Rwanda's Two Wars: Partisanship and Indifference" in Walter and Snyder (eds.) *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention,* New York, NY: Columbia University Press (1999) p. 124

prosecutions.[42] While it should be clearly noted that government elites did not 'invent' ethnic animosity or ethnic politics in Rwanda, these insecurities among the *akazu* prompted some of them to resort to full-scale ethnic scape-goating and fear-mongering as a means of rallying public opposition to the RPF invasion and staving off a fall from power.

Fear as a Tool of Elite Manipulation

Elite manipulation of mass insecurity was widespread in the run-up to the Rwandan genocide. Extremist elements within the government began organising a propaganda campaign (including reliance on pamphlets, speeches, songs, and radio) soon after the RPF invasion.   The main goal of all the propaganda was to frame the war in purely ethnic terms and "communicate a message of fear: that victory by the RPF would presage the enslavement of the Hutus, that these 'foreign devils' sought only to re-impose their historic overlordship, that these 'cockroaches' were returning to infest Hutu lands and to take those lands away from the Hutus whom they rightfully belonged to."[43] Radio broadcasts fabricated stories of the RPF slaughtering entire villages of Hutus and constantly suggested that the rebels were poised to take Kigali and kill all Hutus.[44] Bill Berkely describes a conversation with an eighteen-year old Hutu who took part in the genocide and explained his culpability thus: "(t)he government always told us that the RPF was Tutsi, and if it wins the war all Hutus will be killed."[45] Another Hutu described, "the Tutsis were not killed as

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[42] Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," p. 88
[43] Quoted in: Bruce, "Military Intervention in Rwanda's Two Wars," p. 125-6
[44] Berkeley, "Road to Genocide," p. 111
[45] Ibid, p. 112

Tutsis, only as sympathisers of the RPF." [46] Thus, Rwanda demonstrates yet again how the collision of self-interested elite manipulation and mass insecurity and fear can lead to widespread violence. In this case, the result was one of the most catastrophic extermination campaigns of the 20th century, carried out in little more than 100 days.

SECTION THREE: DESIGNING INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES TO COMBAT ETHNIC CONFLICT

 As demonstrated by these cases of internal conflict, insecurity among the population combined with elite manipulation poses a grave risk to peace and stability in countries going through economic and/or political changes. It is essential that the policies developed by the international community to respond to such situations factor such a dynamic into their effort. The following analysis highlights several lessons for the international community that can be drawn from the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda. These policy recommendations are aimed at steps that can be taken by third parties attempting to limit the dynamic of the security dilemma and elite manipulation and prevent the spiralling conditions that lead to open conflict. They focus on the areas of attempting to minimise the conditions that lead to mass fear, filling the information void, and dealing with governing elites.

Minimising Mass Fear-Producing Conditions

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[46] Gourevitch, Philip. "After the Genocide," *The New Yorker,* (18 December 1995) p. 85

Attempting to cushion a country from dramatic political and economic changes is not always possible; but it is possible to stop promoting policies that indirectly *cause* these massive insecurities. The macroeconomic challenges faced by both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda prior to open conflict stemmed from a variety of causes and cannot be blamed exclusively upon the policies of international lenders such as the World Bank and the IMF. Yet the policy prescriptions passed down from these institutions, while probably sound in their long-term, macroeconomic implications, often create increased economic strains that had the combined effect of further shrinking public spending as well as undermining the central government in the eyes of many among the population. Serious thought must be given to attempting to minimise the dramatic effects that many austerity programs have on countries already dealing with economic hardship.   Other economic steps that could be taken by international actors include providing grants or loans to countries going through destabilising economic crisis, although such assistance is politically difficult to justify in situations characterised by bad governance and corruption.

Politically, it should also be noted that pressure for democratisation from the international community, while generally a positive phenomenon, should recognise the potentially destabilising effect that rapid change can have on the sense of insecurity among governing elites and the general populace. For example, there was intense pressure by the international community on the Habyarimana regime to democratise Rwanda in 1992. Thought must be given to whether it is wise to push for dramatic political changes (Habyarimana had been in power since 1973!) in the midst of a rebel insurgency. Similarly, as noted by analysts such as Snyder and Zakaria, assisting in the build-up of effective liberal institutions prior to full-

scale democratisation is likely to be less destabilising than simply pushing for instant elections.[47]

Other steps that could be taken to limit the amount of insecurity in a population include the possible provision of security guarantees. Members of the international community, including neighbouring states, could promise to come to the defence of one (or either) ethnic group should it be attacked. These security guarantees could serve to limit the insecurity felt by an ethnic population at risk of possible attack, thereby stymieing the spiral of the security dilemma. Given the risks and potential cost for the outside power making such a security guarantee, such a strategy should only be considered in situations where there is a risk of large-scale destabilisation and violence. The possibility of arming one side in the conflict to serve as a deterrent should be considered in specific situations, depending on the level of tension, the geography, and the likelihood of conflict. Clearly such a strategy poses a host of potential risks and should only be undertaken when all other strategies appear unlikely to succeed in preventing open conflict.[48]

A final, more limited, policy option for third-party actors seeking to limit the level of insecurity among multi-ethnic societies is more long-term in nature. While historical animosities cannot be changed, educational efforts aimed at fostering an open dialogue

[47] Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict,* p. 316-321; Zakaria, Fareed. *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad,* New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc (2003)

[48] Consider, for instance, the experience of the United States helping to arm the Afghan *mujahadeen* against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. Although that case was not for the purpose of deterring a potential attack by another group, it serves to highlight the potential for unintended consequences that accompanies a strategy of arming one side of a conflict. I am grateful for the insight of an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this example.

about past grievances among groups could be promoted by international actors as an inexpensive conflict prevention effort.[49]

Filling the Information Void

One critical role that the international community could play in attempting to limit security concerns is in the realm of providing information. As noted previously, the security dilemma is sustained in large part due to incomplete or unreliable information about another group's motives and intentions, often forcing people to rely on inflammatory accounts presented by elites and worst-case assumptions. Outside observation missions aimed at providing unbiased and accurate reporting about both sides' actions and intentions could greatly reduce tension between groups. Such monitoring could accompany a larger 'preventative mediation' effort, aimed at enhancing communication and fostering trust-building measures between the groups. In cases where elite leaders refuse pressure for international mediation, thought must be given to supporting independent and moderate media outlets within the country. In extreme cases, such as Rwanda's 'hate radio,' the international community should be prepared to disable the government's propaganda apparatus as a means of limiting sensationalised misinformation designed to spark fear in the population.

Dealing with Elites

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[49] Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," p. 120

Lastly, the international community must design strategies to address elites who are willing to risk war for their own political prerogatives. Designing effective strategies in this area runs into several moral dilemmas. For example, as the case in Rwanda demonstrated, fear of prosecution for crimes may provide an incentive for leaders to hold onto power at all cost (including through elite manipulation), yet failing to hold leaders accountable for past atrocities denies the opportunity for justice and fails to deter other leaders from committing similar crimes. Likewise, attempting to alleviate elite fears of losing power by limiting pressure for democratisation risks rewarding bad governance and perpetuating authoritarian rule.

 Some have suggested there may be cases when it is necessary to provide threatened elites with a 'golden parachute' (guaranteeing impunity from prosecution and subsidising their career shift) as a means of making them less resistant to giving up power.[50] Others argue that consistently applied, internationally supported prosecutions of ethnic leaders guilty of war crimes can serve as a deterrent to would-be 'ethnic politicians.' With Slobodan Milosevic on the dock in the Hague, the Rwandan genocidiers either dead, on the run in western Congo, or awaiting trial in Tanzania, it could be argued that a clear message to leaders considering a resort to ethnic manipulation as a means of maintaining power is emerging: it doesn't work. The complex realities and peculiarities of different countries and situations caution against embracing a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with elites.   There are situations where, as a means of preventing the outbreak of violence, the international community should consider efforts to co-opt or bribe a leader from power, using the 'carrots' of amnesty, asylum, and

(in extreme cases) financial incentives. If such a strategy proves successful in coaxing a

leader peacefully from power and avoiding the resort to elite fear-mongering and ethnic

conflict, then it is a strategy worth pursuing, despite its moral ambiguities. Situations where

such a strategy of granting amnesty in exchange for a relinquishing of power (and arms) are

numerous, such as the U.S. payment of a million dollar-plus incentive to Haitian military

strongman Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras in 1994, in exchange for his willingness to step down

from power and go into exile.[51] Other related examples include the granting of amnesty in

exchange for the disarmament of Albanian rebels in Macedonia in 2001.[52]

If such a strategy proves unsuccessful in dissuading a political leader from pursuing the

route of ethnic politics as a means of generating support and maintaining power, however,

the international community should cease to offer such a 'golden parachute' to governing

elites. Once a situation results in open conflict, the focus of the international community

should switch to ensuring that elite manipulation of ethnic animosity is not a successful or

acceptable strategy. The resources and energies of the international community should be

devoted to making it abundantly clear that intentional elite manipulation of ethnicity is a no-

win political strategy, by ensuring that the costs for engaging in such behaviour are higher

than the costs of losing power. Instead of presenting threatened elites with the option of

resorting to 'ethnic politics' or, if that doesn't work out, a comfortable retirement in exile,

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[50] Snyder, Jack and Mansfield, Edward. "Democratization and the Dangers of War," *International Security,* vol.20, no. 1, (Summer 1995) p. 36-37

[51] Freed, Kenneth. "U.S. Gave Cedras $1 Million in Exchange for Resignation," *Los Angeles Times,* (14 October 1994)

[52] Gounev, Philip. "Stabilizing Macedonia: Conflict Prevention, Development and Organized Crime," *Journal of International Affairs,* Vol. 57, Is. 1, (Fall 2003). I am grateful to the comments of an anonymous reviewer who pointed out the relevance of the Albanian case to highlight this point.

concerted effort must be devoted to punishing those that attempt such efforts and deterring potential aggressors from following that path. It is recognised that this approach poses risks and dilemmas of its own, but to subsidise and protect rulers serves only to encourage others to follow the same strategy.

CONCLUSION

Fear begets fear. Insecurity among the population at large, caused by a number of conditions, makes the public more receptive to elite manipulations, which rely on the spreading of fear. This cycle can be found in virtually all post-Cold War ethnic conflicts. While the role and centrality of this dynamic in actually causing conflict varies by case, competing with other significant factors such as economic incentives and regional dynamics, security and elite action remain important parts of the ethnic conflict puzzle. Attempts to prevent, resolve, or mitigate such crises must take into account the significance of psychology and perceptions in fuelling this violence.   The most important implication of this understanding of ethnic conflict is that it is not inevitable, not an outpouring of ancient hatreds flowing with the unstoppable force of history. It is intentionally generated and designed by elites, which means it is preventable.   The goal of the international community must be to work to limit the volatile dynamic that has the potential to emerge at the intersection of mass fear and elite manipulation; to help people fight fear before fear starts them fighting; to ensure safe passage across the dangerous crossroads where 'fear and self-interest' collide.